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Centering the Leader: An Investigation of Leader-Centric Variables in the Support Provision Process

Jordyn Jan Leslie
Portland State University

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Centering the Leader: An Investigation of Leader-Centric Variables in the Support
Provision Process

by

Jordyn Jan Leslie

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Applied Psychology

Dissertation Committee:
Tori Crain, Chair
Liu-Qin Yang
Cynthia Mohr
Talya Bauer

Portland State University
2024

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Abstract

Few studies to date have investigated leader-centric variables associated with the support provision process. The following dissertation includes three studies that attempt to further understand such relationships. In Study 1, the interaction between leader sleep quantity and quality on various types of leader support (e.g., general supervisor support, family supportive supervisor behaviors, and sleep leadership) is studied using both employee and leader ratings. Study 2 integrates leader-centric research with work-life supportive leadership to propose a new theoretical model that delineates leader-centric variables (e.g., health & well-being, skills, role expectations, job demands) as precursors to the provision and perception of work-life supportive leadership. Finally, Study 3 emphasizes the leader's perspective of support provision through qualitative methodology that identifies overarching themes related to multilevel barriers to support as well as leader-centric outcomes. Thus, the overarching goal of this dissertation is to shift the paradigm within the support literature by emphasizing the leader's voice regarding their experiences with providing essential support behaviors to their employees.

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Chapter 1: Investigating Leader-Centric Variables in the Support Provision Process

“Secure your own mask before assisting others”. It is a memorable phrase that we hear each time we board an airplane. The phrase is short yet conveys a key lesson. We can only help other people if we are safe and healthy ourselves. This lesson gets lost in translation when applied to our broader life. Most times, we carry on assisting others without taking care of ourselves first, leading to current record-breaking rates of burnout (Smith, 2023) and stress (APA, 2022) within our nation. Taking care of ourselves has traditionally been painted to be something selfish, when in fact, it is quite the opposite. By prioritizing our own needs first, we can actually do more for others than we would have in a state of exhaustion and depletion. This lesson is particularly beneficial to apply to leadership within the workplace. Leaders are incredibly important for the health, well-being, and success of their employees (Hammer et al., 2023), yet often times, we expect leaders to help others before they have put on their own mask.

For over a century, leadership has been a focal point for researchers and practitioners alike given the leader’s influential role in groups, organizations, and society (Antonakis et al., 2018; Vroom, 1976). Indeed, researchers have even stated that “*there are few problems of interest to behavioral scientists with as much apparent relevance to the problems of society as the study of leadership*” (Vroom, 1976, p. 1527) or that “*leadership is one of the most consequential subjects in human affairs*” (Hogan et al., 2018, p. 172). Organizations have traditionally been hierarchically structured, placing emphasis on the leader and relying upon their performance for organizational success. In addition, organizational scientists and practitioners have also leaned on leaders as they

are the most effective point of intervention to promote productivity, efficacy, engagement, and well-being among employees (e.g., Barling & Christie, 2010; Hammer et al., 2021a; Hammer et al., 2021b; Lacerenza et al., 2017). In fact, one of the predominant approaches to improving employee health and well-being (i.e., Total Worker Health® [TWH]) advocates strongly for the critical role of leadership in fostering worker health, safety, and well-being, especially as leaders are a primary source of social support for workers (NIOSH, 2021; Punnett et al., 2020; Schill & Chosewood, 2013). Thus, given the level of reliance that our society has on leaders, particularly within the workplace, it is imperative to understand the capacity of leaders to fulfill such a tall order.

A handful of studies have started to document beliefs or societal and organizational cultures that may be harmful to leader health and well-being and diminish their capacity to fulfill their unique leader responsibilities. Sleep is one health indicator that has been examined within this small subset of the literature. For example, Svetieva and colleagues (2017) found that leaders who are substantially more sleep restricted are less likely to psychologically detach from work compared to the general, non-leader employee. In addition, workplace leaders are more likely, above and beyond the average employee, to decrease time for personal matters (e.g., sleep) in order to increase hours at work (Babbar & Aspelin, 1998; Ruderman et al., 2017). Beyond research, mainstream media within U.S. outlets has published numerous articles highlighting widely known leaders, such as Margaret Thatcher, Bill Gates, Thomas Edison, or Steve Jobs, and their unhealthy habits of prioritizing work over their sleep (Gates, 2019; Lashbrooke, 2020;

Le, 2019; Smith, 2017), specifically due to the amount of demands they have given their leadership role. Even *Business Insider*, a widely read magazine for leaders and professionals alike, published an article titled “19 successful people who barely sleep” (Cutrone & Nisen, 2012), pushing the narrative that success as a leader comes at the cost of health. The majority of mainstream narratives surrounding leader sleep are related to sleep quantity (i.e., the length of time in which an individual spends asleep). However, sleep quantity is only one indicator of broader health and well-being. For this reason, the studies included in this body of work go beyond sleep quantity by investigating additional dimensions of sleep health such as sleep quality (i.e., sleep dissatisfaction and sleep disturbances such as restlessness during the night; Nelson et al., 2022) as well as broader health and well-being indicators (e.g., positive emotions) to further understand the relationship between leader health, well-being, and performance.

In addition, it is important to note that the studies presented in this dissertation are focused on leaders within the U.S. context. There are cultures across different countries that may facilitate a similar narrative that work comes before health. For example, researchers have documented a death by overwork phenomenon in Japan, where individuals are dying due to overwork-related cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases (CCVDs) as well as suicide (Takahashi, 2019). Another example is the overtime working schedule implemented widely in Chinese companies, coined the “996 regime”, due to individuals working from 9am to 9pm six days a week (Li & Chen, 2023; Yang et al., 2021). However, it is important to note that investigations into global “overwork cultures” are focused on the generalized “employee” (e.g., Warton & Blair-Loy, 2002),

but do not place emphasis or detangle the influence of the overwork culture on an employee's status within an organization. For this reason, we know relatively little about unique pressures that leaders may face, over and above the non-leader employee, in other cultures. Some research has shown that across countries and industries, leaders experience work-related barriers to achieving healthy sleep (Svetieva et al., 2017). Nevertheless, it is important to specify that the current studies are in placed within the U.S. culture, which places unique pressures and demands on leaders, as demonstrated by mainstream media and empirical research.

One of the relatively newer responsibilities being placed on leaders over the past two decades has been leader support, which refers to behaviors exhibited by leaders in the workplace that aid employees' in managing their work and nonwork (e.g., family, sleep) stressors (Hammer et al., 2009; Hobfoll, 1989). Organizational scholars have spotlighted leaders as the key to supporting employees (i.e., subordinates, followers) needs in order to alleviate tensions between the work and nonwork (e.g., family) domains (Hammer et al., 1997; Kossek et al., 2021). Specifically, leaders are able to act as the liaison between employee work and nonwork domains by providing resources or removing work pressures. The research stream on leader support has exploded since the concept of family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) (i.e., leader behaviors that are specifically supportive of employee's family roles; Hammer et al., 2009) was introduced. As a result, family has been the predominant nonwork aspect of employee lives that leaders are being encouraged, socialized, and trained to support (Kossek et al., 2022).

Yet, the leader's voice has been left out of the developing support literature, raising questions such as: how are leaders perceiving the increase in demands?, how are they affected by having to support their employees work *and* nonwork lives?, and what obstacles do leaders face in providing such support? It is important to ask such questions as research suggests that increasing job demands may result in work disengagement (e.g., Afrahi et al., 2022; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), but may also increase negative, counterproductive behaviors (Balducci et al., 2011). In fact, research has demonstrated workload/pressure to perform and fatigue (Tepper et al., 2017) are two of the key predictors of abusive leadership. Thus, researchers must first consider the leader before attempting to add responsibilities that will solely benefit non-leader employees. Through this shift in the predominant narrative within the support literature, we can then (a) promote positive behaviors such as support, (b) prevent negative behaviors such as abusive supervision, and (c) create a positive trickle-down process from leaders to employees. Thus, to care about the leader is to care about the employee.

Leader support has been continually established as an essential resource for employees and organizations, improving both work and nonwork outcomes (e.g., sleep, job satisfaction, engagement, turnover intentions; Lapierre & Allen, 2006; May et al., 2004; Muse & Pichler, 2011; Nohe & Sonntag, 2014; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012; Sianoja et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2011). Given these many documented benefits of leader support, the overarching goal of this dissertation is to center the leader's perspective of the supportive provision process to illuminate novel paths forward for both science and

practice to promote supportive behaviors. Indeed, leaders can only do so if they secure their oxygen mask first.

Statement of Purpose

Through a series of three studies, the proposed dissertation explores the support provision process from the leader's perspective using a variety of methodologies. The current research aims to inform future research, practices, and policies with the objective of promoting leader support in the workplace while simultaneously protecting leader health and well-being. To do so, I emphasize how our approach can be better designed to support workplace leaders, and ultimately their employees. Specifically, through a better understanding of leader-centric variables that affect the subsequent provision of support, initiatives may be intentionally designed or implemented to prevent harm to the leader.

As such, this dissertation is driven by three overarching research questions:

- 1) How does a leader's health and well-being influence the provision of support, and how does engagement in support provision influence a leader's health and well-being?
- 2) What are the main leader-centric factors that influence the support provision process?
- 3) To what extent do leaders have the desire and capacity to support their employees with work and nonwork demands?

Key Contributions

The present body of work provides three broad contributions to the current support and occupational health literature. First, the traditional perspective and theoretical

underpinnings in the research stream on leader support have focused on the perspective of the recipient (i.e., the employee) (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018; Guo et al., 2024; Litano et al., 2016). However, what is missing from the story on leader support is the provider's perspective (i.e., the leader). As a result of this narrow focus, the literature has extensively documented the variety of outcomes of support for employees and the broader organization (Hammer et al., 2021a) but not leaders. In addition, the breadth of support research identifies organization level antecedents to support behaviors (e.g., work-family infrastructure, culture, reward system; Straub, 2012) yet has minimal emphasis on leader-centric antecedents. Of the leader-centric antecedents that have been investigated, the majority are fixed and distal such as leader gender or childhood experiences (Kossek et al., 2023; Sargent, 2022; Straub, 2012) (for an exception see Ellis et al., 2022 on role perceptions). As such, the present body of work goes beyond this traditional view and offers a new perspective that addresses the emerging need to treat support provision as a job demand for the leader, rather than just a resource for the employee. By doing so, science and practice can adjust by prioritizing the leader's experience first in order to promote subsequent provision of support to employees. Specifically, the three studies that form this dissertation build off one another to emphasize the experience of the leader within the support provision process and delineate both proximal and targetable leader-centric antecedents and outcomes. Study 1 utilizes the Work, Nonwork, and Sleep framework (WNS; Crain et al., 2018) to investigate the link between leader health and well-being, namely leader sleep, with a leader's subsequent ability to engage in support behaviors. In addition, given the sparse empirical

and theoretical work that centers the leader in the support provision process, Study 2 provides an integrative review and framework that delineates how certain leader-centric variables are likely to influence the provision of support in the workplace. Finally, Study 3 highlights the provider perspective on support by analyzing qualitative interviews with leaders to investigate their capacity and desire to fulfill their support responsibilities, as well as how the support provision process may impact the leader themselves. Through this body of work, I hope to shift future research on leader support by highlighting the various leader-centric factors that are likely at play, thereby placing equal emphasis on the provider and the receiver.

Secondly, I capture a nuanced phenomenon within the support provision process that has largely been overlooked. Through three complimentary studies, I posit that leaders are having to negotiate their way through many tradeoffs when engaging in support. Given the limited investigation of leader-centric antecedents or outcomes of the support provision process (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022), researchers and practitioners alike have taken a simplified view of how support is functioning in the workplace, often ignoring the intricacies, obstacles, and mental negotiations that leaders must navigate to provide support in the first place. Specifically, in Study 1, I found that leaders who have relatively poor sleep health are actually better supporters, indicating that leaders who may be worrying about resolving employee needs in the evening and throughout the night are keener to act on those worries and provide more support. This may suggest leaders who care about their employees are more susceptible to sleep loss. Indeed, this notion is corroborated by the conclusions reached in Study 3, which

suggested that leaders feel that the level of care and concern needed to provide adequate support to employees can come at a cost to their well-being. In addition, Study 3 uncovered tradeoffs beyond well-being such that leaders are often having to choose between satisfying organizational objectives, performing adequately on their own individual job tasks, or supporting their employees. Leaders are also struggling to navigate situations where an employee's work is suffering but the employee does not want support, as the leader may run the risk of ruining the dyadic relationship if they push too hard. Therefore, I expand upon our current knowledge of support behaviors by highlighting that leaders are being forced to choose between critical aspects of their job, relationships, and life in order to meet competing expectations from multiple stakeholders. These findings can guide researchers to investigate which components of a leader's job are most likely to be sacrificed and in what situations (e.g., when roles/demands are at odds with one another), as well as how such choices affect the leader's productivity as well as their employees. Relatedly, a leader's choice holds significant consequences for how employees perceive the organization, as leaders often serve as the face of the organizational entity (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). For example, if a leader chooses to neglect support behaviors to make progress on their tasks as an individual contributor, such a decision will have trickle-down effects and decrease perceptions of organizational support among employees, potentially harming the organization's reputation. Overall, this body of work uncovers the intricate, multi-level difficulties that leader's experience when providing support, suggesting that the support provision process may be more complex than previously thought.

Finally, this body of work provides initial evidence of the intertwined relationship between leader health and the support provision process. Specifically, Study 1 and Study 2 suggest that leader health and well-being precede support behaviors, whereas Study 3 indicates that detriments and/or improvements to leader health and well-being may be the result of providing support to their employees. These findings emphasize the leader's health as a critical "bookend" factor—a perspective that has rarely been taken within the support literature (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Hammer et al., 2021a) (for exceptions see Byrne et al., 2014; Kaluza et al., 2020; Poetz & Volmer, 2024). In other words, this collection of studies expands the nomological network and theoretical understanding of the support provision process by delineating leader health and well-being as both an antecedent and outcome of the support provision process. This novel approach to support can guide future research and practice by turning the focus to the promotion of leader health rather than just leader job performance (i.e., increased support behaviors). Such findings are coincident with recent calls by scholars to shift the way we conceptualize success on the job (Tay et al., 2023). Traditionally, organizational psychologists and practitioners alike have prioritized job performance as the "ultimate criterion" (i.e., metric that captures full domain of performance; Cascio & Aguinis, 2011) yet this narrow conceptualization has driven both theory and practice to overlooking the value of capturing well-being within the "ultimate" performance metric. This is evident in the current approach to promoting support behaviors among leaders such that researchers and practitioners emphasize trainings to build leader skills needed to provide effective support (e.g., Hammer et al., 2021a). Although this is a step in the right direction, this

approach does not consider the protection and promotion of leader health and well-being as a potential mechanism for improving support behaviors. Scholars have suggested that the ultimate criterion instead be shifted to well-being (Tay et al., 2023), such that the promotion of well-being will in turn improve performance as one facet of a more holistic view of success on the job. As such, researchers and practitioners should aim to fortify leader health and well-being as a first step in the pursuit of improving leader on-the-job behaviors. Therefore, the findings of this body of work corroborate this suggestion for a shift to the field's domineering approach by highlighting the criticality of leader health and well-being within the support provision process.

Alternative Methodology

The majority of leadership and leader support research has traditionally been examined through single-source data, cross-sectional design, and quantitative methodologies (Antonakis et al., 2003; Crain & Stevens, 2018; Takahashi et al., 2012i). Unfortunately, the overreliance on these methods for examining leadership has limited our understanding of the complex process of leadership and led to a simplified view of how leader support operates in reality. Specifically, the leadership process – particularly support – is largely relational as it occurs between a leader and an employee (i.e., the follower; Brown et al., 2018). Yet, research has only just begun using dyadic approaches toward understanding the leadership process. Indeed, top-level leaders are only evaluated through employee perceptions 13% of the time, in contrast to lower-level leaders who are evaluated via employee perceptions approximately 63% of the time (Hiller et al., 2011). In addition, the overuse of cross-sectional designs has inhibited organizational scientists

from determining temporal sequencing of variables that have been associated with leader support (Crain & Stevens, 2018). In other words, it has been difficult to pinpoint which variables are predictors of support. As such, multi-time point designs (i.e., evaluation of different measures at successive waves over time) have the capacity to appropriately evaluate predictors and outcomes to reveal a truly representative picture of what leads to support and what is a result of support. Finally, the majority of leadership and leader support research has traditionally been examined through quantitative approaches such as surveys (Antonakis et al., 2003; Hiller et al., 2011; Stentz et al., 2012; Takahashi et al., 2012). In fact, qualitative methodologies only make up approximately 5% of leadership research according to some estimates (e.g., Hiller et al., 2011; Yiğit et al., 2017) and likely comprise even less of the research regarding leader support. Thus, researchers have called for more qualitative research given the complexity of the leadership process. The methodological dependence on singular perspectives, snapshots of time, and numerical ratings may have contributed to the broad scientific and applied oversight related to leaders and their capacity to actually provide effective support. To prevent further simplifications, leader support researchers should aim to utilize a variety of methodologies that can capture the true complexity of the provisional support process from a variety of perspectives. Thus, this body of work taps into underutilized methodologies such as multi-source ratings, multi-time point design, and qualitative methods to reflect the most accurate picture of this phenomenon as it exists within the workplace.

Summary of Studies

Leader support has been extensively studied over the past two decades (Kossek et al., 2023), yet minimal research to date has examined leader support from the leader's perspective. For this reason, I present three programmatic studies that address this emerging need in science and practice.

Study 1 investigates the link between leader sleep quantity and quality on employee- ratings of general supervisor support, and both employee- and leader- ratings of FSSB and sleep leadership, across four-month time lags. Utilizing data from a larger sleep and health study, I examine these relationships within leaders who were matched with their respective direct employees who were full-time employees of the National Guard.

Study 2 builds off of this work by presenting an integrative review of empirical research to identify leader-centric variables that may influence a leader's ability to provide effective and adequate support to their employees. This review informs the development of the support enabling framework which advocates for centering the leader in support-related science and practice. Existing theoretical frameworks related to support provision have taken the perspective of the receiver of support (i.e., the employee), but little research has examined support from the provider's point of view.

Finally, Study 3 utilizes qualitative methods to underscore the importance of capturing the leader's perspective as it relates to the support provision process. Workplace leaders are the fundamental source of effective support yet their own needs are often overlooked within support research. As such, this study provides rich

contextualization of the experiences of leaders and the difficulties they may face or the outcomes they may derive for supporting their employees.

Overall, the differing methodologies utilized in this body of work may inform future research as well as inform a more holistic and intentional approach to the implementation of leader support initiatives by practitioners and academics alike. In summary, I aim to be an advocate for support-oriented research and practice to move forward in a way that prioritizes the leader's experience in the support provision process so that employees, organizations, and even leaders themselves can reap the benefits.

Chapter 2: Sleeping to Support: An Examination of the Relationship Between Leader
Sleep and Positive Support Behaviors

Jordyn J. Leslie

Portland State University

Tori L. Crain

Portland State University

Leslie B. Hammer

Oregon Health and Science University

Rebecca M. Brossoit

Louisiana State University

Cynthia D. Mohr

Portland State University

Author Note

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Abstract

Although research has documented the relationship between sleep and workplace outcomes among general employees, less research has focused on the role of sleep among workplace leaders. The current study investigates the link between leader self-reported sleep quantity on a constellation of positive leader support behaviors (i.e., general supervisor support, family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB), and sleep leadership) rated by both the leader and their direct employee. To gain a deeper understanding of the role of sleep in these relationships, this study also examines the interaction between sleep quantity and quality (i.e., insomnia symptoms and sleep dissatisfaction) on positive leader support behaviors. Overall, we hypothesized that leader sleep quality at Time 1 will moderate the association between leader sleep quantity at Time 1 and general supervisor support, FSSB, and sleep leadership at Time 3. Results revealed significant moderating effects of leader insomnia symptoms at Time 1 on the relationship between leader sleep duration at Time 1 and employee-ratings of sleep leadership at Time 3, as well as employee-ratings of FSSB at Time 3. Finally, there was a significant moderating effect of leader sleep dissatisfaction at Time 1 on the relationship between leader sleep duration at Time 1 and leader-ratings of sleep leadership at Time 3. Results from this study suggest that leader sleep quality plays an influential role in their downstream behavior. This informs future workplace interventions aimed at promoting positive leader support behaviors as well as public health campaigns focused on improving sleep health.

Keywords: sleep, leaders, social support, FSSB, sleep leadership

Sleeping to Support: An Examination of the Relationship Between Leader Sleep and Positive Support Behaviors

Today's competitive workplace culture perpetuates the unhealthy belief that successful leaders do not sleep. This is reflected in many first-hand accounts from well-known leaders, such as Bill Gates and Margaret Thatcher, who have admitted to previously neglecting sleep to gain a competitive advantage as a leader or to make progress on their tasks (Gates, 2019; Lashbrooke, 2020). Past United States presidents have also been known to engage in similar behaviors. For example, Barack Obama was notorious for working instead of sleeping during his presidency (Berger, 2018; Shear, 2016), Donald Trump has been quoted as saying that he "never sleeps and that people who sleep are lazy" (Le, 2019; Smith, 2017), and well-known leader Steve Jobs was quoted saying "everything was secondary" when it came to building his company (Isaacson, 2012). Moreover, Vice President Kamala Harris mentioned in a precampaign interview that she does not get "nearly enough" sleep (New York Times, 2019). In fact, in the same interview, almost all the Democratic candidates for the 2020 presidential election mentioned that they do not get enough sleep (New York Times, 2019).

These anecdotes are supported by the organizational literature, which suggests that individuals believe getting less sleep leads to career success, such that participants assumed successful leaders slept less than the average worker (Svetieva et al., 2017). Other studies confirm this harmful culture, as the shortest sleep durations and highest fatigue are experienced by supervisor-level employees as opposed to lower-level employees (e.g., Åkerstedt et al., 2004; Jackson et al., 2013; Luckhaupt et al., 2010;

Svetieva et al., 2017; Ursin et al., 2009;), indicating that unhealthy sleep beliefs and attitudes are perpetuated by workplace leaders. This broader societal trend is reflected in a survey conducted by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, which identified paid work time as the primary waking activity exchanged for sleep (Basner et al., 2014). Specifically, workplace leaders are more likely to increase hours at work at the cost of their personal time (e.g., sleep) (Babbar & Aspelin, 1998; Ruderman et al., 2017). Taken together, these studies highlight a national concern related to leaders and chronic sleep restriction (i.e., consistently obtaining less than ideal amounts of sleep).

For the average adult, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, the Sleep Research Society, and the National Sleep Foundation recommend a minimum of 7 hours of sleep per night and high levels of quality sleep on a regular basis for optimal health and functioning (Hirshkowitz et al., 2015; Ohayon et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2015). Recently, a study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention uncovered that over one third of Americans (approximately 83.6 million US adults) regularly do not obtain the recommended amount of sleep (Liu et al., 2016). Sleep restriction can be quite damaging for the worker, the organization, and society, given its prevalence and associated consequences. Past work has identified sleep as a major contributor to health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion, as well as broader organizational outcomes such as engagement, performance, safety, absenteeism, and job satisfaction (e.g., Barnes & Watson, 2019; Litwiller et al., 2017). Consequently, approximately 1.2 million working days are lost in the United States each year due to inadequate sleep (Hafner, 2017; Shockey & Wheaton,

2017). Unfortunately, however, research on the potential consequences of sleep restriction within the workplace leader population has been largely neglected.

Reviews and meta-analyses examining sleep in the workplace demonstrate the field's narrow focus on the general employee (e.g., Khubchandani & Price, 2020), rather than leaders. Of the meta-analyses that empirically examine the impact of sleep on work outcomes and work performance, all focus on sleep among general employees, but not leaders (Barnes & Watson, 2019; Barnes, 2012; Henderson & Horan, 2021; Litwiller et al., 2017; Van Laethem and colleagues (2013). Although understanding the relationship between sleep and work outcomes among general employees is important, researchers have called for further examination of the link between sleep and performance among leaders in the workplace (e.g., Gaultney, 2014; Rogers et al., 2019). Recently, individual studies have started to examine the relationship between sleep and various leadership outcomes such as abusive leadership (i.e., hostile verbal and nonverbal behavior; Barnes et al., 2015; Olsen et al., 2016; Tariq et al., 2019). Yet, less is known regarding the role of sleep in a leader's ability to engage in *positive* behaviors in the workplace. This raises a crucial question for the productivity and environment of the workplace: how can leaders support and ensure the well-being of their employees if they are suffering from the consequences of sleep restriction themselves?

Although leaders are vital to the improvement of organizational- and employee-level outcomes, past literature has failed to consider precursors to positive leader support behaviors. Specifically, there are three types of support behaviors particularly relevant to this study: *general supervisor support* (i.e., expressions of care and concern by the leader

or tangible assistance provided to their employees; House, 1981; Kossek et al., 2011), *family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB)* (i.e., behaviors exhibited by leaders that assist employees in managing family and nonwork demands; Hammer et al., 2009), and *sleep leadership* (i.e., behaviors that aid employees in obtaining more and/or better sleep and reflect concern for employee sleep; Gunia et al., 2015). Each of these positive leader support behaviors address a different domain of employees' lives; general supervisor support is broad and focuses on support within the workplace, FSSB is comprised of support behaviors for nonwork demands, and sleep leadership refers to support for employee sleep health. Thus, this study aims to advance this conversation by examining leader sleep as an antecedent to an intentionally chosen set of distinct, yet important positive leader support behaviors in the workplace.

Anticipated Contributions

The present study provides three theoretical contributions to the current organizational health literature. First, research is limited when it comes to examining the relationship between sleep and a leaders' ability to provide positive support behaviors. Understanding how to mitigate negative leader behaviors at work is crucial, but only focusing on prevention is too narrow. By examining positive behaviors, we can also learn how to *promote* positive leader support behaviors. Due to the well-established benefits of leader support behaviors (e.g., Hammer et al., 2009; Hammer et al., 2013; Kelloway et al., 2017; Koch & Binneweis, 2015; Las Heras et al., 2015), it is essential for researchers and practitioners to understand how to promote and maintain positive supportive behaviors amongst leaders in order to drive employees and organizations towards a

healthier and more successful future (e.g., Hämming, 2017; Kossek et al., 2011; Mor Barak et al., 2009). However, antecedents of these positive leader behaviors have largely been overlooked (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018; Byrne et al., 2014). Thus, this will be one of the first studies to examine leader sleep as an antecedent to positive leader support behaviors, specifically general supervisor support, FSSB, and sleep leadership.

Furthermore, the incorporation of a constellation of support behaviors as outcomes is a unique feature of this study. The limited research on this topic typically examines one form of leader behavior as an outcome of leader sleep. For example, Barnes and colleagues (2020) examined unethical leadership as the sole leader-level outcome. Other examples of independent outcomes include abusive supervision (Barnes et al., 2015; Tariq et al., 2019) or hostile leader behavior (Guarana & Barnes, 2017). An example of an exception is a study conducted by Olsen and colleagues (2016) that examines the impact of leader sleep and subsequent transformational and transactional leadership styles. In contrast, the present study will contribute to research by examining multiple specific, positive leader support constructs (general supervisor support, FSSB, and sleep leadership) as outcomes of leader sleep. Examining this constellation allows for us to further understand which behaviors are particularly effortful for leaders to provide when suffering from sleep restriction; are leaders more likely to abandon or provide one form of support over the other when suffering from sleep restriction? From a practical standpoint, examining a constellation of positive leader behaviors informs future interventions aimed at promoting a specific type of positive leader behavior.

The second contribution of the present study is the examination of the interaction between leader sleep quantity and sleep quality as predictors of downstream leader support behaviors. Research has demonstrated that the correlations between sleep quantity and quality are often small and nonsignificant, adding to the argument that they should be assessed as distinct constructs (e.g., Barnes, 2012; Brossoit et al., 2019; Crain et al., 2018; Litwiller et al., 2017). From this, recent work has documented a potential interaction between sleep quantity and sleep quality (Barber et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2015). The interactive relationship between sleep quantity and quality is relatively new, such that the sole outcomes that have been examined to date are ego depletion or psychological strain (Barber et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2015). Thus, scientists know little about how the combination of both sleep quantity and sleep quality may impact outcomes beyond those cognitive in nature. It is important to look beyond cognition to determine sleep quantity and sleep quality's combined impact on more concrete, observable, and influential outcomes such as behavior and action. Therefore, the present study answers calls (Barber et al., 2010; Crain et al., 2018) to expand upon previous literature by examining the interactive effects of sleep quantity and sleep quality on an array of *behavioral* outcomes, namely positive support behaviors (i.e., general supervisor support, FSSB, and sleep leadership). In addition, we utilize a newer form of interaction graphs coined "tumble graphs" (Bodner, 2016). We move beyond traditional interaction plots to illustrate our moderations within dense data regions, rather than erroneously plotting our interactions in sparse data regions which are encouraged by traditional graphing

techniques. This leads to a more representative and accurate interpretation of the moderations as supported by the data.

Finally, this study contributes to the organizational literature by including both employee and supervisor self-ratings of sleep leadership and FSSB outcomes. Leadership, broadly, refers to the process by which leaders influence their followers (Antonakis & Day, 2018; Bass & Bass, 2008; Schonfeld & Chang, 2017; Truxillo et al., 2015). For example, leadership could look like establishing a vision, ensuring cooperation, and changing follower perceptions and actions. Although there are various definitions of leadership, each definition emphasizes the role of both the leader and the follower. For this reason, this study includes both leader and employee ratings of FSSB and sleep leadership to obtain a more realistic picture of how these behaviors are functioning in the workplace, from the perspectives of both key players. Furthermore, by including both employee and leader ratings of different forms of support, we can ask questions such as: How employees and leader perceptions of support differ? Do employees perceive their leader as being more supportive of their work (general supervisor support), nonwork (FSSB), and sleep (sleep leadership) when the leader is getting sufficient and good quality sleep? Therefore, the inclusion of multiple sources of information, specifically leader and employee ratings of two outcomes (i.e., FSSB, sleep leadership), has theoretical advantages.

Theoretical Rationale

To help explain the hypothesized relationship between leader sleep and subsequent support behaviors, we draw from Crain and colleagues (2018) theoretical

model which identifies the underlying processes that link the three domains of employees' lives: work, nonwork, and sleep (WNS). The WNS model's main proposition is that sleep plays a major influential role in our attitudes, behaviors, and states for both the work and nonwork domain. For the purposes of the present study, we examine sleep duration as the core dimension reflecting sleep quantity, and sleep satisfaction and insomnia symptoms (equivalent to sleep efficiency) as dimensions of the broader construct of sleep quality (Buysse, 2014). Crain and colleagues (2018) suggest that an interaction effect may occur between sleep quantity and quality, but few studies have examined such an interaction thus far (Barber et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2015), and consequently, further exploration into this effect has been recommended by researchers (Crain et al., 2018).

The main proposition of the WNS model indicates that sleep influences work behaviors via energy resources. The WNS theoretical framework suggests that sleep influences subsequent behaviors in the work domain via energy-based resources, specifically physical energy and energetic activation (Crain et al., 2018). Quinn and colleagues (2012, p.341) define physical energy as "the capacity to work", or in other words, the physiological energy needed to do, to move, and to think. In contrast, energetic activation represents an individual's appraisal or feeling of being energized, full of vigor, enthusiasm, or zest which is observable in subsequent affective outcomes (Quinn et al., 2012). Expanding beyond this taxonomy of human energy, Crain and colleagues (2018) suggest that sleep is a key contributor to fluctuations in human energy,

and such energy is necessary for a leader's ability to engage in downstream positive support behaviors in the workplace.

The Relationship Between Sleep Quantity and Support Behaviors

As seen in Figure 1, the first aim of this study is to establish a link between sleep quantity and downstream support behaviors. Prior work has begun to establish a link between sleep quantity and leader performance outcomes. For example, research suggests that leaders with poor sleep health subsequently receive lower performance ratings from their peers (Gauntley, 2014), are more likely to engage in passive avoidant leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2010), and are less likely to demonstrate transformational leadership (Olsen et al., 2016). Such studies support the fundamental proposition from the WNS theoretical framework that sleep quantity can have an impact on downstream work behaviors for leaders (Crain et al., 2018). This study assesses sleep quantity's impact on three support behaviors: general supervisor support, family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB), and sleep leadership.

General Supervisor Support

General supervisor support refers to leader behaviors that are primarily supporting an employee's effectiveness at work. Specifically, general supervisor support refers to behaviors such as providing tangible assistance and services (i.e., instrumental support) and demonstrating empathy, encouragement, care, and trust (i.e., emotional support) to their employees in the workplace (House, 1981; Langford et al., 1997; Mathieu et al., 2019; Yoon & Thye, 2000). As suggested by WNS (Crain et al., 2018), sleep is likely to impact a leader's propensity for engaging in general supervisor support as such support

requires energy to provide instrumental and emotional support to a team of employees. For example, a leader who gets more sleep is likely to demonstrate encouragement and care to their employees because they have the physical energy resources necessary and perceive feeling energized, in line with the WNS framework (Crain et al., 2018). Thus, it is hypothesized that sleep quantity will be linked to downstream employee-related general supervisor support (See Figure 1).

Hypothesis 1: Leader sleep quantity at Time 1 will have a positive relationship with employee reports of general supervisor support at Time 2.

Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB)

In contrast to general supervisor support, the construct of FSSB places emphasis on leaders supporting their employees' nonwork demands. FSSB is conceptualized as domain-specific leader behaviors that enable the employee to be successful in both their work and nonwork lives (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Hammer et al., 2009). Overall, a family-supportive leader is one who "empathizes with the employee's desire to seek balance between work and nonwork responsibilities" (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, p.7). A leader's sleep is likely to impact their ability to engage in FSSB because such behaviors might be effortful due to the need for emotion, empathy, and proactivity to effectively engage in such behaviors. Research has indicated that sleep can impair emotional regulation (e.g., Palmer & Alfano, 2017), empathy (e.g., Guadagni et al., 2014; Guadagni et al., 2017), and proactivity (e.g., Schmitt et al., 2017). For example, if a leader obtains enough sleep, they might be more likely to demonstrate empathy and proactivity for addressing and resolving an employee's nonwork demand, both of which require physical

and affective energy, as represented in the WNS framework (Crain et al., 2018) (See Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2a-b: Leader sleep quantity at Time 1 will have a positive relationship with a) leader and b) employee reports of FSSB at Time 2.

Sleep Leadership

Although FSSB refers to supervisor behaviors that enable employees to balance their work and nonwork demands, FSSB does not specifically take into consideration the domain of sleep. According to the WNS model proposed by Crain and colleagues (2018), past literature examining the domains of a working individual's life has often overlooked sleep as a major area, as sleep makes up a significant portion of a 24-hour period. Leaders that engage in sleep leadership behaviors help employees accomplish their sleep goals and demonstrate concern for employee sleep health (Adler et al., 2021; Gunia et al., 2015). However, a leader's own sleep is likely to impact their ability to provide sleep leadership to their employees because if a leader's sleep is suffering, they may not know how to obtain healthy sleep within their own life and thus may be less likely to be able to provide that information to their employees. Additionally, in line with the WNS model (Crain et al., 2018), showing concern for employee sleep is likely effortful, especially under conditions of when a leader's own sleep is reduced. Indeed, sleep research has indicated that sleep restriction impacts effort allocation (Massar et al., 2019), suggesting that leaders may be less likely to allocate effort towards performance goals such as aiding and caring for employee sleep. For example, leaders who do not get enough sleep may be less likely to care about their employees' sleep or be able to instrumentally aid their

employees with sleep information. In contrast to FSSB, however, leader sleep may be associated subsequent sleep leadership behaviors; if a leader does not show concern for their own sleep, then it is especially unlikely for leaders to care about employees' sleep.

Hypothesis 3a-b: Leader sleep quantity at Time 1 will have a positive relationship with a) leader and b) employee reports of sleep leadership at Time 2.

Interaction between Sleep Quantity and Sleep Quality

Building off hypotheses that sleep quantity and leader support behaviors are related, the present study also aims to understand how this relationship might change if sleep quality is considered. Past literature has typically examined sleep quantity and quality as additive components of sleep (Barnes, 2012), such that the effects of each sleep dimension are examined individually and cannot be substituted. The WNS model, however, cites past research in which an interaction effect exists between sleep quantity and quality (Crain et al., 2018), suggesting that the relationship between the constructs could also be multiplicative. Specifically, Barber and colleagues (2010) found that sleep quantity and quality interact to buffer against psychological strain as an outcome, such that the relationship between sleep quantity and psychological strain is weakened under conditions of high sleep quality. Additionally, although Barnes and colleagues (2015) hypothesized that sleep quantity and sleep quantity would have additive effects on ego depletion and subsequent leader behavior, results indicated that the relationship between sleep quantity and daily ego depletion was weakened under conditions of high sleep quality, lending empirical evidence to motivate the hypothesized interaction. Due to the novelty of this relationship, researchers have called for further exploration of this effect

on other physical, psychological, or behavioral outcomes (Crain et al., 2018). The more sleep leaders get *and* the more rested and satisfied with their sleep leaders are, the more the leader will engage in support behaviors compared to leaders who obtain insufficient sleep quantity and have poor sleep quality. For example, we expect sleep quantity is related to more positive support behaviors and this relationship is enhanced under conditions of higher sleep quality and attenuated under conditions of low sleep quality (See Figure 1).

Hypothesis 4: Leader sleep quality at Time 1 will moderate the relationship between leader sleep quantity at Time 1 and leader support behaviors at Time 2, such that the positive relationship between sleep quantity and support behaviors will be enhanced under conditions of high (versus low) sleep quality.

Method

Procedure and Participants

Data were collected as part of a larger sleep and health intervention study that ran from 2017 through 2020. Specifically, we examined a sample of leaders who were matched with their respective direct employees in the Army and Air National Guard located in one state in the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. Participants were employed in a wide variety of positions but were primarily leaders and employees working in human resources, finance/supply, logistics, and maintenance. Surveys were completed at two time points: Time 1 and approximately 9-months later (Time 2). Thus, we examined sleep duration and sleep quality at Time 1 and support behaviors (i.e., general supervisor support, FSSB, and sleep leadership) at Time 3. Because the intervention was not of

substantive interest in this study, we controlled for the intervention indicator in all analyses, as we describe in greater detail below.

Please see Hammer et al. (2021) for detailed information on recruitment and study logistics, but we provide an overview here. The research team initially worked with the headquarters of the National Guard and were given organizational charts as well as breakdowns of units and the respective leaders, including leader contact information. For smaller units and the Air branch, a person-of-contact within the National Guard was identified and they connected the research team with the appropriate leader. From this information, leaders were emailed and debriefed about the study. Unit leaders were asked by the research team to respond to an online survey via REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) that was sent to the personal email addresses of leader participants. Leaders were also asked to send an email to the full-time employees who directly reported to them, with information and a link for opting into the study. Participants were eligible to sign-up if they worked at least 32 hours per week, and also then received an online survey via REDCap. All surveys were completed during non-work time.

Employee participants were asked to indicate who their direct leader was in their online survey (i.e., the leader that they report to if they needed to take time off work). Based off this information and the organizational chart given to the research team at the beginning of the study, participating leaders were matched with their respective employees once all data were collected. The research team worked from the list with individual unit leaders to determine a final list of leaders per unit depending on who in the unit participated in the study and were linked to employees. Thus, the final data set

includes employees linked to their respective leader in which leaders may have one or multiple direct employees. Specifically, each leader in this dataset had between one to 13 employees matched to them as a result of this process. The final sample sizes for matched leaders and employees were $N = 178$ and $N = 393$, respectively.

In all, participants were asked to complete three 45-minute online surveys over the course of a year, and surveys were identical for all participants (leaders and employees). As an incentive, participants were offered a gift card for \$25 for completing each individual survey, resulting in a potential total reward of \$75 for completing all survey waves. Research staff then visited Army and Air bases to give an in-person briefing of the study and recruit any further employees who had not yet signed up for the study. Conducting both online and in-person recruitment helped to increase participation and prevent attrition from the study. All study participants signed informed consent forms before entering the study and the study protocol was approved by Institutional Review Boards of the principal investigators' institutions.

Most *leader* participants were white (84.3%), male (80.9%), married (82.6%), and were on average 40.8 years old ($SD = 7.30$). Leaders had approximately two children on average ($SD = 1.4$) and the majority had completed a college degree (41.6%). Leaders had an average tenure of 5.39 years ($SD = 5.80$), worked approximately 44.83 hours per week on average ($SD = 5.31$), worked a regular daytime shift (89.3%), and had approximately six direct reports on average ($SD = 6.18$). Most *employee* participants were white (81.9%), male (74%), married (65.6%), and were on average 35.8 years old ($SD = 8.86$). Employees had approximately two children on average ($SD = 1.4$), and the

majority of employees only completed some college/technical school with no degree (43.5%). Employees had an average tenure of 4.36 years ($SD = 5.56$), worked an average of 42.37 hours per week ($SD = 5.0$), and worked a regular daytime shift (81.2%).

Measures

Leader sleep quantity

Leaders were asked to assess the duration of their sleep during the last month at Time 1. Leaders were told that their answers should indicate the most accurate reply for the majority of days and nights in the past month to reflect their average sleep duration. Sleep duration was measured using two items from the Pittsburg Sleep Quality Index (PSQI; Buysse et al., 1989). The items included, “During the past month, when have you usually gone to bed at night?” and “During the past month, when have you usually gotten up in the morning?” Leaders answered each item by indicating the hour (01-12), minute (00-59), and AM/PM for when they went to sleep and woke up. These items were used to compute leader sleep duration (i.e., a difference score between when the leader reported they went to bed and when they woke up).

Leader sleep quality

Leaders were asked the extent to which they experienced poor sleep quality in the past week at Time 1. The sleep quality construct was measured using eight total items from the PROMIS Sleep Disturbance scale (Cella et al., 2010; PROMIS, 2016; Yu et al., 2012), which was separated into two measures based on confirmatory factor analysis results. Four items reflect the sleep dissatisfaction dimension. An example item is, “I was satisfied with my sleep”. These items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 =

very much) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$) with the exception of one item that was rated on a 5-point scale with differing anchors (1 = *very poor*, 5 = *very good*). The next four items represent the insomnia symptoms dimension. An example item is, "I had trouble staying asleep". Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$). As is recommended practice with these measures, scale scores for both dimensions of sleep quality were calculated following the HealthMeasures (2021) scoring system and a t-score transformation metric. This t-score transformation is necessary to have an understandable, comparable metric to better view distributions and percentiles from this sample across what we know from prior research to be the norm (i.e., average) of sleep quality in the U.S. Additionally, this is considered the most accurate option because the scores are IRT-derived (using response pattern scoring). This option also handles missing data and is the recommended option for using subsets of items. Overall, higher scores reflect greater dissatisfaction with sleep for one dimension, and more insomnia symptoms for the other dimension.

Employee-rated general supervisor support

Employees rated the extent to which they agreed with each statement with three items on a 5-point scale at Time 3 (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$). An example item is, "My supervisor can be relied upon when things get tough on my job" (Yoon & Lim, 1999). Scale scores were created for employee-rated general supervisor support using mean imputation if at least 75% of the items were answered per scale.

Leader- and employee-rated family-supportive supervisor behaviors

Leaders rated the extent to which they agreed that they exhibited FSSB at Time 3. The short form 4-item FSSB measure (Hammer et al., 2013) was utilized for the present study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$). Leaders were asked to respond to four items on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). An example item is, "I make my subordinates feel comfortable talking to me about their conflicts between work and non-work". Employees who were linked to each leader were also asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that their direct leader exhibited FSSB at Time 3 using the same scale. Employees responded to four items, also rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$). An example item is, "Your supervisor makes you feel comfortable talking to him/her about your conflicts between work and non-work". Scale scores were created for leader and employee ratings of FSSB using mean imputation if at least 75% of the items were answered per scale.

Leader- and employee-rated sleep leadership

Leaders rated the extent to which they agree that they exhibited sleep leadership with eight items on a 5-point scale (Gunia et al., 2015) at Time 3 (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$). An example item is, "I encourage my subordinates to get adequate sleep".

Employees who are linked to each leader were also asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that their direct leader exhibited sleep leadership behaviors at Time 3. Employees responded to eight items on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$). An example item is, "My supervisor encourages subordinates to get adequate sleep (Gunia et al., 2015). Scale scores were created for leader and employee

ratings of sleep leadership using mean imputation if at least 75% of the items were answered per scale.

Control variables

A set of control variables for inclusion were selected according to theory and past research, following Bernerth and Aguinis' (2016) discussion of the use of statistical control variables. Specifically, this study moved away from the purification principle (Spector & Brannick, 2011), as recent research suggests that control variables may be causing harm to analyses by changing the meaning of the relationship, reducing degrees of freedom, lowering power, and diminishing explained variance (Bernerth et al., 2018). Moreover, some researchers even suggest that overinclusion of control variables may produce erroneous inferences and irreplicable results, creating barriers to scientific progress (Becker et al., 2016). Thus, selected control variables should be both empirically and theoretically related to variables of interest to control for alternative explanations and spuriousness of relationships in the model. In line with recommendations by past researchers, the following section outlines conceptually relevant control variables that are included in analyses (Aguinis et al., 2019; Aguinis & Vandenberg, 2014; Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016; Bernerth et al., 2018). Additionally, all analyses were performed both with and without control variables and standard descriptive statistics were reported for all control variables, including correlations and significance levels (See Table 1) (Aguinis & Vandenberg, 2014; Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016; Bernerth et al., 2018). There were no substantive differences in results, so all results are reported with the inclusion of controls,

however we still describe the theoretical rationale for inclusion of control variables below.

Additionally, due to this study's predominant focus on workplace leaders, we followed recent recommendations from leadership researchers regarding the inclusion of demographic control variables. A systematic review conducted by Bernerth and colleagues (2018) indicated that there is an unconvincing effect size between leadership-relevant constructs and commonly used control variables such as age, gender, tenure, or education. Specifically, Bernerth and colleagues (2018) suggest the inclusion of such demographic controls is not grounded in theory and is solely based on outdated misconceptions surrounding control variables, resulting in significant detriments to analyses. Thus, this study did not include proxy demographic control variables such as leader age, gender, tenure, or education (Bernerth et al., 2018).

Work-related controls. Empirical research has demonstrated that certain characteristics of jobs can impact sleep. For example, shift work (e.g., Åkerstedt, 2003; Van Dongen et al., 2006) has been shown to lead to poor sleep. In addition, it is possible that leaders or employees who work shifts that deviate from the typical daytime shift may have less interaction with each other, thereby creating spuriousness within results as hypotheses depend on interaction between leaders and employees. Thus, as shift work may impact both leader sleep as well as leader and employee ratings of positive support behaviors, work schedule was included as a control variable in analyses. In the context of the present sample, Whealin and colleagues (2015) suggest that the Army branch of the National Guard experiences poorer health outcomes compared to the Air branch, such as

higher levels of post-traumatic stress syndrome, more serious physical and mental health detriments, as well as sleep deficiencies due to increased strain. As such, branch of service (i.e., Army, Air) was included as a control variable. Finally, the larger study was a randomized-controlled trial intervention. However, for the present study, the intervention is not a variable of interest, and thus, the intervention indicator (0 = usual practice, 1 = intervention) was included as a control variable.

Family-related controls. Empirical studies suggest that individuals who have children at home or engage in eldercare report shorter sleep duration in comparison to those who are childfree or do not have eldercare responsibilities (e.g., Burch, 2019; Burgard & Ailshire, 2012; Dugan et al., 2020; Hagen et al., 2013; Hoyt et al., 2021; Khubchandani & Price, 2020; Tienoven et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is also possible that leaders who have children or eldercare demands may be more empathetic to employee nonwork demands and thus, may demonstrate more nonwork support (e.g., FSSB, sleep leadership). Given that number of children at home and eldercare may influence both leader sleep and subsequent support behaviors, number of children and eldercare were included as control variables.

Results

For the main analyses, we examined a series of multilevel moderation models exploring the association between Time 1 leader sleep duration on Time 3 leader behavior outcomes (i.e., leader-reports of general supervisor support, leader and employee-reports of FSSB, and leader and employee-reports of sleep leadership), with Time 1 leader sleep quality (i.e., sleep dissatisfaction, insomnia symptoms) being

evaluated as a moderator of the relationship between leader sleep duration and support behaviors. Due to the nested structure of the data in which participating employees worked within work groups under the supervision of leaders, intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) were computed to determine the degree of dependency within work groups. ICCs were computed for emotional exhaustion (ICC = .09), leader-ratings of FSSB (ICC = .27), and leader-ratings of sleep leadership (ICC = .16), suggesting there is substantial dependency in the outcomes depending on work group. ICCs were not able to be computed for general supervisor support, employee-ratings of FSSB, or sleep leadership due to convergence issues, which is likely due to a lack of dependency within the work groups. However, multilevel modeling is the more cautious approach when analyzing multilevel, nested data, and given the relatively high ICCs among key outcome leader variables, multilevel modeling was utilized.

Analyses were conducted using Mplus Version 8 and multilevel fully-saturated path analyses were specified (Muthen & Muthen, 2018). We ran a series of five moderation models in which the predictor (i.e., sleep duration), both moderators (i.e., sleep dissatisfaction and insomnia symptoms), only one outcome (i.e., general supervisor support, leader-ratings of FSSB, employee-ratings of FSSB, leader-ratings of sleep leadership, employee-ratings of sleep leadership), and all control variables were included in the model¹.

¹ The full model was also tested with all outcomes and control variables included. All results were retained except for the significant moderation found on leader ratings of sleep leadership.

Following analyses, tumble graphs (Bodner, 2016) were constructed in place of traditional graphs for significant interactions. Given the high correlation between the predictor and the moderator, as well as the dependence of the conditional variance of the predictor on the moderator variable value, we elected to use tumble graphs for our significant moderations to avoid interpreting endpoints that have little to no supporting data. This is due to the fact that traditional interaction graphs use arbitrary points (such as +1 and -1 SD above and below the mean) which results in the interaction being plotted in sparse data regions. Rather, the use of tumble graphs avoids inaccurate interpretations of the interaction by ensuring that the selected data values reside in more populated data regions, making the interaction more representative and interpretable.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics revealed that average employee ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 0.48$) and leader ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.78$) ratings of sleep leadership were much lower compared to the means of the other two types of support, namely leader and employee ratings of FSSB ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.90$; $M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.49$, respectively) and employee ratings of general supervisor support ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.80$). Among the three sleep variables, sleep duration was significantly correlated with insomnia symptoms ($r = 0.12$, $p < .05$), but not sleep dissatisfaction. Sleep dissatisfaction, however, was significantly correlated with insomnia symptoms ($r = 0.53$, $p < .01$), but not sleep duration. In relation to the outcome variables, employee ratings of sleep leadership and general supervisor support were significantly correlated with employee ratings of FSSB ($r = 0.52$, $p < .01$ and $r = 0.73$, $p < .01$, respectively). General supervisor support was also significantly correlated with

employee ratings of sleep leadership ($r = 0.39, p < .01$). In addition, leader ratings of sleep leadership were significantly correlated with leader ratings of FSSB ($r = 0.22, p < .01$). Interestingly, sleep duration was not significantly correlated with any of the support outcomes.

Direct Effects

Hypothesis 1 proposed that Time 1 leader sleep duration would have a positive relationship with employee reports of general supervisor support at Time 3. Controlling for all other variables in the model, there was no significant association between leader sleep duration at Time 1 and employee-rated general supervisor support at Time 3 ($B = 0.62, SE = 0.05, p = 0.22, 95\% CI [-.048, .146]$). *Hypothesis 2a-b* proposed that Time 1 leader sleep duration would have a positive relationship with leader and employee reports of FSSB at Time 3. There were no significant associations found between leader sleep duration at Time 1 and leader reports of FSSB at Time 3 ($B = -0.01, SE = 0.08, p = 0.95, 95\% CI [-.13, .20]$) or employee-reports of FSSB at Time 3 ($B = 0.06, SE = 0.07, p = 0.41, 95\% CI [-.09, .19]$), controlling for all other variables in the model. Finally, *Hypothesis 3a-b* proposed that Time 1 leader sleep duration would have a positive relationship with leader and employee reports of sleep leadership at Time 3. Controlling for all other variables in the model, there was no significant association between leader sleep duration at Time 1 and leader reports of sleep leadership at Time 3 ($B = -0.05, SE = 0.11, p = 0.64, 95\% CI [-.27, .17]$) or employee reports of sleep leadership at Time 3 ($B = -0.07, SE = 0.81, p = 0.41, 95\% CI [-.02, .09]$). Therefore, *Hypotheses 1-3* were not supported (See Table 2.2).

Interactions Between Sleep Quantity and Quality

Insomnia Symptoms as a Moderator

Results revealed two significant interactions when insomnia symptoms were considered as a moderator. First, there was a significant interaction between leader sleep duration at Time 1 and leader insomnia symptoms at Time 1 on employee-ratings of FSSB at Time 3 ($B = 0.02, p < .05$), controlling for all other variables in the model, such that the relationship between leader sleep duration and employee-ratings of FSSB was significant and positive under conditions of high leader insomnia symptoms, yet significant and negative under conditions of low leader insomnia symptoms. The Figure 2 tumble graph illustrates this disordinal interaction. Additionally, results revealed that the relationship between leader sleep duration at Time 1 and employee-ratings of sleep leadership at Time 3 was significantly moderated by leader insomnia symptoms at Time 1 ($B = 0.03, p < .01$), such that the relationship between leader sleep duration and employee-ratings of sleep leadership was significant and positive under conditions of high leader insomnia symptoms, yet significant and negative under conditions of low leader insomnia symptoms. The Figure 3 tumble graph illustrates this disordinal interaction, which was in contrast to the hypothesized interaction pattern of an overall positive association between sleep duration and support outcomes, with a strengthening of that relationship when leaders also had high levels of insomnia symptoms. Leader insomnia symptoms did not significantly moderate the relationship between leader sleep duration and general supervisor support, leader ratings of FSSB, or leader ratings of sleep leadership (See Table 2.2).

Sleep Dissatisfaction as a Moderator

Alternatively, when sleep dissatisfaction was considered as a moderator, one significant interaction was found. Leader sleep leader sleep dissatisfaction at Time 1 moderated the relationship between duration at Time 1 and leader-ratings of sleep leadership at Time 3 ($B = -0.040, p < .05$), such that the relationship between leader sleep duration and leader-ratings of sleep leadership was significant and positive under conditions of low leader sleep dissatisfaction, yet significant and negative under conditions of high leader sleep dissatisfaction. The tumble graph in Figure 4 illustrates the disordinal interaction, which was in contrast to the hypothesized interaction pattern of an overall positive association between sleep duration and support outcomes, with a strengthening of that relationship when leaders also had low levels of dissatisfaction. Given that this significant finding was not fully in the expected direction, but did show evidence of an interaction between sleep quantity and quality. Leader sleep dissatisfaction did not significantly moderate the relationship between leader sleep duration and general supervisor support, leader or employee ratings of FSSB, or employee ratings of sleep leadership (See Table 2.2). In summary, results from examined interactions between sleep quantity and quality (i.e., insomnia symptoms and dissatisfaction) suggest that *Hypothesis 4* was partially supported.

Discussion

In this study, we explored the role of leader sleep duration, insomnia symptoms, and sleep dissatisfaction on downstream leader support behaviors, specifically general supervisor support, FSSB, and sleep leadership. Results are contradictory to Crain and

colleagues' (2018) WNS framework. Specifically, hypothesized direct effects were not significant, such that sleep duration was not significantly related to the various positive support behavior outcomes 9-months later. In addition, while significant interactions were found, the interaction patterns were not as anticipated and differed depending on the type of sleep quality being examined and whether leader-reported or employee-reported support outcomes were in question. Specifically, the interaction between leader sleep duration and insomnia symptoms was significantly associated with downstream employee-rated FSSB and employee-rated sleep leadership, and there was a significant interaction between leader sleep duration and leader sleep dissatisfaction which was significantly linked to downstream leader-ratings of sleep leadership. We first discuss the lack of significant direct effects and then the interaction effects, in relation to prior theory and research.

Non-significant direct effects

Surprisingly, there were no direct effects from sleep duration to the constellation of support behaviors. This is discrepant from past research and theorizations (e.g., Barnes, 2012; Barnes et al., 2015; Crain et al., 2018), which broadly conclude that sleep is likely to influence downstream behaviors at work. However, the majority of organizational sleep studies examine sleep components as additive (i.e., sleep duration and sleep quality are entered as separate predictors; Barnes, 2012; Barnes et al., 2015; Brossoit et al., 2019; Litwiller et al., 2017) rather than multiplicative (i.e., sleep duration is a predictor and sleep quality is specified as a moderator; Barber et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2015). This unexpected finding may suggest that sleep duration is, by itself, not a

strong predictor of downstream outcomes separated by longer time frames. Also of note is that leaders in our sample reported an average of 7.37 hours of sleep, thereby meeting the recommended criteria for healthy sleep duration. Therefore, there may be a ceiling effect within the sample that sways the resulting relationships between sleep duration and downstream relationships with support outcomes, such that participant scores on sleep duration were clustered toward the higher end rather than the lower end. Such clustering impedes statistical discrimination between leaders with low sleep duration and high sleep duration.

However, the lack of direct effects is further informed by the three disordinal interactions that were found on support outcomes. It is only under conditions of certain types of sleep quality that we find significant associations between sleep duration and positive support behaviors. Thus, findings lend support to the notion that sleep duration, insomnia symptoms, and sleep dissatisfaction should be considered and examined as separate multiplicative components of sleep health—in this case, such an approach illuminates the role that sleep quality plays in the sleep health and downstream behavior relationship, such that sleep quality is more influential than previously thought.

Significant indirect effects

Regarding insomnia symptoms as a moderator, we found two significant disordinal interactions that were somewhat counterintuitive and inconsistent with prior research and theory. Specifically, our results suggest that, under conditions of high insomnia symptoms, there is a positive relationship between sleep duration and employee ratings of FSSB and sleep leadership. For example, as leader sleep duration increases,

leaders also provide more FSSB and sleep leadership 9-months later, as rated by their employees, but only under conditions of high insomnia symptoms. Under the condition of low insomnia symptoms, however, the relationship between sleep duration and employee ratings of sleep leadership was negative. These disordinal interactions suggest that for leaders who have high insomnia symptoms, increases in sleep duration are associated with increases in employee perceptions of familial and sleep support. Conversely, for leaders who have low insomnia symptoms, increases in sleep duration are associated with decreases in employee perceptions of familial and sleep support. Such findings are discrepant with past theorizations and research that posit sufficient sleep health (i.e., low insomnia symptoms and high duration) is related to more positive outcomes, whereas poor sleep health (i.e., high insomnia symptoms and low duration) is related to negative outcomes (e.g., Barnes, 2012; Crain et al., 2018; Litwiller et al., 2017; Williamson et al., 2019). Overall, results may suggest that leaders who are suffering from higher rates of insomnia symptoms may be more sympathetic towards employees with familial demands or sleep-related barriers and therefore may be more likely to demonstrate these support behaviors at work, regardless of their sleep health.

Potential explanations for unexpected findings

Mechanisms that explain this relationship may include emotion regulation or emotion identification. Research has suggested that sleep is a large factor in effective emotion regulation (e.g., Palmer & Alfano, 2017). For example, for leaders who get enough sleep and have lower insomnia symptoms, they may perhaps be less attuned or empathetic to others' stress and emotions because of their ability to effectively regulate

their own emotions, making others' emotions less salient and disruptive for the leader with healthy sleep (e.g., Barsade et al., 2018). On the other hand, research has shown that sleep health can influence our interpretation of social cues, which is incredibly important given that social cues, if interpreted correctly, influence the behavior of others.

Specifically, sleep influences our ability to recognize key human emotions and facial expressions (e.g., van Der Helm et al. 2010) as well as reduce our ability to understand social threat (Goldstein-Piekarski et al., 2015). For example, for leaders who typically have higher insomnia symptoms, when they get enough sleep, they may be able to correctly interpret and recognize social cues from their employees, signaling to them that the employee needs support and the leader therefore enacts the behavior.

Another potential explanation is that a supportive leader may be having long enough sleep periods (i.e., high sleep duration), but are struggling to maintain sleep throughout the night (i.e., tossing and turning, problems falling and staying asleep) because they are ruminating about work-related tasks such as supporting their employees' needs in both the familial and sleep domains, resulting in an increase in such behaviors as reported by their employees. The mechanism at play here could be anxiety. Anxiety has been linked with insomnia symptoms (e.g., Bernes et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2006) and as such, leaders who are more anxious may have higher insomnia symptoms. For example, when an anxious leader does get more sleep, it may give them the energetic resources they need to act on their worries around whether they are doing enough as a leader, so in turn, the leader supports their employees more. In other words, getting more sleep allows for the anxious leader to address the things they worry about.

A pattern that is important to note is that leader insomnia symptoms, but not leader sleep dissatisfaction, were found to be the key moderator in the relationship between leader sleep duration and employee-ratings of FSSB and sleep leadership. In fact, sleep dissatisfaction was only found to be a significant moderator of the relationship between leader sleep duration and leader ratings of sleep leadership, separate from employee perceptions. Our results suggest that, for leaders who have high sleep dissatisfaction, increases in sleep duration are associated with decreases in leader perceptions of their own sleep leadership, which is in contrast to the pattern seen with high insomnia symptoms. On the other hand, for leaders who have low sleep dissatisfaction (i.e., leaders were more satisfied with their sleep), increases in sleep duration are associated with increases in leader perceptions of their own sleep leadership. These findings may shed light on why leaders may choose to enact sleep leadership. It may be the case that leaders who have experience with sleep dissatisfaction may be more aware of the pervasiveness of sleep health to work and therefore be more likely to provide such support to their employees.

In addition, this is a new contribution to the organizational sleep literature and provides evidence for Buysse's (2014) definition of sleep health in which different dimensions are explicated. Historically, organizational research examining sleep has broadly looked at sleep quantity and quality as core dimensions (Barnes, 2012). In contrast, Buysse (2014) suggests that sleep health is multidimensional in nature and more nuanced, meaning that there are different components that make up "good" sleep. Specifically, sleep health consists of key dimensions including sleep duration (i.e., total

amount of sleep obtained in each 24-hour period), sleep satisfaction (i.e., one's subjective evaluation of whether they obtained "good" or "bad" sleep), sleep efficiency (i.e., how easy it is to fall and stay asleep), and sleep timing (i.e., placement of sleep within a 24-hour period) (Buysse, 2014). Mapping onto Buysse's (2014) multidimensional definition of sleep health, we examine sleep duration as the core dimension reflecting sleep quantity, and sleep satisfaction and insomnia symptoms (equivalent to sleep efficiency) as dimensions of the broader construct of sleep quality. Specifically, sleep dissatisfaction and insomnia symptoms had differential effects on downstream behavior based on who the rater was. Such results may suggest that the effects of insomnia symptoms may not be as salient to leaders compared to their own subjective dissatisfaction with their sleep, as they are aware of their poor sleep health, which then plays a role in the downstream sleep leadership they provide. Leader sleep dissatisfaction may not moderate the relationship between leader sleep duration and leader-ratings of FSSB because a leader who has personal experience with poor sleep quality may be more understanding and empathetic of the pervasiveness of sleep health to everyday functioning, and thus may be more supportive of their employees attaining adequate sleep health. Thus, this finding lends support to the sleep literature by highlighting how sleep dissatisfaction, as opposed to insomnia symptoms, plays a role in the leader's perception of their own downstream behavior.

Novel insights in the sleep and behavior relationship

Results also reveal that the interaction between leader sleep duration and leader insomnia symptoms are significantly linked to employee-ratings of both FSSB and sleep

leadership, but not employee-ratings of general supervisor support. Such findings suggest that sleep health may not be as strongly associated with a leader's ability to provide general support compared to FSSB and sleep leadership. One mechanism proposed in the WNS framework (Crain et al., 2018), namely energetic activation, holds an explanation for this finding. Specifically, energetic activation has been linked to affective constructs such as emotions, moods, or dispositions (Crain et al., 2018; Quinn et al., 2012).

Laboratory experiments have also suggested that sleep restriction can impact one's ability to appropriately interpret and respond to another's emotions (e.g., Amicucci et al., 2021; Tempesta et al., 2020; Van der Helm et al., 2010). Support behaviors such as FSSB and sleep leadership rely on the leader appraising that they have enough energy to display care and concern for the employee's nonwork life, which is inherently emotional and expected to be tied to one's energetic activation (Quinn et al., 2012). Thus, the present finding may indicate that FSSB and sleep leadership may require substantially more emotional and interpersonal skills than general supervisor support, which may be more automatic and less likely to require deep emotional resources. Indeed, past leadership research has suggested that resource depletion hinders behaviors that require more effortful processing but does not hinder behaviors that are automatically processed (DeWall et al. 2008; Schmeichel et al. 2003). Thus, findings suggest that general supervisor support behaviors may feel overall less taxing and be more automatic for leaders to enact compared to FSSB and sleep leadership.

It is worth noting that the use of tumble graphs allows us to make some new inferences that have previously not been represented in prior literature. Specifically,

because we mapped our interaction graph according to where data were actually present and not just where data might be projected to be based on regression lines plotted at +1 and -1 SD of the moderator, as is traditionally done, we are able to see that leaders who had lower insomnia symptoms were generally sleeping less than those who had higher insomnia symptoms. When viewing the tumble graphs, the line representing higher levels of insomnia symptoms are consistently shifted to the right on the x-axis (i.e., sleep duration), whereas the line indicating low levels of the moderators are consistently shifted to the left of the x-axis (See Figures 2.2 and 2.3). By teasing apart the different dimensions of sleep quality and understanding their separate interactive effects with sleep duration, we find that leaders who are sleeping longer are also more likely to report struggling more with insomnia symptoms. Thus, in contrast to prior literature and federal recommendations (e.g., Hirshkowitz et al., 2015), sufficient sleep duration is not likely to be the sole indicator of the presence of sleep health. In other words, we must also consider the different components of sleep quality when conceptualizing and promoting sleep health.

It is important to examine the potential interaction between sleep duration and insomnia symptoms and sleep dissatisfaction as it may demonstrate their combined relationship to downstream leader behaviors, which can lend information to scientists and practitioners about how to consider sleep quantity and quality in tandem in workplace interventions. On a broader scale, gathering empirical evidence regarding the sleep quality and sleep quantity interaction could provide a new approach for public health campaigns as most campaigns currently emphasize getting at least 7 hours of sleep per

night (i.e., sleep duration) to maintain adequate functioning. Examples include sleepeducation.org which provides a bedtime calculator and a “7 and up” campaign related to sleep duration as well as suggestions for making time to sleep as part of the National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project (American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 2021). Moreover, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services launched the “HealthyPeople2030” campaign that almost exclusively focuses on improving sleep duration (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). However, if enough empirical studies suggest sleep quality may play a bigger role than previously thought, these campaigns could place more emphasis on promoting health information related to types of sleep quality.

Insights from descriptive statistics

Aside from the hypothesized relationships, and although not a primary question of the present study, it is interesting to examine both leader and employee descriptive statistics of support outcomes (see Table 1). Here we obtain a unique understanding of how leaders rate themselves on their support behaviors compared to their direct employees, as it seems as though on average, leaders and employees in this sample agree about the amount of general, familial, and sleep support that the leader provides in the workplace. This is inconsistent with what has been previously demonstrated in the support literature (e.g., Marescaux et al., 2020). Our means and standard deviations call attention to the fact that sleep leadership was being demonstrated much less by the leader in the workplace compared to FSSB or general supervisor support, which is agreed upon by both the leader and the employee. This could be due to sleep leadership potentially

crossing uncomfortable boundaries or less opportunities for sleep leadership to arise naturally in the workplace setting. Overall, comparing both leader and employee reports of support behaviors provided unique preliminary insights into the leader-employee dyad and different forms of support.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations associated with the present study. First, in accordance with previous recommendations for studies on sleep and workplace outcomes across time points (e.g., Crain et al., 2018), this study included 9-month time lags to understand how the relationship between sleep and downstream leader behaviors unfold over time. Although the multi-time point nature of these data are a strength of this study, future research should examine if shorter time lags (e.g., 3-months) or daily fluctuations in sleep duration and insomnia symptoms or sleep dissatisfaction have a stronger influence on workplace behavior the next day. In other words, the 9-month time lag may have been too long to assess short-term changes in energy that may lead to more volatile changes in behavior at work. For example, Barnes and colleagues (2015) found that nightly sleep influences next day leader behaviors, such that after a night of poor sleep, leaders were more likely to be abusive. Indeed, laboratory sleep studies have suggested both proximal and distal outcomes of sleep (e.g., Bei et al., 2017; Medic et al., 2017). Thus, future studies should examine these relationships within a more proximal framework and study design. For example, shorter time lagged studies may reveal that on days where the supervisor reported less sleep and worsened insomnia symptoms or

dissatisfaction, they also reported more decreased positive behaviors at work the following day.

Second, this study was conducted with a sample of leaders who received the recommended average sleep duration of about 7 hours per night. Future research should replicate this study across different occupations that may be susceptible to more extreme sleep loss. For example, populations that would be particularly interesting are those that have atypical schedules (e.g., shiftwork, night work) such as nursing, the restaurant industry, hotels, or even occupations in which employees often travel such as construction, professional athletes, or flight attendants. Additionally, given the global pandemic, it would be especially interesting to examine the role of sleep in downstream leader support behaviors in jobs that have become “front-line” such as first responders, personal care aids, grocery store employees, or fast-food workers, as well as jobs that have moved to a more remote nature.

The measures used for this study also present limitations. First, the instructions for the sleep duration, insomnia symptoms, and dissatisfaction scales varied such that participants were asked to report their average sleep duration over the past month whereas participants were asked to report their insomnia symptoms and dissatisfaction over the past week. This shorter time frame was intentionally chosen for sleep quality as participants could more accurately report on their experiences of sleep quality when thinking about the last seven days in comparison to the last month. Future studies should consider aligning the time frames given to participants for subjective reports of sleep duration and sleep quality.

Finally, there were approximately 175 leaders in the final sample after attrition from Time 1 and Time 2, as well as after the statistical matching of leaders to employees and cleaning of the data. Although we were at the relative threshold with our given sample size based on previous recommendations for the type of analyses we conducted (Kline, 2011), future studies should attempt to recruit a larger sample of matched leaders and employees to replicate the results of the present study as well as engage in more advanced statistical analyses that require a larger amount of power such as structural equation modeling or latent profile analysis.

Future Directions

Given that this study serves as a steppingstone for uncovering various antecedents to leader support behaviors, there are many exciting future directions that researchers can explore going forward. First, future research should utilize the full measure of FSSB (Hammer et al., 2009) to explore how sleep dimensions may differentially be associated with the four components of FSSB: emotional support, instrumental support, role-modeling, and creative work-family management. Taking this direction could lend insight into future interventions aimed at promoting FSSB in the workplace by understanding if and how certain dimensions of FSSB are more or less affected by leader sleep.

In addition, future research should expand on this study by testing how relationships between sleep, energetic resources, and leader behaviors may change when examined holistically. In particular, the WNS model (Crain et al., 2018) emphasizes the mediational role of energetic activation and physical energy as the mechanism between sleep and behavior outcomes. Future studies should consider including these mechanisms

as measured variables when assessing sleep and downstream behaviors. For example, researchers interested in testing physical energy as a mediating mechanism should consider utilizing wearable accelerometer devices to measure activity levels, heart rate, and a calculation of oxygen consumption (Butte et al., 2012; Hills et al., 2014).

Also, the WNS model suggests that sleep both precedes and follows work and nonwork domain attitudes, behaviors, and states. Although the present study examines upstream sleep, it would be a particularly interesting avenue for future research to also consider how these hypothesized relationships and work behavior outcomes could impact downstream sleep. For example, leaders who feel like they are failing to provide adequate support to their employees may experience large detriments to their sleep due to rumination and guilt. On the other hand, leaders who provide a lot of nonwork support to their employees may feel depleted and therefore, may experience burnout and possible sleep health consequences downstream. This study also places emphasis on work domain behaviors; however, it is equally important to produce research that gives us an understanding into how leader sleep may also impact leader's work attitudes and states as well as nonwork behaviors, attitudes, and states. For example, leader sleep may be linked to perceptions of self-efficacy in their job or even improvements of creativity, and these may subsequently be associated with downstream performance in the form of support behaviors.

Finally, given the research on leaders' sacrificing of sleep for work (Ruderman et al., 2017) as well as the lack of research on leader health as it relates to their behavior at work, it is critically important to assess how to support leader's health and well-being.

Leaders are the core of organizations and the success of employees as well as the organization overall rely on the success of the leader. Thus, future research should seek to understand how leaders' health and well-being may be especially at risk given their unique job tasks, as it may be over and above what non-leader employees experience due to the implicit association of work hours and success among workplace leaders (Svetieva et al., 2017).

Practical Implications

Overall, this work has implications for practitioners, organizations, and public health campaigns. Broadly, this study can inform public health campaigns by shifting the predominant rhetoric that is communicated to the general public. Components of leader sleep quality were found to significantly strengthen the relationship between leader sleep duration and downstream employee perceptions of the leader's FSSB and sleep leadership and leader perceptions of sleep leadership. This underscores the importance of sleep quality in downstream support behaviors in the work domain. Thus, public health campaigns could shift the rhetoric away from only increasing sleep duration, and place equal emphasis on improving sleep quality. For example, instead of only promoting a bedtime calculator aimed at improving sleep duration, the "7 and up" campaign (American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 2021) could also incorporate information or tools related to sleep hygiene (i.e., sleep habits related to sleep quality such as maintaining a consistent sleep schedule or avoiding alcohol or caffeine before bed; Mastin et al., 2006) to help people improve their sleep quality, prevent insomnia symptoms, and reduce sleep dissatisfaction. Additionally, public health campaigns could

begin supporting education initiatives about the importance of understanding both sleep duration and sleep quality and how they are different.

In addition, results revealed that for the leader who experiences high insomnia symptoms, when they get enough sleep, their employees are likely to perceive the leader as providing more FSSB or sleep leadership. Some explanations previously discussed may include emotion regulation social cue identification, which rely on the leader to correct identify and interpret others micro-emotions. Accordingly, organizations and practitioners should encourage or train employees to be more explicit when asking their leader for familial and sleep related support. Such behaviors may remove the need for leaders to be acutely attuned to the small changes in emotions or ambiguous social cues. In addition, organizations promote procedures and policies that are sleep-friendly for leaders so that, even though leaders may experience more insomnia symptoms, if they get enough sleep, they may be more supportive of their employees nonwork demands. To do so, organizations could directly address or dismantle harmful cultures that signal to leaders that working more and sacrificing sleep will result in more success. Another suggestion is for organizations to offer a cut off time for work outside of regular work hours that leaders can follow if they want without feeling guilt or like they are losing progress. For example, having an explicit organizational-wide policy that workers are not expected to be on email past 5 p.m. may allow for improved segmentation between the work and nonwork domain, leaving more time and space for leaders avoid work-related rumination (e.g., Melo et al., 2021; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015) and prioritize their sleep health.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the interactive relationship between leader sleep quality and sleep quantity on a constellation of downstream leader- and employee-rated support behaviors (i.e., general supervisor support, FSSB, and sleep leadership). Results suggested that the relationship between leader sleep and downstream support behaviors is more complex and nuanced than previously thought. From these findings, researchers, practitioners, workplace leaders, and organizations should prioritize initiatives that promote holistic sleep health among leaders. Public health campaigns should also educate and advocate for the importance of sleep quality in addition to sleep duration.

Table 2.1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

| Variable | N | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Sleep Duration (T1) | 175 | 7.37 | 0.99 | | | | | | |
| 2. Insomnia Symptoms (T1) | 175 | 52.47 | 7.14 | .12* | .82 | | | | |
| 3. Sleep Dissatisfaction (T1) | 175 | 52.31 | 7.07 | .01 | .53** | .87 | | | |
| 6. FSSB at T3 (ER) | 294 | 4.11 | 0.90 | .05 | -.05 | -.01 | .95 | | |
| 7. Sleep Leadership at T3 (ER) | 293 | 2.51 | 0.48 | -.02 | -.04 | -.03 | .52** | .94 | |
| 8. General Supervisor Support at T3 | 290 | 4.23 | 0.84 | .05 | -.08 | -.04 | .73** | .39** | .78 |
| 9. FSSB at T3 (LR) | 128 | 4.10 | 0.49 | -.10 | -.12* | -.01 | .02 | -.01 | .03 |
| 10. Sleep Leadership at T3 (LR) | 128 | 2.70 | 0.78 | -.08 | -.14* | -.05 | -.03 | -.03 | -.04 |
| 11. Branch of Service at T1(E) | 393 | 0.53 | 0.50 | -.21** | -.14** | -.11* | .06 | -.02 | .04 |
| 12. Condition at T1 (E) | 393 | 0.57 | 0.50 | -.07 | .52 | -.01 | -.02 | .03 | .03 |
| 13. Number of children at T1 (E) | 389 | 1.20 | 1.21 | -.01 | -.01 | .01 | -.12 | -.02 | -.14* |
| 14. Eldercare at T1 (E) | 393 | 0.05 | 0.22 | .10* | .10* | .03 | .05 | -.05 | -.01 |
| 15. Shiftwork at T1 (E) | 393 | 0.81 | 0.39 | .09 | .92 | .07 | -.06 | -.05 | .03 |
| 16. Branch of Service at T1 (L) | 178 | 0.56 | 0.50 | -.14** | -.14** | -.11* | .06 | -.02 | .04 |
| 17. Condition at T1 (L) | 178 | 0.48 | 0.50 | .03 | .03 | -.02 | -.03 | .02 | .02 |
| 18. Number of children at T1 (L) | 174 | 1.71 | 1.40 | -.03 | -.03 | -.06 | -.05 | .00 | -.03 |
| 19. Eldercare at T1 (L) | 178 | 0.05 | 0.22 | .01 | .06 | .12* | .02 | .01 | -.04 |
| 20. Shiftwork at T1 (L) | 178 | 0.89 | 0.21 | .06 | .00 | .16** | -.02 | -.04 | -.04 |

Note. E = Employee, L = Leader, ER = Employee Rating, LR = Leader Rating, T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2, T3 = Time 3. Sleep Duration variable is in hours. Insomnia Symptoms and Sleep Dissatisfaction have t-score transformations. Branch of service (0 = Army, 1 = Air). Condition (0 = Control, 1 = Treatment). Number of children living at home (0-11). Eldercare (1 = Yes, 0 = No). Work schedule (0 = Other, 1 = Regular Daytime). Values reported on the diagonals are alphas. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 2.1 Continued
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

| Variable | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|------------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|------|------|--------|-------|-------|------|------|----|
| 1. Sleep Duration (T1) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Insomnia Symptoms (T1) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Sleep Dissatisfaction (T1) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. FSSB at T3 (LR) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Sleep Leadership at T3 (ER) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. General Supervisor Support (T3) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. FSSB at T3 (LR) | .89 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. Sleep Leadership at T3 (LR) | .22** | .88 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9. Branch of Service at T1 (E) | .21** | -.09 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10. Condition at T1 (E) | .12* | -.06 | .16** | | | | | | | | | |
| 11. Number of children at T1 (E) | -.06 | -.02 | .00 | .01 | | | | | | | | |
| 12. Eldercare at T1 (E) | .06 | .01 | -.03 | -.02 | -.05 | | | | | | | |
| 13. Shiftwork at T1 (E) | -.16** | -.06 | -.30** | -.05 | .05 | .02 | | | | | | |
| 14. Branch of Service at T1 (L) | .21** | -.09 | .10** | .16** | .00 | -.03 | -.28** | | | | | |
| 15. Condition at T1 (L) | .10 | -.07 | .18** | .97** | .01 | -.03 | -.05 | .18** | | | | |
| 16. Number of children at T1 (L) | -.17** | -.11 | -.07 | .16** | -.03 | .05 | .05 | -.07 | .15** | | | |
| 17. Eldercare at T1 (L) | .01 | .02 | -.05 | -.02 | .11* | .06 | .05 | -.05 | -.03 | -.02 | | |
| 18. Shiftwork at T1 (L) | .04 | -.12* | -.07 | .01 | .08 | -.05 | .30** | -.07 | .02 | -.04 | -.01 | |

Note. E = Employee, L = Leader, ER = Employee Rating, LR = Leader Rating. T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2, T3 = Time 3. Sleep Duration variable is in hours. Insomnia Symptoms and Sleep Dissatisfaction have t-score transformations Branch of service (0 = Army, 1 = Air). Condition (0 = Control, 1 = Treatment). Number of children living at home (0-11). Eldercare (1 = Yes, 0 = No). Work schedule (0 = Other, 1 = Regular Daytime). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 2.2

Main Analyses

| Predictor | Outcomes | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| | GSS(E) | FSSB(L) | FSSB(E) | Sleep Leadership (L) | Sleep Leadership (E) | |
| | <i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>) | <i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>) | <i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>) | <i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>) | <i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>) | |
| Sleep Duration | 0.06 (0.05) | -0.01 (0.08) | 0.06 (0.07) | -0.05 (0.11) | -0.06 (0.08) | |
| Sleep Dissatisfaction | 0.00 (0.01) | 0.01 (0.01) | 0.01 (0.01) | 0.02 (0.02) | -0.04 (0.07) | |
| Insomnia Symptoms | -0.01 (0.01) | -0.01 (0.02) | -0.01 (0.01) | -0.02 (0.02) | 0.04 (0.05) | |
| Duration x Dissatisfaction | -0.01 (0.01) | -0.01(0.01) | -0.01 (0.01) | -0.04 (0.02)* | 0.01 (0.01) | |
| Duration x Insomnia | 0.01 (0.01) | 0.01 (0.01) | 0.02 (0.01)* | 0.01(0.02) | 0.03 (0.01)** | |
| Branch of Service | 0.06 (0.12) | 0.10 (0.16) | 0.12 (0.14) | -0.24 (0.21) | -0.04 (0.06) | |
| Condition | 0.09 (0.10) | 0.24 (0.13)† | -0.04 (0.12) | 0.05 (0.19) | 0.03 (0.06) | |
| Number of children | -0.11 (0.06)† | -0.07 (0.06) | -0.09 (0.06) | -0.10 (0.07) | -0.05 (0.07) | |
| Eldercare | -0.05 (0.23) | 0.10 (0.37) | 0.23 (0.26) | -0.23 (0.55) | -0.04 (0.06) | |
| Work Schedule | 0.10 (0.20) | -0.26 (0.20) | -0.14 (0.19) | -0.56 (0.45) | -0.07 (0.10) | |
| Model <i>R</i> ² | 0.06 | 0.18 | 0.07 | 0.17 | 0.09 | |

Note. *b* = Unstandardized Direct Effect. *SE* = Standard Error. E = Employee. L = Leader. FSSB = Family supportive supervisor behaviors. GSS = General Supervisor Support. Sleep Duration variable is in hours. Branch of service (0 = Army, 1 = Air). Condition (0 = Control, 1 = Treatment). Number of children living at home 3 days a week (0-11). Eldercare (1 = Yes, 0 = No). Work schedule (0 = Other, 1 = Regular Daytime Schedule). Employee control variables (i.e., Branch of service, condition, number of children, eldercare, work schedule) were used for employee-rated outcomes whereas supervisor variables were used for supervisor/self-rated outcomes. Results reported in this table are those from the supervisor models. Results did not change significantly when examining employee models. †*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001

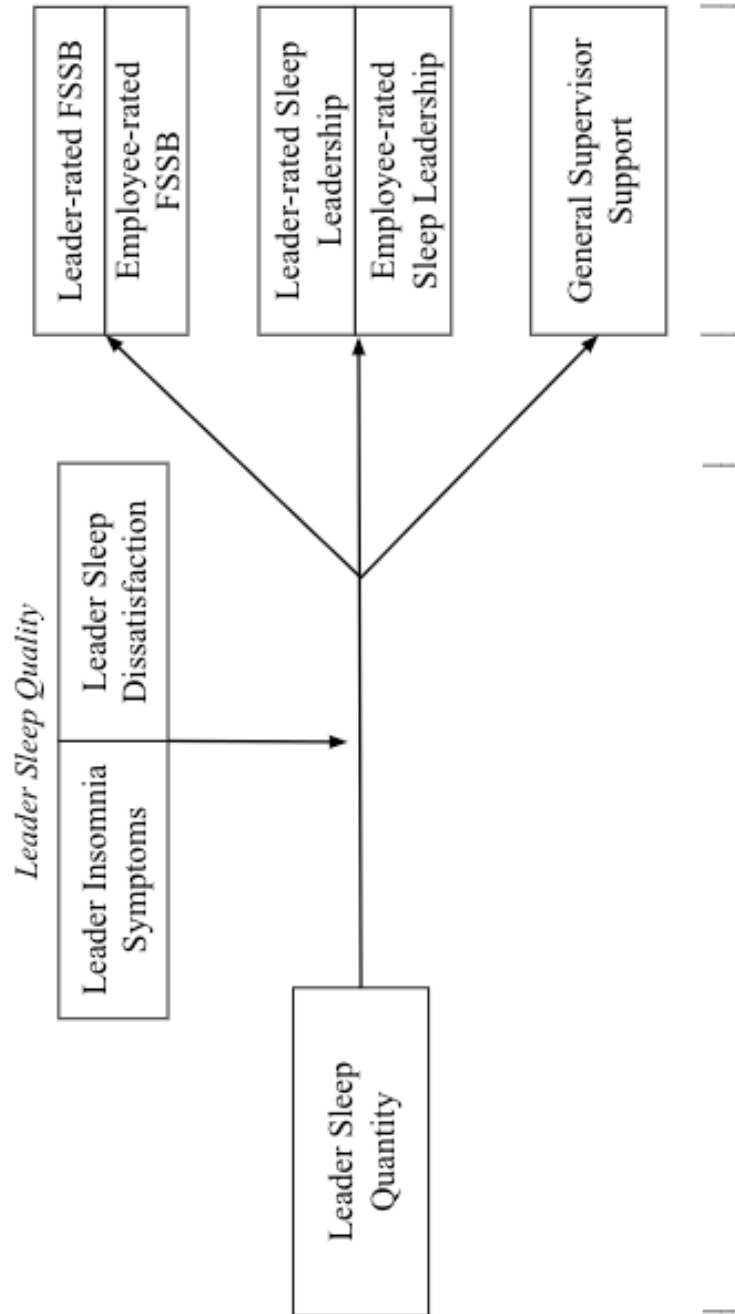


Figure 2.1. Time lagged moderated model of leader sleep duration at Time 1 (i.e., Baseline) on general supervisor support, FSSB, and sleep leadership at Time 3 (i.e., 9-month), moderated by supervisor sleep quality (i.e., insomnia symptoms and sleep dissatisfaction) at Time 1 (i.e., Baseline), on. Both leaders and their direct employees provided ratings of FSSB and sleep leadership. Control variables (i.e., work schedule, Army vs. Air, child/eldercare responsibilities) not shown for parsimony.

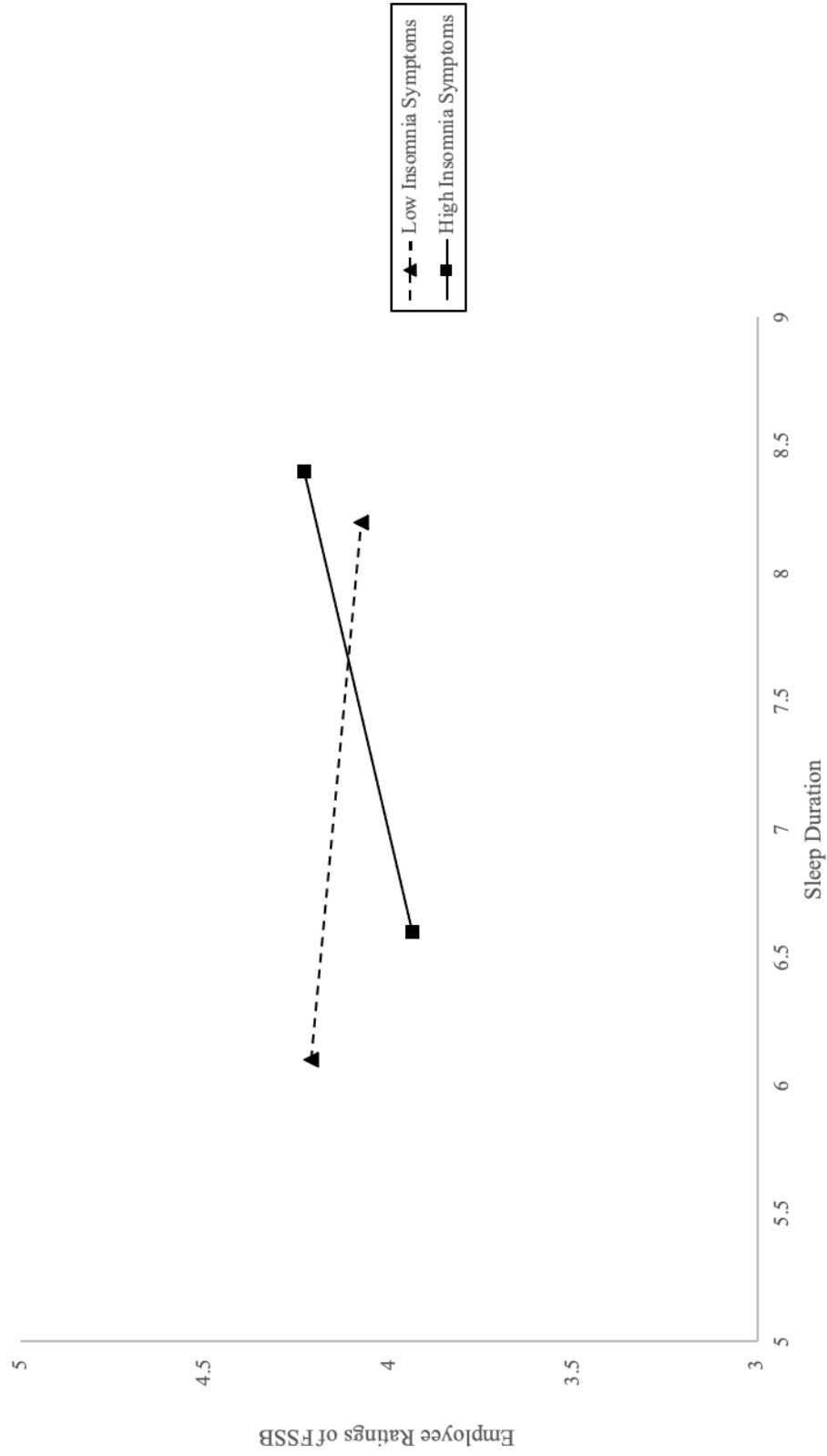


Figure 2.2. Disordinal interaction between leader sleep duration and leader insomnia symptoms on employee ratings of FSSB.

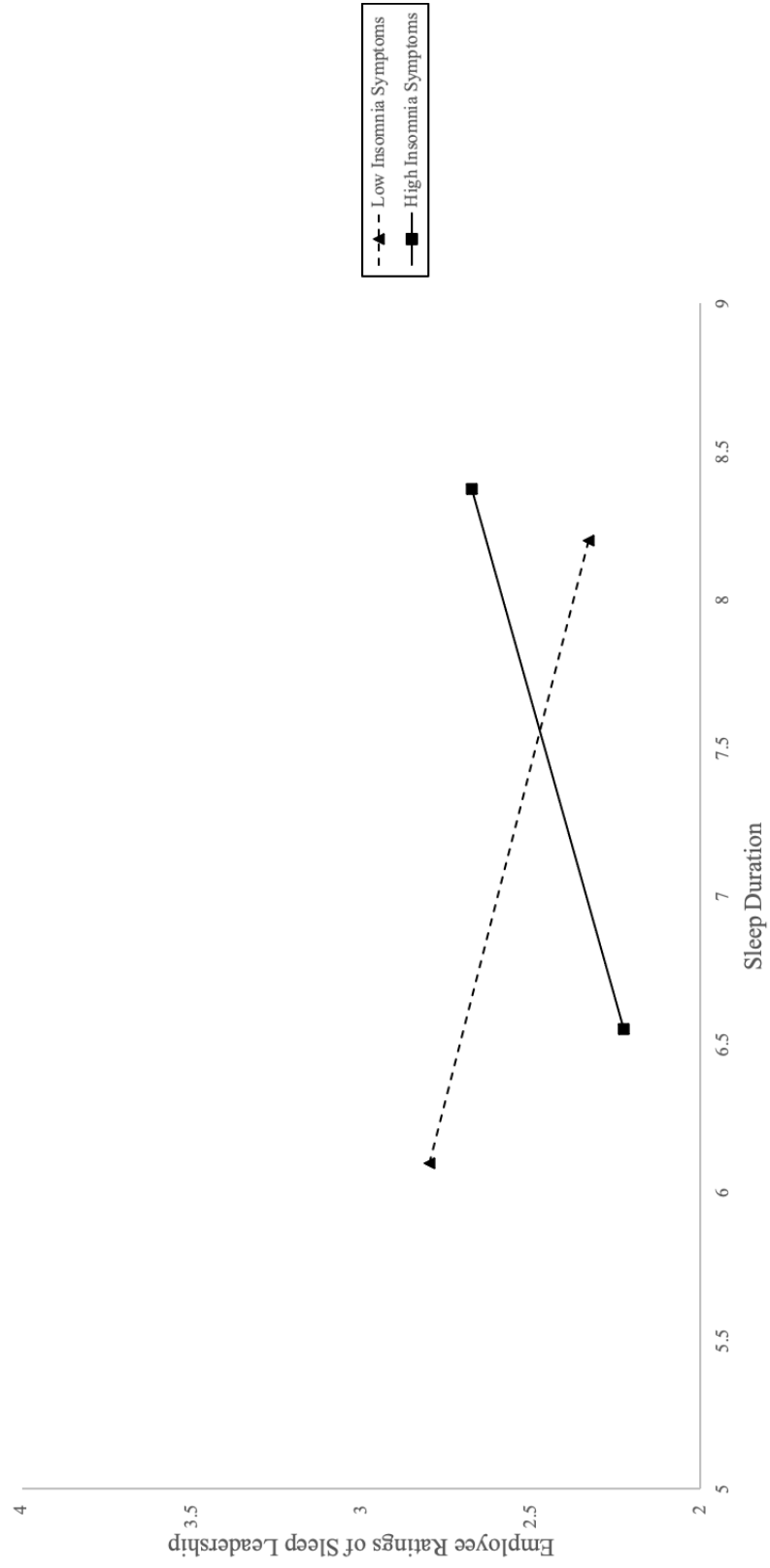


Figure 2.3. Disordinal interaction between leader sleep duration and leader insomnia symptoms on employee ratings of sleep leadership.

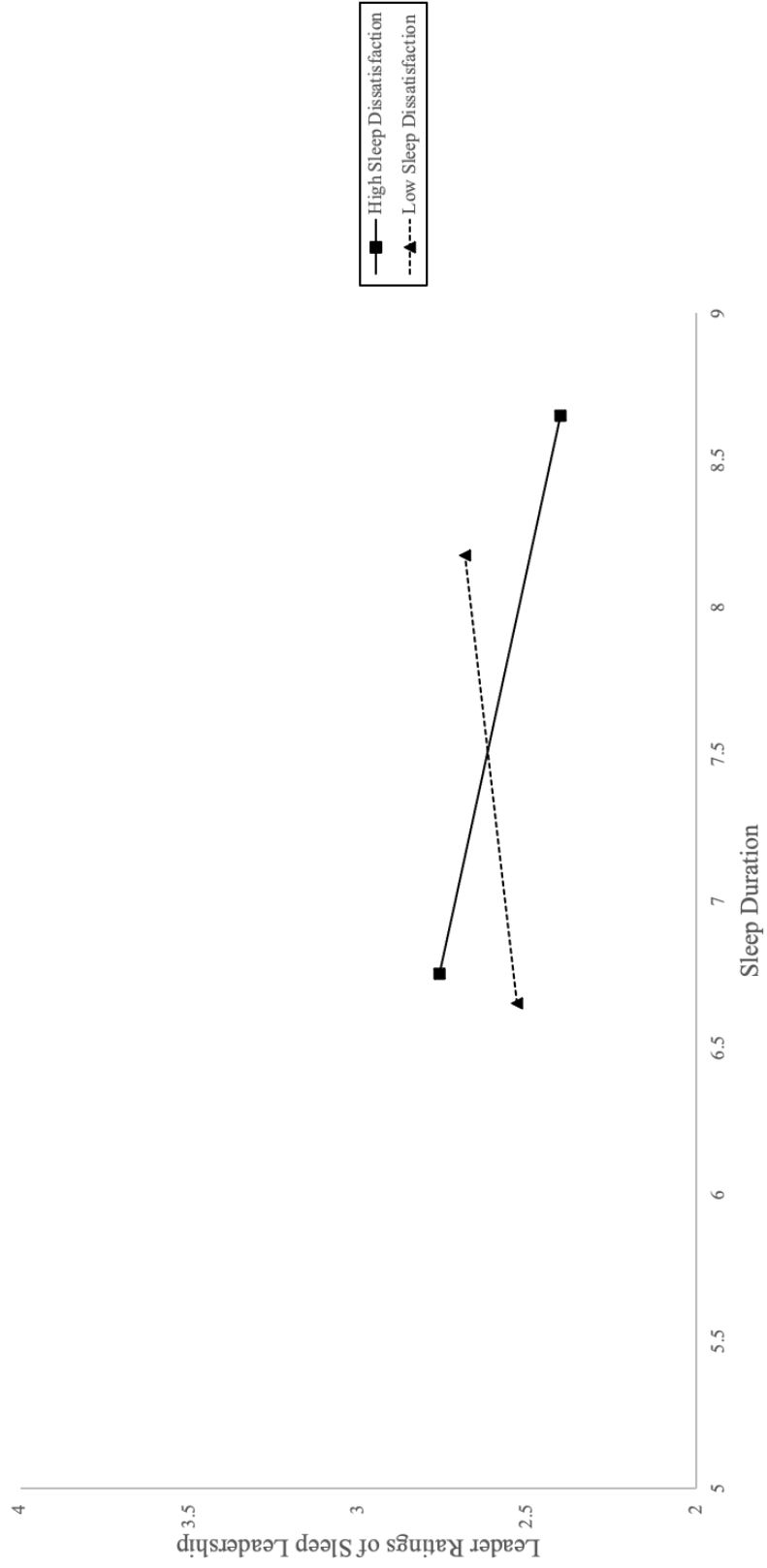


Figure 2.4. Disordinal interaction between leader sleep duration and leader sleep dissatisfaction on leader ratings of sleep leadership.

Chapter 3: What about the Leader?: A Review Integrating Leader-Centric Research and
Work-Life Supportive Leadership

Jordyn J. Leslie

Portland State University

Tori L. Crain

Portland State University

Liu-Qin Yang

Portland State University

Abstract

Workplace leaders are the fundamental source of effective work-life supportive leadership, yet their own needs are often overlooked within work-life research. As such, we propose four main factors that call attention to the needs of the leader when asking leaders to engage in supportive practices for employees: *leader health and well-being*, *leader role expectations*, *leader job demands*, and *leader skills*. Each factor reflects a “dueling” agenda, such that work-life support may result in decreased health and well-being, increasingly ambiguous role expectations, increased job demands, and lack of appropriate skills for the leader if these factors are not addressed appropriately by the researcher and practitioner prior to expecting such supportive behavior. We identify integration points between these four factors and essential elements of the employee life cycle, such as performance appraisal/management, and training. Finally, we present the support enabling framework that integrates key leader-centric variables that play a role in the support provision process and highlights the breadth of potential benefits of work-life supportive leadership, allowing for mutually beneficial outcomes for the employee, the organization, and the *leader*. Overall, we direct both scientists and practitioners to take a holistic view of work-life supportive leadership by considering the leader more intentionally.

Keywords: leadership, support, work-life supportive leadership, family supportive supervisor behaviors, support enabling framework

What About the Leader?: A Review Integrating Leader-Centric Research and Work-Life

Supportive Leadership

Large-scale changes are occurring within our workforce, the nature of work, and the broader societal context, which have significant implications for how and if leaders can adequately support their employees. In particular, a variety of societal stressors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, racial unrest, numerous mass shootings, climate catastrophes, and political divisiveness and rulings, as well as an increasingly diverse workforce (e.g., with more women, aging adults, racial/ethnic minorities, immigrant workers, LGBTQ+ workers; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022) are forcing leaders to play a more supportive role than ever before. For example, instances of racialized violence (e.g., police brutality) against Black, Indigenous, and people of color (i.e., BIPOC) has been shown to negatively impact BIPOC individuals' emotional well-being and productivity at work (Avery & Ruggs, 2020; Ruggs et al. 2022). In such instances, social support in the workplace is essential for BIPOC individuals to attempt to cope with this indirect trauma (Ruggs et al., 2022). Thus, as modern-day employees continue to face ever-present obstacles, the organization of work evolves, and societal stressors are experienced with increasing frequency and intensity, leaders are often the first line of contact for employees in need.

A well-established literature points to the importance of leaders in helping employees manage the conflicts that arise between work and nonwork (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018), and it is likely that these work-nonwork stressors are only increased as a result of recent events and societal stressors. For example, women were

disproportionately impacted by the work-nonwork boundary disruption caused by COVID-19 (e.g., remote work), which led women to have to make complex decisions about which role to sacrifice (e.g., family or work; Kossek et al., 2021; Shockley & Clark, 2021). This relationship was found to be especially heightened for BIPOC parents and caregivers, as these individuals experienced substantial impacts to their parenting, familial relationships, and physical and emotional well-being (Kaugars et al., 2022). Researchers have suggested that leaders are the liaison between our work and nonwork lives (Major & Lazun, 2010; NIOSH, 2021; Punnett et al., 2020) and this role has only been amplified by ongoing societal stressors. As such, these evolving tensions between the work and nonwork domains places more pressure on leaders to support their employees is also likely to threaten leaders' *own* health and well-being.

In fact, workplace leader health and well-being are deteriorating. Leaders are becoming increasingly burnt out and unhealthy (e.g., Inceoglu et al., 2021; Kaluza et al., 2021; Matick et al., 2022), particularly over the last few years (Harter, 2021). Additionally, a recent study conducted by Williamson and colleagues (2021) demonstrated that leaders are in high pressure roles and are especially prone to burnout and declining levels of overall well-being (Inceoglu et al., 2021). This trend raises concern regarding leader's ability to provide effective support for their employees' dynamic work and nonwork lives. Leader support is foundational for the success of employees at work (e.g., Hammer et al., 2009), yet researchers have yet to determine the specific barriers at various levels that leaders face in providing support to their employees

(Crain & Stevens, 2018). For this reason, we must shift our focus from leaders as being the supporters and identify the tension points at which leaders need support themselves.

The purpose of the following review is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the work-life supportive leadership process by explicating the various ways that leader-centric antecedents can play a key role in the provision and perception of support. Despite the expansion of work-life research over the past decade, very little have considered the perspective of leader. As such, a holistic framework is necessary to significantly contribute to research and practice. Thus, in following sections, we propose the support enabling framework (see Figure 3.1) to drive this research agenda forward. Overall, we suggest that leader health and well-being as well as leader job demands influence the provision of support. In addition, leader role expectations influence the propensity of leaders to provide support whereas leader skills influence the relationship between actual provision and employee perceptions of support.

Work-Life Supportive Leadership

Recently, Kossek and colleagues (2022) coined a new term –*work-life supportive leadership* –which refers to leadership that prioritizes active support for employees’ needs for navigating work, family, and personal life demands (Kossek et al., 2022). This term moves beyond the traditional constructs of leadership and support by integrating the two previously siloed literatures to highlight the variety of outcomes that are related to leader support. Historically, leadership research has had a focus on the job-related outcomes of leader behaviors (e.g., job satisfaction, engagement) whereas work-life research has traditionally emphasized work-family or nonwork outcomes (e.g., work-

family conflict). Kossek and colleague's (2022) integration calls attention to how leader work-life support is not just beneficial for (1) employee work and nonwork outcomes but (2) also organizational outcomes (i.e., "dual" agenda). As such, work-life supportive leadership is becoming progressively more desirable and critical given the transformation of work, ongoing societal events, as well as increasingly blurred lines between the work and nonwork domains. However, what is not examined in depth is how leaders are also affected by engaging in work-life supportive leadership. What still remains hidden underneath the idealized view of work-life supportive leadership is the leader themselves. Due to the well-established benefits of leader support behaviors (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018), it is essential for researchers and practitioners to understand how to promote and maintain supportive behaviors amongst leaders.

Novel Theoretical Contributions

Leader-centric antecedents are relatively ignored within the work-life literatures (Kaluza et al., 2020; Kossek et al., 2022; Perry et al., 2020), which becomes particularly damaging when responsibilities such as work-life supportive leadership are added to their plate. Research on the fundamental role of leaders in improving employee and organizational outcomes (Hammer et al., 2021a) largely outweighs the research on leader health and well-being or leader job demands as key predictors of their ability to provide effective work-life supportive leadership. Indeed, past research has routinely demonstrated that employee health and well-being, as well as job stressors, are fundamental for effective job performance (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 2003; Halbesleben, 2006; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). However, these relationships have yet to be

conceptualized in the context of leadership positions, particularly within the work-nonwork framework. Leader health and well-being as well as leader job demands are likely to affect the provision of work-life supportive leadership. As such, this review expands our understanding of the work-life supportive leadership phenomena by incorporating upstream variables focused on the leader's experiences, namely leader health & well-being as well as leader job demands.

Second, little is known regarding factors that may exist within the organizational context that may influence the provision of work-life supportive leadership. Family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) were introduced in the early 2000's (Hammer et al., 2009) and this construct is what comprises most of the literature on work-life supportive leadership (Kossek et al., 2022). Given that the concept of FSSB is relatively new, organizations have only recently begun to accept these behaviors as well as train and encourage leaders to enact them. However, leaders may be confused about whether such behaviors are a requirement. For example, Ellis and colleagues (2021) found that leaders across organizations vary widely on their perception of whether FSSB is part of their formal role. Indeed, past research has linked confusion around role expectations to abandon behaviors associated with that role (e.g., Toegel et al., 2013). For this reason, organizations may not make it clear to leaders whether or not work-life supportive leadership is a formal expectation, which may moderate the relationship between work-life supportive leadership as a job stressor and the provision of such support. As such, this review develops our knowledge regarding contextual variables by positing that role expectations is a specific variable that may play a role in the relationship between the

leader's job demand of work-life supportive leadership and the actual enactment of such behaviors.

Third, one of the main assumptions underlying work-life support theory is that leaders are an effective tool to reach employees and create cascading benefits (Hammer et al., 2021a; Inceoglu et al. 2021; Kossek et al., 2022). However, this relies on the skill of the leader in effectively providing work-life support to their employees. The majority of work-life literature capitalizes on the unique and special work-nonwork liaison role that leaders play in the functioning of an organization but do not consider how this same role can be difficult for leaders if they are not first provided with the necessary training to engage in their role effectively. Indeed, a handful of randomized control trial interventions have begun to train supervisors to provide FSSB, showing that such trainings can improve employee perceptions of support (Hammer et al., 2011; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016). However, many organizations may not be implementing these trainings. In addition, FSSB trainings may not capture the full scope of employee demands that leaders are having to support, which may result in oversights on training and leader's having to act on impulse which may potentially reduce the efficacy of work-life supportive leadership. As such, we extend the current work-life literature by identifying leader skill as a varying characteristic that is likely to influence the relationship between leader provision of work-life supportive leadership and employee perceptions of support.

Finally, this review directs the focus of science to how the provision of work-life supportive leadership can actually come at a cost to the leader. Recent reviews have

confirmed that predominant theoretical rationale and empirical evidence supports the assertion that work-life supportive leadership is a widely beneficial behavior for employees and organizations alike (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022), suggesting that promotion of such behavior is a “win-win” or mutually beneficial for work and nonwork outcomes –often referred to as the “*dual*” agenda (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Kossek et al., 2022). However, this is an oversimplification to the complexity of leader behavior in the workplace. We draw on and summarize empirical evidence to highlight support for a “*dueling*” agenda, which is contradictory to the dominate perspective guiding work-life support research. The “*dueling*” agenda suggests that provision of work-life supportive leadership can be detrimental to the leader, resulting in “win-lose” or “lose-lose” scenarios. In addition, past theoretical development has largely focused on benefits to the general employee and organization (e.g., Bass & Avolio, 1994; Hammer et al., 2009; Hammond et al., 2015; Kossek et al., 2022; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; van Dierendonck, 2011) and has overwhelmingly ignored potential benefits for the leader. Understanding the advantages of supportive leader behaviors is crucial, but only focusing on employee and organizational outcomes is unrealistically narrow. Thus, this review expands our current understanding of the work-life supportive leadership phenomena by incorporating downstream leader outcomes into the theoretical framework.

Overall, we propose an integrative, unified theoretical model of work-life supportive leadership that moves toward a true “win-win” approach, given that leader-centric variables (i.e., leader health & well-being, leader job demands, leader role

expectations, and leader skills) are included as part of the theoretical framework and consequently, the leader may actually benefit from the implementation of work-life supportive leadership. It is theoretically important to consider how leader-centric antecedents result in the enactment of work-life supportive leadership because we can obtain a more accurate picture of such behavior as it exists in reality. Scientists and practitioners are likely to adopt an unbalanced view of work-life supportive leadership if the leader is not considered, leading to potential oversights and negative downstream outcomes for everyone: leaders, employees, and the organization. As such, this will be the first review to propose leader-centric needs as antecedents to positive leader support behaviors, specifically work-life supportive leadership.

The support enabling framework indicates that there are four leader factors (leader health and well-being, leader job demands, leader role expectations, and leader skills) that play a preceding role in both the quality and amount of work-life support the leader provides to their employees. In addition, the framework is the first to suggest the presence of leader outcomes to provisional support process. Finally, the support enabling framework includes a feedback loop, such that the provision of support is likely to influence leader health and well-being. Such a framework can serve as a guide for research to begin considering leader outcomes of work-life supportive leadership as well as a preliminary tool for a healthier, more balanced, and more successful implementation of work-life supportive leadership.

The Predictive Role of Leader Health & Well-Being

As indicated in Figure 3.1, we propose that leader health and well-being predict a leader's propensity to provide work-life supportive leadership to their employees. Health is the primary driver of the way we function and interact with the world around us. *Health*, in the context of the proposed theoretical framework, refers to physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being as well as the absence of detriments toward the achievement of such wellbeing (e.g., illness, burnout) (WHO, 2022). Prior work-life literature highlights leader nonwork experiences such as conflict between work and family, childhood upbringing, or existing caregiving roles (e.g., eldercare) as precursors toward a leader's propensity to engage in work-life supportive leadership (e.g., Kossek et al., 2022). However, a fundamental antecedent that is not discussed is leader health and well-being. This absence is largely due to the topic's relative scarcity in both work-life and leadership literatures. Occupational health researchers have repeatedly demonstrated both theoretically and empirically that employee well-being is essential for key organizational outcomes such as job performance, engagement, and motivation (e.g., Hobfoll, 1989; Khubchandani & Price, 2020; Nielsen et al., 2017). Yet, this phenomenon is not exclusive to the general employee. It is easy to forget that leaders are people too and are often dealing with the same stressors as their employees, yet at the same time, are also responsible for team performance, leading by example, and fostering healthy workplace cultures.

Given their unique job demands and position within the organization, leaders may be more susceptible to experiencing detriments to their well-being. Globally-recognized leaders such as Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Margaret Thatcher, and past United States

presidents such as Joe Biden, Donald Trump, and Barack Obama, have publicly, and almost proudly, admitted to previously neglecting their health to gain a competitive advantage as a leader or to make progress on their tasks (Gates, 2019; Lashbrooke, 2020). For example, Steve Jobs has been quoted saying “everything was secondary” when it came to building his company (Isaacson, 2012). Leadership coaches have even documented widespread leader misconceptions that self-care is a sign of weakness (Neale, 2021). Furthermore, leadership coach Palena Neale explains that leaders often respond with exasperation when the topic of caring for their own health is introduced, mostly due to their perception of lack of time; “Are you kidding me?!? I’m already way beyond capacity looking after my team and my family...and emotionally supporting my friends, colleagues, family...I don’t have time for that!” (Neale, 2021).

Occupational health researchers are beginning to catch on to this toxic mindset by documenting the damaging effects it can have on leader well-being. Specifically, researchers have started to demonstrate that leaders are more likely to sacrifice personal time and their health (e.g., sleep) to increase hours at work (Babbar & Aspelin, 1998; Ruderman et al., 2017), paving the way for increased leader burnout and disengagement as well as trickle-down negative work and nonwork outcomes for employees (Kaluza et al., 2021; Ruderman et al., 2017). A recent poll by Gallup highlights this phenomenon, as managers reported a significant increase in burnout in 2021 (Harter, 2021). This is further reinforced by Matick and colleagues (2022) who suggest that leadership positions have characteristically high psychosocial demands and sense of responsibility which leads to inevitable spillover in the form of increased rumination about work during nonwork time.

Thus, the toxic and competitive leadership culture as well as the resulting negative health effects amongst workplace leaders invites the question of how leaders are able to engage in behaviors such as work-life supportive leadership while subsequently suffering from poor health and well-being.

Although relatively new, leader well-being is being increasingly recognized by researchers as a prerequisite for leadership. Research has shown that leadership behaviors are likely to be impacted when the leader's health and well-being is suffering.

Specifically, leaders who report higher well-being may have increased access to personal resources that facilitate their ability to provide sufficient quality support to their employees in comparison to depleted and burnt-out leaders, who may not have the required energy to provide resources and resist impulses, thereby exhibiting more negative forms of leadership such as laissez-faire or abusive leadership (Barnes et al., 2015; Byrne et al. 2014; Franke et al., 2014; Inceoglu et al., 2021). Thus, a leader's health and well-being is likely tied to their subsequent behaviors in the workplace.

Proposition 1: Leader health and well-being positively influence the provision of work-life supportive leadership.

The Predictive Role of Leader Job Demands

Although work-life supportive leadership is demonstrably essential for employees, it should also be regarded as a demand for leaders due to the empathy, attention, and sustained effort that is required for a leader to exhibit effective supportive leadership behaviors. In the context of this review, *job demands* are defined as physical, psychological, social, emotional, or organizational characteristics of one's job that

requires sustained effort that comes at a cost (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001). Seminal role stress theories can shed light on the potential downstream outcomes of a leader's position in resolving competing demands from a variety of stakeholders. Role conflict, or the friction between incompatible demands that deplete resources (Bakker et al., 2004; Katz & Kahn, 1978; LePine et al., 2005), as well as role overload, which refers to the perception of too many demands coupled with time pressure and a lack of resources that are necessary for successful completion of such demands (Griffin & Clarke, 2011; Rizzo et al., 1970), have both been established as influential job stressors given the widespread and downstream effects of role conflict and overload on various levels of outcomes. For example, role conflict and role overload have been linked to job dissatisfaction, lower organizational commitment, decreased job engagement and motivation, turnover, lower safety behavior and poor health-outcomes such as depression and burnout (Barling et al., 2002; Fisher & Gitelson, 1983; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964; Parker & Ohly, 2008; Schmidt et al., 2014).

In addition, the Job Demands Resource (JDR) model supports the idea that job demands, in this case work-life supportive leadership, can come at an expense for leaders (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2001). Specifically, too many demands at work can lead to considerable losses in motivation, job performance, health, and increases in strain (e.g., burnout) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). As such, the empirical relationship between job demands and health and well-being is denoted in the model (See Figure 3.1). Work-life researchers may draw from JDR to inform future studies related to the cost of increasing leader job demands researchers request work-life supportive leadership. However, our

discipline's conceptualization of job demands needs to shift given the large-scale changes that have occurred to the world of work and society since early work related to JDR (Demerouti et al., 2001). Specifically, job demands have typically centered around demands that originate from the workplace (e.g., time pressure, heavy workload). However, leader job demands are beginning to become more nuanced as they bridge the gap between the work and nonwork domains.

Leaders in particular have a unique and large list of demands, given that they are the linchpin between individual employees, teams, and the broader organization. As such, leaders must facilitate information diffusion between top-level leadership and the lower-level employees while also balancing, prioritizing, or reconciling potentially competing demands between the leader's responsibility to the strategic vision of the organization and their employees and team (e.g., "middle management perspective"; Wooldridge et al., 2008). Given the nature of a leader's position in the organization, leaders can face significant conflicts between demands of the individual entities that they must serve. In other words, what may be good for individual employees may or may not be good for the team, which may or may not be good for the organization (Hogan et al., 2018). Researchers have highlighted this struggle in reconciling demands, such that during the COVID-19 pandemic, many leaders "either reactively adapted (or glaringly ignored) the urgent demand to address turbulent intersecting work and nonwork environments" (p. 6; Kossek et al., 2022).

What has not been considered in research thus far, however, is how the leader's responsibility to deal with organizational, team, and employee demands becomes

increasingly complicated and nuanced when leaders are also asked to resolve employee work and nonwork demands that are at likely at odds with one another. Illustratively, an individual employee may ask for flexible work arrangements (e.g., remote work) due to a nonwork constraint such as childcare, but if this arrangement is not offered to everyone, there might be perceptions of unfairness across the team (i.e., family-friendly backlash; e.g., Parker & Allen, 2001). On the other hand, if remote work is made available to everyone, this may have implications for the efficiency and cohesiveness of the team (e.g., Ferreira et al., 2021). Finally, the leader must consider potential consequences of flexible work arrangements for the broader organization such as communication effectiveness (e.g., Piccoli et al., 2004) or widespread burnout due to remote structures (Moss, 2018), all of which may result in long-term detriments to organizational success. This tension between employee, team, and organizational demands demonstrates the intricacy of a leader's responsibility to reconcile competing demands through their role as the liaison between not just top leaders and lower-level employees but also between an employee's work and nonwork domains.

Therefore, our proposed theoretical framework expands the classic JDR model by accounting for variables that align with the reality of the blurred lines between work and nonwork, namely work-life supportive leadership. Given the established theoretical and empirical literature, we propose that leader job demands will negatively impact enactment of work-life supportive leadership, such that as job demands increase, leader engagement in work-life supportive leadership behaviors will decrease.

Proposition 2: *Leader job demands negatively influence the provision of work-life supportive leadership.*

Characteristics of Work-Life Supportive Leadership

Less research has been conducted on how leader health and well-being or leader job demands influences two different components of leader behavior: quality and amount. To inform our propositions, we draw from Conservation of Resources (COR) theory which suggests that strain results from a loss of resources (e.g., objects, valued roles, time, physical energy; Hobfoll, 1989). Past meta-analyses have documented the linkage between resource loss and health and well-being indicators such as burnout and stress (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Oyenubi et al., 2022; Westman et al., 2004; Wright & Hobfoll, 2004). As such, we argue that lowered leader health and well-being is indicative of a loss of resources, which decreases the quality and amount of work-life supportive leadership they can provide. In addition, both theory and empirical work has suggested that job demands and resources are interdependent such that, in a highly demanding environment, there is insufficient resources (Bakker et al., 2023; Hobfoll, 1989; Westman et al., 2004). For example, a recent study conducted by Bakker and colleagues (2022) found that weekly job demands relate positively to maladaptive behaviors via emotional exhaustion, which is an established chronic health indicator of lack of resources.

As such, we propose that a leader's experience increased job demands, impact both the *quality* of work-life supportive leadership, as well as the overall *amount*. Indeed, past literature has broadly shown that having sufficient resources can improve the quality of work and work performance (Glaser et al., 2015; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). However,

this line of work has not yet been extended within the work-life literature, specifically in the context of work-life supportive leadership behaviors. Thus, based off of prior empirical and theoretical research, we propose that diminished leader health and well-being will result in a decrease in both the quality and amount of engagement in work-life supportive leadership.

Proposition 1: Leader health and well-being positively influence relationship the a) quality and b) amount of work-life supportive leadership provided to employees.

Proposition 2: Leader job demands negatively influence relationship the a) quality and b) amount of work-life supportive leadership provided to employees.

The Moderating Role of Leader Role Expectations

As society and the world of work evolves, so does the role of the leader. Roles are functional positions that are, in part, determined by the context in which they are fulfilled. Specifically, *organizational roles* determine “how work is designed, communicated, accomplished, evaluated, and experienced” (Sluss et al., 2011). In the context of this review, *role expectations* refer to leader beliefs regarding the what their role entails (Dierdorff & Morgesen, 2007). It is important for researchers to reevaluate the formal and informally prescribed roles of leaders as we experience large-scale changes that are occurring within our workforce, the nature of work, the structure of organizations, and society. Specifically, as research continues to prescribe leader demands or behaviors in concert with the fluctuations in societal values and needs (i.e., work-life supportive leadership), researchers must also ensure that formal leader job

descriptions and performance expectations are explicit and aligned with evolving organizational objectives.

Although recent reviews have demonstrated the widespread benefits of work-life supportive leadership (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022), few studies have begun to investigate leader perceptions of whether work-life supportive leadership behaviors are within their prescribed formal in-role job requirements (i.e., expected by the organization) or whether such behaviors are non-mandatory and are considered “extra” (i.e., not expected by the organization; Borman & Motowidlo, 1993;1997). One exception is a recent study conducted by Ellis and colleagues (2021) which found that leader perceptions of whether family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) are a part of their formal role is truly discretionary and widely varied across individuals (i.e., FSSB role perceptions; Ellis et al., 2021; Hammer et al., 2009). Specifically, approximately half the sample believed FSSBs were part of their formal role whereas the other half of leaders believed FSSBs were extra-role or were unsure.

Certainly, the distinction between formally expected job behaviors and prosocial behaviors can determine the factors that come into play when considering the level of engagement in each behavior. For example, research has documented that engagement in prosocial behaviors can depend on a variety of factors such as individual differences (e.g., demographics, knowledge, abilities, personality, health and well-being), situational differences (e.g., job design, climate, organizational support), cognitive-motivational processes (e.g., perceived capability, goals, values), role definition/crafting (e.g., preferences, expectations, perceptions), and affect of the leader and employee (Bindl &

Parker, 2011; Liang et al., 2022; Sluss et al., 2011). As such, that are not formally prescribed or expected by the organization are inherently more dependent on external factors, which leads to wide variety in the provision of such behaviors. In fact, in the seminal work on FSSBs, Hammer and colleagues (2009) note the overall lack of inclusion of nonwork-supportive roles within leader job descriptions and performance requirements as well as highlight the potential for leader discretion to play a role in the provision of nonwork support.

This discretion could be informed by a variety of factors, one of which is the quality of leader-member exchange (i.e., LMX; Halbesleben, 2006; Hooper & Martin, 2008; van Breukelen et al., 2002; Wilson et al., 2010). LMX emphasizes the dyadic relationship that develops between leaders and their employees (i.e., members) and how the resulting quality of the relationship can steer leaders in the direction of treating each of their employees differently (Lord et al., 2017; Morganson et al., 2017). In particular, research has demonstrated that employees who have higher quality LMX with their leader are more likely to receive resources such as job-related information or support (e.g., Halbesleben, 2006; Liang et al., 2022) compared to employees who have lower quality LMX with the same leader. This relatively new line of literature demonstrates how leader beliefs regarding whether work-life supportive leadership is expected by the organization or not impacts their propensity to enact such behavior.

Fundamental role stress theories can give researchers insight into clarifying whether or not work-life supportive leadership is an expectation from organizations (e.g., Kahn et al., 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Sluss et al., 2011). Role ambiguity, or the lack of

specificity or predictability in organizational expectations and responsibilities (Griffin & Clarke, 2011), is likely to influence a leader's tendency to engage in or adopt certain behaviors into their role definition. Indeed, research has documented that clarity surrounding the specific behaviors that are a formal and expected part of an employee's role increases the employee's propensity for engaging in such behaviors (e.g., Jiao et al., 2013). Conversely, ambiguous roles (i.e., roles that are not explicitly a part of one's job) promote discretion in deciding whether or not to engage in such behaviors and induce job-related strain (e.g., Toegel et al., 2013). Systematic reviews on the influence of role ambiguity in the workplace suggest that role ambiguity is a suppressing factor when considering motivation (Parker & Ohly, 2008). Such research implies that leaders may be opting out of providing work-life supportive leadership due to role ambiguity surrounding whether such leadership is expected by the organization and a true part of their role as a leader. As such, clear organizational expectations as it relates to work-life supportive leadership as it may serve as a potential buffer against leader strain, demotivation, and disengagement from their supportive role.

We propose that leader role expectations will influence the relationship between leader health and well-being and the provision of work-life supportive leadership, such that the positive relationship between leader health and well-being and enactment of work-life supportive leadership will be enhanced under conditions of clear (versus unclear) role expectations. For example, when leaders have poor health and well-being, but also have clear expectations that they provide work-life support, then the leader will be more likely to provide work-life support compared to instances in which expectations

are unclear. In addition, we propose that role expectations will influence the relationship leader job demands and the provision of work-life supportive leadership, such that the negative relationship between leader job demands and enactment of work-life supportive leadership will be exacerbated under conditions of unclear (versus clear) role expectations. For example, when leaders have high demands, and also have unclear expectations that they provide work-life support, then the leader will be less likely to provide work-life support. Conversely, when leaders have high demands, but also have clear expectations that they provide work-life support, then the leader will be more likely to provide work-life support compared to when expectations are unclear.

Proposition 3a: Leader role expectations moderate the relationship between leader health and well-being and the (a) quality and (b) amount of work-life supportive leadership provided to employees.

Proposition 3b: Leader role expectations moderate the relationship between leader job demands and the (a) quality and (b) amount of work-life supportive leadership provided to employees.

The Moderating Role of Leader Skills

Over the past few years, workplace leaders have been required to adapt to ongoing global and societal crises. Through such recent global and societal crises, it has become increasingly clear that leaders are needing to adopt and learn new skills in order to be effective at addressing employee work and nonwork needs. *Skills*, in the context of the present review, refer to a learned ability to perform a beneficial action in order to achieve a desired result (Morgeson & Campion, 2000). More so than ever, leaders must

have the skills that allow them to effectively serve as point people for employees to obtain information, certainty, support, and guidance during times of need. For example, researchers have demonstrated that social support, particularly from a leader, may serve as a critical resource in BIPOC individual's attempts to cope with traumatic crises like instances of racially motivated violence across the country (Ruggs et al., 2022). Indeed, it is widely documented that human beings search for leadership in times of crisis (e.g., Brown et al., 2018). Yet, to the best of my knowledge, no research currently exists that details the novel yet necessary skills that leaders need to learn in order to sufficient support these new and evolving employee demands.

Recent global, national, and societal crises as well as documented leader unpreparedness for such predicaments (e.g., Kossek et al., 2021; Kossek et al., 2022) have called attention to the way that work-life supportive leadership may be functioning in practice. Past research on work-life supportive leadership has focused on relatively consistent occurring, expected, or individual work-nonwork demands such as shifts in schedule due to ongoing childcare/eldercare responsibilities or consistent check-ins with employees regarding well-being, of which are likely to occur on more regular and individual basis (e.g., Hammer et al., 2009). Though daily, consistent, and stable support for employee nonwork needs is undisputedly essential, it is also imperative for researchers to understand the evolving nuances of work-life supportive leadership, particularly during large-scale crises. Crises are generally unexpected, more infrequent, and likely to have widespread emotional, physical, or psychological collective impact compared to other non-crisis instances (DuBrin, 2013; Wu et al., 2021). Specifically, to

the best of my knowledge, no research to date has examined how work-life supportive leadership may function differently depending on the severity, unpredictability, and pervasiveness of the nonwork need. This oversight draws attention to how leader may not have the necessary skills to adequately address nonwork demands of all severities that may occur with not just individual employee, but potentially a whole team.

As demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall lack of preparation and resources for such volatile changes to the nature of work required leaders to implement work-life supportive leadership “haphazardly” and at their discretion (Kossek et al., 2022). In the past, to avoid such shortcomings, leaders have been traditionally trained in the workplace on work-life supportive behaviors. The work-life support field is relatively new yet is marked by a sizeable number of randomized-control trials (RCT’s) or interventions aimed at promotion of FSSBs (e.g., Hammer et al., 2009). Typically, these trainings provide leaders with information and tools related to four key dimensions of FSSBs, namely instrumental support (i.e., reactionary provision of tangible and transactional resources to the employee on a day-to-day basis), emotional support (i.e., investing emotional resources such as listening, demonstrating care for employee nonwork needs), creative work-family management (i.e., proactive and strategic actions that aim to promote work-nonwork synergy), and role modeling (i.e., leader modeling behaviors that signal value in balance between the work and nonwork domains) (Hammer et al., 2009; Hammer et al., 2011). Although occupational health researchers have repeatedly and systematically demonstrated the far-reaching multilevel benefits of such FSSB trainings for individuals, their families, and the organization (e.g., Crain &

Stevens, 2018), research has yet to specifically dive into the nuances between general, daily, stable work-life support that becomes essential in times of crisis. Thus, trainings specifically aimed at improving a leader's ability to support their employees during large-scale crises are non-existent, leading to haphazard enactment of such behaviors that may decrease employee perceptions of adequate support.

We draw from the crisis leadership literature to support the idea that leadership may differ between times of collective crisis and individual work-nonwork demands. Crisis leadership details the process in which leaders prepare for and handle unexpected crises in the workplace (e.g., Bundy et al., 2017; James et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2021). Moreover, crisis leadership emphasizes the role of leadership before, during, and after the crisis, thereby tapping into a holistic and ubiquitous perspective of work-life supportive leadership. Given that crises are “unexpected, highly salient, and potentially disruptive” (i.e., Bundy et al., 2017; Pearson & Clair, 1997), they are anticipated to have significant impacts on stakeholders of the organization and therefore demand effective leadership, especially given the likely heightened requests and expectations from stakeholders (Boin & t'Hart, 2003; Heifetz et al., 2009). Crisis leadership research has demonstrated that employee's perceive leader behaviors such as sense-making, communality (i.e., social support, sensitivity), adaptiveness, empowerment, and decisiveness to be particularly beneficial during times of crisis (Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022; Caringal-Go et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2021). As such, we argue that work-life supportive leadership will be perceived as more effective by employees if the skills align with the surrounding context (i.e., crisis vs. non-crisis).

Interestingly, the current research on crisis leadership has an overwhelming focus on the organization or groups as the key stakeholders in times of crisis, such that the leader must be equipped to protect the best interest of the organization and invested groups (e.g., an executive board) by preventing detriments to production rates, the organization's reputation, organizational survival, or competitiveness of the company. However, the crisis leadership research stream has yet to extend the leader's role beyond broad organizational interests to that of also navigating employee work and nonwork demands during times of crises. Moreover, crisis leadership typically examines crises that are happening to the organization itself (e.g., layoffs or costs to reputation) rather than large-scale, societal crises. As such, the proposed theoretical model extends with work on crisis leadership to encompass leader behaviors that address work and nonwork employee needs during times of societal crisis.

Overall, work-life researchers must consider how and when work-life supportive leadership is provided in order to obtain a realistic and holistic view of how this phenomena functions within workplace. Although understanding work-life supportive leadership as it relates to daily nonwork needs such as time off due to illness or child/eldercare is unquestionably important, it also is a simplified view of the breadth of nonwork demands that leaders are now required to attend to. Researchers are beginning to see the repercussions of the unalignment between leader skills and employee needs, such that that the skills that leaders currently have or are being trained on are not adequate or sufficient for what is being asked of them by employees (Kossek et al., 2022).

We propose that leader skills will influence the relationship between leader health and well-being and the provision of work-life supportive leadership, such that the positive relationship between leader health and well-being and enactment of work-life supportive leadership will be enhanced under conditions of adequate (versus inadequate) skills. For example, when leaders have poor health and well-being, but also have the necessary skills to provide work-life support, then the leader will be more likely to provide work-life support compared to instances in which the leader has insufficient skills. In addition, we propose that leader skills will influence the relationship leader job demands and the provision of work-life supportive leadership, such that the negative relationship between leader job demands and enactment of work-life supportive leadership will be exacerbated under conditions of inadequate (versus adequate) leader skills. For example, when leaders have high demands, and also do not have the necessary skills provide work-life support, then the leader will be less likely to provide work-life support. Conversely, when leaders have high demands, but also have the necessary skills to provide work-life support, then the leader will be more likely to provide work-life support.

Proposition 4a: Leader skills moderate the relationship between leader health and well-being and the (a) quality and (b) amount of work-life supportive leadership provided to employees.

Proposition 4b: Leader skills moderate the relationship between leader job demands and the (a) quality and (b) amount of work-life supportive leadership provided to employees.

Moving Toward a “Win-Win” Scenario: Leader Outcomes

The majority of past theoretical and empirical developments have suggested that work-life supportive leadership follows a “dual” agenda, such that the provision of work-life supportive leadership mutually benefits both work and nonwork outcomes for employees and can have positive impacts on organizational outcomes (Kossek et al., 2022). Indeed, this agenda surfaces given the predominant focus on employee and organizational outcomes of effective leadership over the past century. Yet, through the examination of research related to leader health & well-being, job demands, role expectations, and skills, empirical evidence also suggests that work-life supportive leadership can follow a “dueling” agenda, such that the provision of work-life supportive leadership can come at a cost to leader’s work and nonwork outcomes.

Past research has rarely examined outcomes of support behaviors or enacted leadership at the level of the leader. For example, in a 25-year review of leadership outcomes published by Hiller and colleagues (2011) in the *Journal of Management*, not a single leadership assessment criterion was mentioned to be at the leader level. Indeed, these authors do explicate the levels at which leadership criteria are being assessed (i.e., individual, group, unit, or organization; Hiller et al., 2011). In addition, when leader self-reports are used, such studies are typically examining the degree to which the leader believes they provided a form of leadership or support rather than how enacting those behaviors impacted them (Hiller et al., 2011). As such, there is an imperative need to hear the leader’s perspective, particularly how the unique behaviors they engage in may influence beneficial or detrimental outcomes for the leaders themselves.

To inform our propositions, we draw from a small handful of studies that can point us in the direction of understanding how provision of work-life support in particular may impact the leader. For example, Ilies and colleagues (2005) theorize that leaders who engage in authentic leadership practices (i.e., leadership that prioritizes growth, development, and awareness) will in turn experience greater flow and intrinsic motivation at work as well as have higher self-esteem. Another example is safety leadership, in which Mullen and Kelloway (2010) highlight how a training on safety leadership improved leader safety attitudes, intent to promote safety, and self-efficacy. Another example is a small stream of literature on LMX (i.e., leader-member exchange). Wilson and colleagues (2010) noted the gap in examining leader derived benefits or costs to the LMX process and conducted research to spotlight how having high quality relationships between a leader and employee can facilitate the bi-directional exchange of resources, such that employees may give positive performance ratings that may impact career progression or pay for example. Indeed, such studies confirm theoretical notions regarding how the leadership process is a transaction of resources between leader and employee (Wilson et al., 2010) and as such, the provision of work-life support is likely to generate outcomes not just for the employee but also the leader.

Overall, these studies illuminate the path forward for researchers and practitioners to begin unearthing leader-centric outcomes of particular leader behaviors. However, given that work-life supportive leadership is a unique and complex behavior that spans both the work and nonwork domain, we need research to comprehend the impact the

provision process may have on the leader, in addition as to how employee perceptions of support may relate to leader outcomes.

Proposition 5: Employee perceptions of work-life supportive leadership for work demands will positively influence employee outcomes.

Proposition 6: Employee perceptions of work-life supportive leadership will positively influence organizational outcomes.

Proposition 7: Employee perceptions of work-life supportive leadership will positively influence leader outcomes.

Potential effects of work-life supportive leadership on leader health & well-being

For researchers and practitioners alike, it is easy to want to capitalize on the fundamental position and subsequent aptitude that leaders have within an organization, yet this capitalization overlooks leaders' own needs, which are often made secondary or even completely ignored in research. Leaders are typically under high pressure to be the success-drivers of the organization, which contributes to the unhealthy belief that leaders should sacrifice their own personal time, health, work, and nonwork needs at the expense of productivity and gaining a competitive advantage (Åkerstedt et al., 2004; Babbar & Aspelin, 1998; Basner et al., 2014; Jackson et al., 2013; Luckhaupt et al., 2010; Ruderman et al., 2017; Svetieva et al., 2017; Ursin et al., 2009). For this reason, it is likely that leaders will find it difficult to prioritize fulfillment of their *own* needs without an organizational climate that supports such practices and prioritizes leader health and well-being over workaholism (e.g., Clark et al., 2016).

Of the sparse literature beginning to emphasize leader well-being as a predictor of performance in the workplace, few studies have begun to examine how performing work-life supportive leadership can come at a cost to leader well-being and performance. One study suggests that certain forms of leadership can actually hurt the leader. Specifically, Liao and colleagues (2021) find that daily enactment of servant leadership behaviors, which encapsulates work-life supportive leadership (Kossek et al., 2022), results in same-day depletion and next-day withdrawal from their leadership responsibilities (i.e., laissez-faire leadership). COR theory, which suggests strain results from a loss of resources (Hobfoll, 1989), supports the ascertain that certain effortful forms of leadership, such as work-life supportive leadership, can actually drain the leader's resources and lead to detriments in health and well-being, performance, and other important outcomes.

Due to the limited research on this topic, researchers should aim to understand when the provision of work-life supportive leadership could be detrimental compared to when it actually may be beneficial (i.e., feedback loop). For example, provision of work-life supportive leadership may be detrimental when organizational support is absent, such that leader may be less likely to engage in efforts that support their own needs without clearance to do so from the organization (e.g., Ostroff, 1993; Schneider et al., 2017). Conversely, leaders may feel competent and benefit from improved mood when they feel they successfully provided work-life support to an employee (Richter-Killenberget al., 2022). Thus, it is ultimately unclear whether the provision of work-life supportive leadership is likely to harm or improve leader health and well-being.

Research question: *How does the provision of work-life supportive leadership influence leader health and well-being?*

Discussion

Leaders play a critical yet unique role within the organization, yet leader-centric antecedents are continually overlooked within organizational research as a distinctive sample when discussing a leader's ability to successfully execute increasing demands in fast-paced and continually changing work environments. Given the rapid changes occurring to both the workforce (i.e., increased diversity, Great Resignation, essential workers) and the nature and structure of work (e.g., remote work), leaders are being asked to support their employees more than ever. Through this review, we provide a holistic, testable framework of work-life supportive leadership that spotlights leader-centric antecedents to the provision of such leadership, subsequent employee perceptions, and resulting organizational, employee, and leader outcomes. In addition, this review draws attention to the value of integration across previously siloed areas, namely the work-life literature and essential human resource functions, as work-life research is truly infused in every part of the organizational life cycle and should be addressed in such a manner in order to align practice with science.

Practical Implications

It is nearly impossible to talk about leadership and work-life literatures without also integrating industrial-organizational psychology and human resource topics such as training, work redesign, and performance appraisal/management as they are closely intertwined. Specifically, these topics are foundational to the structure and functioning of

the workplace. Unfortunately, the research and theory related to work-life supportive leadership is typically siloed and rarely extended to key portions of the employee organizational life cycle. As research within the work-life supportive leadership field progresses, adjustments should be made to the way we select leaders, assess their performance, train leaders, and provide resources given their ever-expanding role. As such, parallel integration of work-life supportive leadership with core practical issues can provide an advantage to scientists and practitioners in our mission to facilitate effective and beneficial work-life supportive leadership. In the following section, we highlight a variety of intentionally chosen practical considerations that emphasize critical stages within a leader's organizational life cycle.

Training

Foundational resource theories suggest that workplace trainings (i.e., integrated interventions) are a strategic job resource that supply leaders with necessary guidance and support for the unique role they play in easing the tensions between work and nonwork demands for their employees. Trainings are considered a resource due to the promotion of growth, learning, and development (Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) as well as protecting or buffering against potential downstream health and well-being consequences due to job demands. Trainings that aim to promote work-life supportive leadership should, for example, improve interpersonal skills and emotion recognition as well as provide identification strategies for employee nonwork demands, role playing opportunities with various work-life scenarios that leaders may encounter, or a list of phrases for leaders to turn to for future use.

Of particular relevance for trainings related to leader health & well-being, a beneficial approach when attempting to minimize demands and provide resources to employees is Total Worker Health (TWH; Punnett et al., 2020; Schill & Chosewood, 2013). Work has the ability to harm health and well-being but the workplace can also be a unique environment in which well-being and health can also be enhanced (e.g., social support; Hunt & Gensing-Pophal, 2022). This philosophy informs TWH initiatives, such that integrated TWH interventions place emphasis on health *protection* (e.g., minimizing demands) but also on safety and health program coordination (rather than isolation), assessment of work *and* nonwork health exposures, creation of workplaces that *promote* health (e.g., providing resources), and utilize the active *participation* of the employees to foster efficacy and empowerment (Punnett et al., 2020). Of the work-life supportive leadership literature that has focused on TWH trainings, very few have considered leader health and well-being as a precursor (Anger et al., 2015).

FSSB trainings are among the few trainings that have integrated components related to leader health promotion. For example, Hammer and colleagues (2021b) offered sleep feedback derived from data obtained via actigraphic devices to their sample of leaders (i.e., health promotion for leaders). In addition, Ellis and colleagues (2017) implemented an intervention with the goal of increasing leader knowledge and skills related to both their employee's mental health *and* their own. Thus, researchers and practitioners should use such integrative interventions as a steppingstone towards true achievement of the overall TWH mission (Punnett et al., 2020). However, researchers and practitioners should be also cautious that such participation does not add an

additional demand and become a work-related health hazard for leaders. Thus, as researchers continue to recommend and intervene on leader behaviors like work-life supportive leadership, we must also ensure that leaders have the knowledge, time, and resources to engage in such behaviors in the first place.²

The leader's employee. A potential avenue could be employee-facing trainings targeted toward communication strategies in the process of work-life supportive leadership (e.g., how to ask for FSSB; Wong et al., 2019), with the aim of lessening demands on the leader by having to interpret or read ambiguous nonwork situations. Research has demonstrated that training team members on a certain leadership behavior can have upstream effects on the leader. For example, Lyubykh and colleagues (2022) found that a shared transformational leadership training aimed at improving safety outcomes for employees improved safety participation for the leader. Overall, training individuals at different levels of the organization to “support the supporter” is a future opportunity for both researchers and practitioners to explore in order to promote work-life supportive leadership².

Work Redesign

Researchers have often said that an organization's most valuable yet scarce resource is the time of leaders (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). The same holds true when considering the provision of work-life supportive leadership, which often occurs on a dyadic level in which the leader provides support behaviors that are aligned with the unique nonwork demand of a specific employee. As mentioned before, work-life

² For information about the science of workplace instruction, see Kraiger and Ford (2021).

supportive leadership is inherently more emotional, requiring positive affect, empathy, and proactivity to effectively engage in such support behaviors (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018; Ellis et al., 2022; Sargent et al., 2020). Therefore, not only is engagement in work-life supportive effortful, but often has to be tailored to each individual employee which can make it particularly time-consuming (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984; Stein et al. 2020; Strazdins & Broom, 2007). A recent study demonstrated that leader workload was negatively related to their employee's perception of supportive leadership, such that the more demands a leader has, the less likely their employees are to perceive the leader to be supportive (Stein et al., 2020). This suggests that it is imperative for leaders to have manageable demands in order for them to engage in work-life supportive leadership effectively and efficiently as well as increase employee perceptions of such support.

One reason leaders may be unable to provide effective support behaviors and consequently experience detriments to own their health and well-being is if their team size is too large. Work redesign, therefore, is a particularly fruitful avenue for arranging leader demands to facilitate work-life supportive leadership. Hackman and Vidmar (1970) suggest that the ideal team size across occupations is 4.6 employees. Of note, however, research has generally ignored the impact team size can have on effective provision of nonwork support. For example, it may be that the more employees a leader must support, the more likely they are to experience burnout and other negative health and well-being outcomes. Therefore, as work-life supportive leadership is adopted into the workplace, it is important to consider the ideal team size that facilitates leader

provision of work-life supportive leadership and also protects leader health and well-being.

Performance Management and Appraisal

As the world of work evolves, our expectations for leaders change and researchers begin to prescribe more workplace behaviors accordingly. Researchers and practitioners must then collaborate to ensure our approach to the management and appraisal of leader performance changes in unison. Performance management is referred to as a “continuous process of identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals” (Aguinis, 2009a, p. 2) and involves a wide variety of activities such as feedback, goal setting, training, reward systems and performance appraisals (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Performance management systems, including performance appraisals, serve various functions for the organization such as establishing objectives for training programs, providing concrete feedback to leaders to improve future performance, or facilitating organizational diagnosis (e.g., highlighting training needs or necessary skills for future hires) (Cascio & Aguinis, 2015). Therefore, to ensure adequate leader skills for supporting new and evolving work-life issues within the workplace, performance management systems and appraisals must be appropriate and effective by integrating and appraising the work-life supportive behaviors that leaders are engaging in.

Leadership should be advancing in a way that is complimentary to the fluctuations in organizations, individuals, and society. The people who work are changing, the values held by the workforce are changing, and the structure of work is changing. For this

reason, leadership and leader support for nonwork demands has started and will start to look different as we move into new worlds of work.

Future Research Directions

Methodology

Overall, the leadership and work-life literatures rely heavily on survey-based measures (e.g., Brown, 2018; Hunter et al., 2007). Indeed, approximately 63% of leadership research is based off of survey measures (Hiller et al., 2011). Although this methodology can be beneficial in some respects, researchers and practitioners should utilize varied methods, such as qualitative interviews, for understanding the frequency, difficulty, criticality of errors of work-life supportive leadership, especially given the emotional and sometimes episodic nature of nonwork support. Qualitative interviews can provide a rich and nuanced perspective regarding the enactment and perception of work-life supportive leadership yet only make up less than 5% of leadership research (Hiller et al., 2011). Future research should consider implementing qualitative methods to understand, from the leader's perspective, how work-life supportive leadership is truly functioning in reality. Practitioners should aim to utilize interviews from leaders (i.e., subject matter experts [SME's]) to help construct appropriate and accurate job descriptions, specifications, and expectations.

Additionally, approximately 63% of leadership research focused on mid-level leaders is based off of employee ratings, with the same pattern existing within work-life literature (Hiller et al., 2011). For example, work-life supportive leadership is based on what is experienced by employee (Kossek et al., 2022). However, much can be learned

about work-life supportive leadership by expanding this to include other rates. For example, as highlighted in consideration three (i.e., leader demands), top-level leaders serve an important role as both a mentor for novice leaders as well as a role model (as alluded to within FSSB literature). Shockingly, leaders at the top level are primarily examined through database derivations related to effectiveness indicators (e.g., profit) (Hiller et al., 2011) yet we know that perceptions of organizational support are likely to come from one's leaders (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Thus, future research should examine the potential trickle-down, role modeling process related to work-life supportive leadership from upper management to mid-level managers by utilizing employee assessments of top-level leaders. For this reason, practitioners should also aim to understand how top-level leadership is engaging in work-life supportive leadership to identify points of intervention.

Distinguishing leadership and support constructs

Leadership and leader support are the two constructs that scientists have studied related to leaders' influential position in the workplace, yet such constructs have traditionally been examined separately within organizational sciences. *Leader support* is one of the many essential behaviors a successful, high-quality leader must engage in (e.g., van Dam & van der Helm, 2016) and has typically been defined as showing general support for their employees, encouraging autonomy, maintaining interpersonal relationships through respect and care, and empowering their followers (e.g., Cheung & Wong, 2011). In contrast, *leadership* has traditionally been conceptualized as an influencing, goal-oriented, and relational process between leaders and followers that is

impacted by characteristics, traits, qualities, and behaviors of the leader and the broader context (Antonakis et al., 2018; Horner, 1997). The siloed nature of these two related constructs (i.e., support and leadership) has contributed to construct proliferation, such that leadership researchers and leader support researchers may be able to combine constructs to create a more efficient, concise, and effective research stream. Indeed, Kossek and colleagues (2022) highlight that only nine studies examine both leadership and support constructs together, which is concerning given the size of both leadership and support lines of research. Clarity and cohesion among the scientific community becomes increasingly more imperative as research on leadership and support continues to proliferate in response to change in the nature of work and societal events. Thus, scientists and practitioners should press pause and reevaluate the concepts of both leadership and support in order to facilitate dissemination of direct and clear information to our leaders, increasing the potential for downstream beneficial leader behaviors.

Dark side of support

Until recently, research has generally regarded leader nonwork support to be a positive, beneficial behavior. However, researchers have begun to uncover a potential dark side to leadership. For example, Perrigino and colleagues (2018) suggest that organizations who implement work-life policies (e.g., flexible work accommodations) may experience backlash from employees due to perceptions of inequitable distribution or potential stigma that may arise from benefiting from or engaging with such policies. Additionally, Boekhorst and colleagues (2021) found that caring behaviors exhibited by leaders actually had negative effects on the employees, such that employees felt guilty for

receiving such care. Thus, researchers should continue to unearth dyadic intricacies regarding work-life supportive leadership in an effort to prevent potential negative consequences for employees, organizations, and leaders prior to implementation. Indeed, leadership research has consistently alluded to the idea that “any act of leadership requires the active involvement and agreement by the followers” (Barling et al., 2011). For this reason, practitioners might also implement employee trainings to facilitate agreement upon work-life practices or offer spaces intended for open communication between decision-makers, mid-level leaders, and lower-level employees to ensure accurate understanding the “why” behind implementation of work-life supportive leadership behaviors and policies. This may also provide practitioners with an opportunity to receive feedback to further improve such efforts. Additionally, future researchers interested in the evolving nature of work-life supportive leadership may consider hosting focus groups with leaders to better understand the barriers to enactment of such behaviors in the workplace.

Potential expansions to work-life supportive leadership framework

As Kossek and colleagues (2022) suggest, FSSB is the primary construct that comprises work-life literature. However, this may not be the only form of work-life support that leaders may need to engage in, as the world of work and society evolves. For example, a relatively new form of nonwork support has been established. Gunia and colleagues (2015) proposed *sleep leadership* as behaviors enacted by a leader that could broadly provide support to improve employee sleep. Moreover, with the onslaught of societal crises such as the murder of George Floyd or political rulings like *Roe v. Wade*,

leaders may need to support employees with the potential aftermath of these events, which goes beyond the conceptualization of FSSB. It is important to note that a potential barrier to the adoption of these novel support behaviors is widespread hesitancy for organizational involvement in one's nonwork life, particularly within an aspect as potentially intimate as sleep or identity. Indeed, leader support for employee familial and nonwork needs has only recently become a value in the workplace due to evolving societal needs of the workforce (e.g., Lirio et al., 2008). As such, researchers and practitioners alike must aim to examine and understand the potential nuances that may arise when incorporating new forms of support into the broader work-life supportive leadership framework, as the slow rate of FSSB adoption in workplaces may be indicative of the degree of openness that the workforce may have toward organizational and leader involvement in their nonwork lives.

Understanding leader needs

As science and practice integrates and implements work-life supportive leadership, qualitative research may prove to be a promising starting point for researchers and practitioners to understand the various leader-centric considerations that may precede effective work-life supportive leadership. Due to the relative novelty of work-life supportive leadership, practitioners should aim to understand the leader's perspective through qualitative interviews. Conducting interviews with leaders can help pinpoint where and when organizations should intervene or provide resources to ensure successful accomplishment of a goal (Brown & Sitzmann, 2011). Additionally, practitioners should aim to identify the tasks performed by leaders and the knowledge, the skills necessary to

perform them effectively, as well as whether trainings are necessary to improve performance, and leader readiness for training; Cascio & Aguinis, 2015). Utilization of qualitative methodology is likely to provide both the practitioner and researcher with critical and rich information related to work-life supportive leadership about how to develop and adjust trainings or performance appraisals, as well as create research questions that may help move the field of work-like supportive leadership forward.

Conclusion

The present review shifts the current paradigm surrounding work-life supportive leadership literature by emphasizing and prioritizing the leader. Through this integrative review, we provide a testable model that scientists and practitioners can use to make meaningful improvements in organizations that coincide with evolving societal needs and values. Overall, we must generate conversations among scientists and practitioners as well as move toward a framework of work-life supportive leadership that benefits the employee, organization, *and* the leaders.

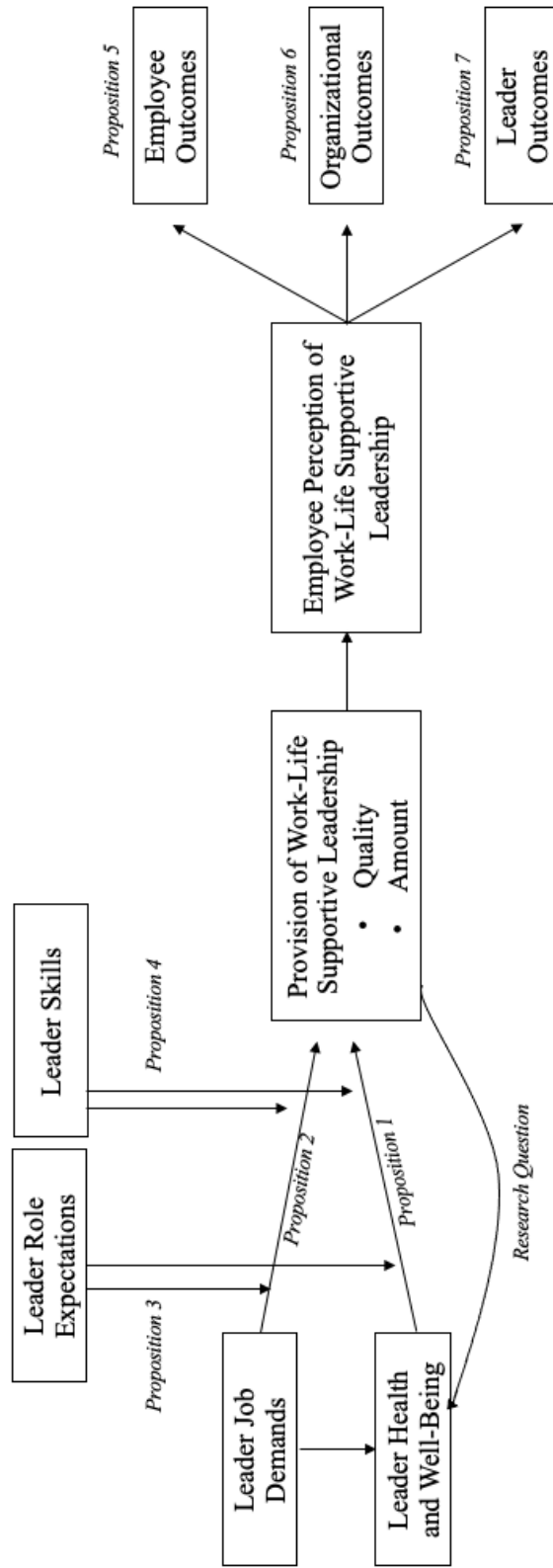


Figure 3.1. Support enabling framework

Chapter 4: The Leader's Perspective: A Qualitative Investigation of Workplace Leader
Experiences in Providing Support

Jordyn J. Leslie

Portland State University

Tori L. Crain

Portland State University

Liu-Qin Yang

Portland State University

Cynthia D. Mohr

Portland State University

Talya N. Bauer

Portland State University

Abstract

Over the past two decades, there has been an increasing call for leaders to support employee needs not only at work, but also in nonwork life (e.g., Hammer et al., 1997). A substantial portion of research has been dedicated to understanding the benefits of leader support for employees and organizations (Kossek et al., 2021), yet leader experiences with support provision have been overlooked. Through semi-structured interviews with 32 self-identified leaders in organizations, I provide an exploratory investigation into what factors are affecting a leader's ability to provide support, how providing support impacts the leader themselves, and how leaders view support as either a positive or negative part of their job. Thematic analysis revealed factors that may inhibit a leader's ability to provide support such as a lack of support from their own leaders and the organization, tensions between their various roles and demands, and unhelpful employee behaviors. Conversely, leaders believed tenure in their leadership role made them a better supporter. Results also suggested that providing support may take a toll on leader health and well-being. Overall, however, leaders believe that although there are costs to providing support, there also are benefits. These findings lay the groundwork for scientists and practitioners to expand the existing theoretical and empirical knowledge surrounding support by emphasizing the perspective of the leader. In addition, the findings of this study demonstrate the untapped potential to improve the support provision process for all stakeholders – the employee, the organization, *and* the leader.

Keywords: leaders, health, well-being, support, total worker health

Chapter 4: The Leader's Perspective: A Qualitative Investigation of Workplace Leader Experiences in Providing Support

Leaders are the backbone of organizations. For decades, organizational scholars have highlighted the leader's unique and influential role in the workplace (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2003; Hammer et al., 2021a; Hogan et al., 2018; Major & Lauzun, 2010). Leaders are key to fostering worker health, safety, and well-being in the workplace, and have been referred to as the primary source of social support for workers (NIOSH, 2018; Punnett et al., 2020; Schill & Chosewood, 2013). The past two decades of scholarship on leader support were marked by an increasing call for leaders to support employee needs not only at work, but also in nonwork life (e.g., Hammer et al., 1997). Specifically, given their unique position within the organization, workplace leaders have the power to act as the bridge between employees' work and non-work lives (Major & Lauzun, 2010).

For this reason, scholars have leveraged leaders as an effective point of intervention for improving employee work and nonwork outcomes (Hammer et al., 2021a; Montano et al., 2017). Indeed, empirical research has documented the value of support in fostering a wide array of beneficial employee outcomes such as reduced work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict (e.g., Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Muse & Pichler, 2011), better employee sleep (e.g., Sianoja et al., 2020), increased positive emotions (e.g., Mohr et al., 2021), higher job satisfaction (e.g., Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012), improved job performance (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016), reduced personal/social functional impairment (e.g., Hammer et al., 2021a), increased work engagement (e.g., May et al., 2004), as well as lower turnover intentions (e.g., Hammer et al., 2021a; Nohe

& Sonntag, 2014). Therefore, given that leaders are a critical asset for employees and organizations, it is imperative for leaders to be functioning at the highest level to realize the full potential of leader support.

However, the leader's voice is largely absent from the support literature, which has significant implications for science and practice given that we are viewing the support provision process through a narrow and unrealistic lens. By overemphasizing the value of support behaviors for employees and organizations (Kossek et al., 2022), we now have an unbalanced understanding of the support provision process such that leader experiences are overlooked. One consequence of this imbalance is the gap in our understanding of antecedents to leader support behaviors (Crain & Stevens, 2018). Another example is the overwhelming evidence documenting positive benefits of support for employees in navigating their work and nonwork life as well as for organizations (Kossek et al., 2022), yet we have many outstanding questions about how the support process may impact the leader. Accordingly, we must begin to apply a balanced approach by placing equal emphasis on the leader's experiences of the support provision process. Such an approach can guide research and practice toward an appropriate and necessary consideration of the leader as a primary stakeholder and facilitate the identification of barriers, resources, and outcomes of the support process for the provider rather than just the recipient.

A notable example of this is recent evidence that suggests leader health and well-being has been deteriorating, as managers reported experiencing a significant increase in burnout in 2021 (Harter, 2021) and are exceedingly exhausted, disengaged, and

unhealthy, above and beyond what is being reported by non-leader employees (e.g., Hatfield et al., 2022; Inceoglu et al., 2021; Kaluza et al., 2021; Matick et al., 2022). Research has also shown that, given their role within the organization, leaders are particularly prone to high levels of burnout, fatigue, and lack of sleep (e.g., Inceoglu et al., 2021; Svetieva et al., 2017; Williamson et al., 2021). Leadership coach and CEO Dan Pontefract (2022) writes “I have never felt such angst as I do these days throughout my tenure of supporting leaders. Wherever I turn, I see palpable levels of distress, the likes of which I have never seen” (p.1). Indeed, leaders are more likely to ruminate about work during their nonwork time than non-leader employees (Matick et al., 2021). To make matters worse, leaders seem to be ignoring their declining health and well-being (Hatfield et al., 2022), or sacrificing their well-being for professional gain (e.g., Le, 2019; Neale, 2020; Smith, 2017). The declining health and well-being of our leaders should be concerning for academics and practitioners alike, given how critical leaders are for the sustainability of our workforce. Put simply, organizations depend on leaders to perform and employees rely on leader support.

For this reason, it is necessary for research to begin exploring whether leaders are being stretched beyond their capacity when asked to support their employees. Consequently, such research can inform future interventions to better support leaders and ultimately their employees. Given the integral nature of leaders to worker health, safety, and well-being, combined with alarming statistics of the workforce’s mental health and leader’s own well-being, there is an emerging need to understand the leaders’ perspective as it relates to their ability to support workers and subsequently, represents a significant

health, safety, and economic burden. Overall, this work will have noteworthy practical impact by exploring the needs of leaders and their employees, identifying potential avenues for organizations to better support leaders, and guiding future research to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of integrated support interventions.

Review of leader support literature

Leader support is critical for fostering worker health, safety, and well-being among workers (NIOSH, 2018; Punnett et al., 2020; Schill & Chosewood, 2013). Support refers to specific behaviors exhibited by leaders in the workplace that aid employees in managing their work and nonwork (e.g., family, sleep) stressors (Hammer et al., 2009; Hobfoll, 1989). The support literature is largely rooted in resource-based theoretical frameworks (Hobfoll, 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2018) which suggest that leaders provide resources to employees through support behaviors at work. Inherently, this perspective takes a top-down approach such that leader is the provider of resources and the employee is the recipient. Thus, the breadth of our current empirical understanding of support is disproportionately focused on the outcomes of leader support behaviors for employees, teams, and organizations (Guo et al., 2024; Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012).

As a result, our understanding of leader-level antecedents to the support process is scant (Crain & Stevens, 2018). A notable exception is the model proposed by Straub (2012) which outlines a variety of individual antecedents to family supportive supervisor behaviors (i.e., behaviors that supervisors engage in that are supportive of employees' family roles [FSSB]; Hammer et al., 2009). Straub (2012) posits that, at the individual level, a leader's own experiences with work-nonwork issues (either personally or through

a close other), life course/family stage (e.g., partnering, child rearing), social identification (common group membership, demographic similarity), and gender roles (feminine vs. masculine) are likely to influence the extent to which a leader engages in FSSB. From this theoretical model, empirical work has mostly tested and established the link between dyadic similarity (i.e., race, gender, parental status) and exhibited support behaviors by the leader (Basuil et al., 2016; Foley et al., 2006; Huffman & Olson, 2017; Sargent et al., 2022; Schemmel, 2023). Interestingly, a recent review of the support and leadership literature found that, across 38 studies, none of them considered leader family and nonwork experiences as a precursor to their support behaviors (Kossek et al., 2022). In an effort to guide the focus of support literature, Kossek and colleagues (2022) drew from leader development research to outline potential antecedents including leader short-term family experiences such as work-family conflict, relationship conflict, or caregiving responsibilities as well as leader long-term family experiences such as childhood environment and family violence or aggression (Kossek et al., 2022). Researchers are beginning to take this perspective, as a recent study has documented the link between leader experienced family-work conflict and downstream FSSB provision (Pan et al., 2021). Two notable exceptions that extend beyond leader nonwork experiences and demographic antecedents examine the link between leader workaholism (Pan et al., 2018) or leader role perceptions (“is it my job?”; Ellis et al., 2022) to downstream support behaviors. It is important to note that these individual-level variables are theorized to increase a leader’s felt responsibility (i.e., personal obligation to bring constructive change; Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and therefore promote supportive behaviors (Straub,

2012). Thus, of the limited antecedents to support behaviors that have been identified at the leader-level, the vast majority are focused on the leader's distal nonwork experiences and fixed demographics.

Beyond individual-level antecedents, Straub (2012) also outlined a variety of contextual level antecedents of leader support behaviors. Specifically, Straub (2012) identified broader work-family culture of the organization, top management openness to work-family issues, reward systems for supporting work-family needs, and access to work-family infrastructure (i.e., availability and competency to utilize) as key contextual factors that may play a role in a leader's ability or decision to provide support to their employees. Empirical research has substantiated this theoretical framework, identifying family-supportive policies such as flexible schedule availability (Hammer et al., 1997; Matthews et al., 2015; O'Driscoll et al., 2003; Russell et al., 2009; Shockley & Allen, 2007), family-supportive culture (Guo et al., 2024; Las Heras et al., 2015), and family-supportive organizational perceptions (Allen, 2001) as preceding variables that influence the support provision process (Lauzun, 2010). It is theorized that the contextual level variables drive leader motivation to engage in support behaviors, as they promote leader psychological empowerment (i.e., motivating phenomenon that cultivates meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact; Straub, 2012; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In sum, the breadth of research on contextual level antecedents has focused on the boarder organization or top-down messaging. Although there have been strides made by scholars to begin to identify the preceding processes to support provision, the scope is still relatively narrow such that we lack an understanding of the more proximal and

nuanced antecedents that may motivate or deter leaders from engaging in support behaviors.

A small line of research on leader support behaviors has started to shift away from the predominant resource-oriented theoretical perspective in an attempt to tap into the dyadic complexity of support provision, instead drawing from social exchange theory (SET) (Bagger & Li, 2014; Guo et al., 2024; Rofcanin et al., 2018). Specifically, SET posits that high-quality relationships between entities (in this case, a leader and employee) are built through trust, loyalty, and commitment and both upward and downward exchange of resources, such that both the leader and the employee provide resources to each other (Bernerth et al., 2007; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Scandura et al., 2008). Relatedly, researchers use SET theory to suggest that the provision of support by the leader can facilitate the development of a high-quality relationship with their employees (i.e., leader-member exchange [LMX]; Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Major & Morganson, 2011) and can induce a feeling of needing to reciprocate such support within the recipient (i.e., upward exchange of resources). Accordingly, Straub (2012) conceptualizes LMX as a predictor of nonwork support provision. Empirical evidence has started to link high-quality LMX to increased provision of FSSB (e.g., Morganson et al., 2017), resulting in an upward resource exchange. Of the employee-to-leader resources that have been documented thus far, the majority emphasize employee attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, turnover (e.g., Bagger & Li, 2014) and intrinsic motivation (e.g., Marescaux et al., 2020). Within this line of literature, the leader

perspective is still largely disregarded. Indeed, most research on LMX, similar to that of support behaviors, focuses on the benefits of high LMX for employees and organizations, but often overlooks the benefits that a leader may derive from such relationships such as feedback-seeking (Chun et al., 2018; Dulebohn et al., 2012; Wilson et al., 2010). For this reason, scholars have called for investigations into leaders' perceptions in LMX relationships (Tse et al., 2018) as empirical evidence on leader-employee relationships and leader-oriented outcomes is minimal (for exceptions see Bernerth and Hirschfeld, 2016 and Richter-Killenberg and Volmer, 2022). Overall, there are calls for further investigation on the support provision process utilizing the SET and LMX perspective (Guo et al., 2024) as it is relatively understudied yet provides a nuanced understanding of the dyadic nature of the support process.

Not only are leader-centric antecedents of the support process minimally studied, but we know even less about how engaging in support can impact the leader. Demonstrably, Kossek and colleagues (2022) conducted a review of the literature related to work-life supportive leadership (i.e., when the leader prioritizes providing support for employees in managing work, family, and personal life roles and such support is experienced by the employees themselves). Through their review, Kossek and colleagues (2022) demonstrate support for a "dual" agenda which suggests that support provided by the leader mutually benefits employee work and nonwork outcomes, as well as organizational outcomes, yet no leader outcomes were identified. Interestingly, a recent meta-analysis confirms this finding by only delineating employee work and nonwork outcomes from existing empirical literature (Guo et al., 2024). Further, Straub's (2012)

theoretical framework of FSSB details only employee- and team-level outcomes, thereby neglecting the leader as a central player in the model. The majority of literature on social support in the workplace emphasizes the positive practical value of middle managers in providing support (Major & Lauzun, 2010), with a small handful of studies beginning to recognize the taxing effect this may have on middle management individuals (Anicich & Hirsch, 2017; Floyd & Lane, 2000). For example, support behaviors are typically studied as something that is a job resource for the recipient (e.g., Hammer et al., 2009), as mentioned previously, but is recently being studied as a job demand for the provider, resulting in a loss of resources (i.e., Yang et al., 2018).

Given that very few studies have examined support from the standpoint of the leader, I intentionally chose to employ qualitative methodology as it is appropriate for conducting initial explorations, identifying overarching themes, and generating rich descriptions of this unique phenomena to inform practice and guide empirical investigations (Locke, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Researchers have noted the nature of leadership research regarding the absence of alternative methodologies, such that the breadth of the literature relies on quantitative and cross-sectional investigations (Dinh et al., 2014; Hiller et al., 2011). Of the leadership studies that have utilized qualitative methods, however, many have been important and influential in the generation of novel research streams such as the role of leaders within change processes (Bryman, 2004) or different forms of leader behavior (e.g., Blasé & Roberts, 1994, Bryman, 2004). However, qualitative methodology has been minimally applied to research on support provision as a specific and nuanced leader behavior. As such, this study employed

qualitative research to obtain rich descriptions and an initial understanding of leader experiences of the support provision process to expand theory and guide empirical investigations.

Guiding research questions

As demonstrated through the review of the literature, there is limited knowledge about the leader's experience of the support provision process. However, due to the well-established benefits of leader support behaviors, it is essential for researchers and practitioners to understand how to promote and maintain these supportive behaviors amongst leaders. To this end, I sought to answer three of the most pressing, outstanding questions surrounding the leader's perspective of support provision that will be most impactful for the generation of ideas on how to alter the leader's environment to subsequently enhance the support provision process for all parties involved.

Research Question #1: What is facilitating or inhibiting a leader's ability to provide support?

Minimal work has been conducted to determine a broader range of antecedents, beyond those specified by Straub, that may influence the support provision process (Crain & Stevens, 2018). In fact, the majority of antecedents to FSSB have been derived from empirical studies in which more emphasis has been placed on the recipient of support (i.e., the employee) than the provider (i.e., the leader). As a result, this study serves as an initial step in answering calls to identify various antecedents at differing levels that may be influencing the provision of various forms of support (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Straub, 2012), particularly from the perspective of the support provider.

For example, what factors of the leader's immediate workplace environment are derailing their ability to provide support? How do the workplace relationships with those close to the leader promote or prevent the leader from providing support? How does the leader negotiate between their supportive role and other aspects of their job? Do leaders feel overworked? Indeed, mainstream media outlets and empirical research suggests that the U.S. culture places unique pressures and demands on leaders (e.g., Cutrone & Nisen, 2012) – such as the implicit association between career success and time at work (Svetieva et al., 2017) – which may be a preceding factor in a leader's ability to effectively engage in support as part of their role. This paradigm shift is likely to make significant advancements to our understanding of how leader support is functioning in the workplace. Overall, this study guides research and practice from just simply encouraging leader support behaviors to first identifying the potential obstacles that leaders face toward providing complex and nuanced forms of support.

Research Question #2: How does providing support impact the leaders themselves?

Scholars have repeatedly demonstrated that healthy and productive employees are essential for achieving beneficial organizational outcomes (e.g., Henderson & Horan, 2021). In addition, research has placed significant emphasis on the leader as the key driver of employee and organizational success (Hammer et al., 2011; Kotter, 2017; Kossek et al., 2022; Yukl, 2008). Such an approach, however, has traditionally led to oversight on how support provision impacts the leader. Research has relatively ignored how the various responsibilities associated with a leader's role in the workplace can have a unique impact on leader-centric outcomes. Of the sparse literature that has examined

the relationship between leader-centric factors and leadership behaviors, most have focused on leader health and well-being as a predictor of subsequent performance. For example, Byrne and colleagues (2014) found that leaders' depressive symptoms, anxiety, and alcohol consumption predicted lower transformational leadership and higher abusive supervision. In addition, two separate studies by Barnes and colleagues (2015; 2017) found that depleted leaders, specifically leaders' sleep-related health issues, are more likely to be abusive and are less likely to be viewed as charismatic by their employees. However, less scholarly effort has been allocated toward examining the relationship between specific demands associated with the leader's role in the workplace and subsequent leader-centric outcomes such as health and well-being, performance, or work-life outcomes, as they are likely to be different than the average, non-leader employee. One notable exception is a recent meta-analytic review by Kaluza and colleagues (2020) which suggests that destructive or constructive leadership is linked to subsequent long-term negative or positive leader health and well-being, respectively. For example, leaders who engaged in behaviors that improve the quality of relationships with employees (i.e., support) were more likely to have positive long-term well-being (e.g., happiness, life satisfaction, positive affect) whereas leaders who engage in passive behaviors (i.e., disregard for employees, hostility) were more likely to have negative short-term well-being.

Although the stream of literature focusing on supervisor support is an advantageous starting place to begin placing emphasis on the leader's perspective, scholars have yet to address the relationship between engaging in support provision and

leader outcomes. For example, does providing support drain leader energy or does it rejuvenate them? Do leaders think their own productivity at work is increased or decreased as a result of supporting their employees? Does demonstrating care and concern for their employees have a unique toll on their affective energies? Answers to these questions may also give us timely insight into why leaders are experiencing high levels of distress and declining health and well-being in recent years (e.g., Barling & Cloutier, 2017; Hatfield et al., 2022; Pontefract, 2022). As such, this study illuminates the leader's experience in relation to how they feel providing support impacts their own health and well-being, performance, and work-life outcomes.

Research Question #3: What are current leader perspectives on the support provision process?

Given that the large majority of literature on leader support provision in the workplace has prioritized the benefit to employees and organizations, we currently lack a broad understanding about how leaders feel about engaging in support. For example, are leaders burdened by their supportive role or do they find it to be enjoyable? Is leader appraisal of support as a specific job demand generally positive or negative? Undeniably, most empirical and theoretical work to date has been concerned with delineating downstream effects of supportive supervision, while relatively less effort has been put toward understanding leader motivation to either engage in or avoid such supportive behaviors (Crain & Stevens, 2018). Given that scientists and practitioners are calling for leaders to increasingly support their employees work and nonwork lives (Kossek et al., 2022), we must understand how leaders are viewing their supportive role as either

positive (e.g., fulfillment) or negative (e.g., resentment), as this may be contributing to declining levels of leader health and well-being that is being discussed in mainstream media and empirical research (e.g., Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Hatfield et al., 2022; Pontefract, 2022). As a result, a major concern is that existing models of support provision are incomplete and inadequate to fully understand whether leaders see the value in providing support behaviors or perceive such behaviors as a hindrance, which has implications for practice in maintaining sustained and effective performance by leaders in their supportive role. Thus, I identify overarching themes to illuminate the underlying connotation of leader perspectives as it relates to the support provision process to guide future science and practice toward identification of leader-centric drivers and a more true-to-life and well-rounded approach to the promotion of leader support in the workplace.

Method

Participants

The current study sampled self-identified leaders over the age of 18, who have direct reports, work over 20+ hours, and live and work in the U.S. In addition, participants were eligible if they worked under hybrid or in-person work structures, but not fully remote as support provision that is completely virtual is likely a different phenomenon that requires its own study. In terms of the industry, participants were eligible if they worked in the professional, scientific, and technical services work sector, which is the single largest industry sector representing about 1 in every 15 jobs in 2021 (approximating to 15% of the total economy; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Employees within this industry specialize in performing professional, scientific, and

technical activities such as advertising and public relations, accounting and tax preparation, computer systems design, architectural and engineering services, creative services, and IT services. This industry is projected to grow 7.3% over the 2021-31 decade (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). For this reason, it is important to understand how the leaders within this industry are functioning, as their behavior is likely to impact a large portion of the employees within the U.S. workforce. In addition, these organizations are traditionally hierarchically structured, such that leaders have the same group of direct employees day-to-day and are likely having more regular “check-in” meetings. Such structure within the organization is likely to facilitate trust and more personal exchanges between the leader-employee dyad, leading to opportunities to provide support. As such, these leaders likely have enough decision latitude (i.e., control over job tasks and conduct; Karasek, 1979) to provide effective nonwork support to their employees.

The final sample was comprised of 32 individuals with ages ranging from 26 to 63 ($M = 43.48$, $SD = 10.29$). Out of the 32 participants, 19 participants identified as women (61.3%) and 13 participants identified as men (38.7%).¹ Twenty-seven

¹ Given the theoretical and empirical link between leader gender identity and exhibited support behaviors, I included the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) to understand the average femininity of participants in this study. I utilized the adapted version that includes 10 items derived from the original 60-item BSRI scale (Sumra et al., 2019). An example item is “Gentle” and participants could respond using a 7-point Likert scale with options ranging from never to always. Higher scores on this scale represent higher affiliation with feminine traits. For this sample, the average femininity was 5.78 ($SD = 0.64$), suggesting that leaders in this study were more feminine leaning (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.72$). This is aligned with the gender demographics indicating that the large majority of participants identified as female.

participants identified as white (87%), 4 identified as Asian (9.7%), and one identified as Other/Multiracial (3.2%). Most participants identified as heterosexual ($n = 26$, 83.95%) were married ($n = 23$, 74.2%), and living without a disability ($n = 30$, 96.3%). The majority of participants had a graduate or professional degree ($n = 18$, 58.1%), and reported a total household income (pre-taxes) of \$100,000-\$199,999 in the last 12 months ($n = 15$, 48.4%). Regarding caregiving responsibilities, most participants ($n = 14$) had two children (45.2%) or no children ($n = 13$, 41.9%), with the maximum being four. However, about 61.3% ($n = 19$) of the participants did not have children under the age of 18 living at home and 93.5% ($n = 29$) did not have children living at home with developmental disabilities or sicknesses. Finally, the majority of the sample ($n = 28$, 90.3%) did not have eldercare responsibilities. Participants were located in 12 different states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington.

Regarding work characteristics, the participants in this sample worked an average of 47.77 hours per week ($SD = 9.78$). The maximum number of employees supervised ever ranged from 1 to 100 ($M = 25.35$, $SD = 27.99$). Similarly, the maximum number of employees currently supervised at the time of the study ranged from 1 to 100 ($M = 14.29$, $SD = 21.25$). Approximately 61.3% ($n = 19$) of participants worked under a hybrid (i.e., remote and in person) work model. Those who worked hybrid formats spent an average of 49.1% of their time working remotely, with approximately 62% of their interactions with their direct reports occurring virtually. Leader tenure ranged from 2 to 35 years ($M = 11.90$, $SD = 9.01$), with specific organizational tenure ranging from 0 to 25 years ($M =$

5.06, $SD = 5.43$). Overall, the majority of participants identified as being part of the science ($n = 11$, 35.5%) or management and consultants ($n = 10$, 32.3%) portions of the professional, scientific, and technical services industry.

Procedure

Recruitment

Leaders were recruited through convenience sampling and subsequently snowball sampling. Specifically, information for the study was dispersed through social media sites (e.g., Facebook, X, LinkedIn). Flyers were also prepared for dispersal to ensure accurate transmission of information. The study has been approved by the Portland State University Institutional Review Board. Potential participants were screened through a survey via Qualtrics to ensure they fit the inclusion criteria (see Appendix E for survey). Consent to the study was asked via Qualtrics and verbal consent was obtained at the start of each interview.

Data Collection

Data collection took place from September of 2023 to January of 2024. Leader participants completed one hour-long virtual semi-structured one-on-one qualitative interview via Zoom in exchange for a \$20 incentive. Virtual interviews were chosen over in person interviews given that they do not require the participants to be in the same geographical location of the interviewer, facilitating faster and easier recruitment (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). In addition, virtual interviews are better for scheduling flexibility, which is arguably necessary given the sample, and for ensuring a high-level of anonymity which thereby promotes more honest responses (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

Zoom is a video conferencing platform that has been recommended for virtual qualitative interviews given its ability to securely record and transcribe interviews (e.g., Archibald et al., 2019; Oliffe et al., 2021). The primary investigator conducted the majority of interviews for this study, with one research assistant being sufficiently trained to facilitate five of the interviews. Participants received information about what to expect prior to their interview via email, and verbal consent was requested at the beginning of each interview. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission. Participants were asked to keep their video on for the duration of the interview to ensure that participants were only participating in the study once and to allow the interviewer to see emotionality behind statements. However, the video was not retained for analysis and was securely deleted once data collection was complete.

Interview questions were semi-structured. Questions were intentionally aimed at addressing the primary research questions of the study, but following previous qualitative protocol, I asked follow-up questions based on the participant's responses to the core questions (King, 2004). The questioning process was iterative, such that questions were altered in subsequent interviews based off of what I learned in prior interviews. For example, the question "*How could the organization make it more likely that you provide support?*" elicited a theme of reflecting on support from the participant's own leader, which led me to add a follow-up question to future interviews specifically asking participants to reflect on this phenomenon by asking "*Do you feel adequately supported by your leader?*". In addition, I purposefully structured the questions around using conversational, common language that is straightforward and simple to facilitate

discussion and deeper understanding of the project aims. Sample questions include: *If you were to think about one of your direct reports that you spend the most time with, what are all the things you are trying to navigate with them right now?; How has supporting your employees with work and nonwork issues influenced you?; and, Can you tell me about any obstacles you run up against when trying provide support.* See Appendix B for the full interview protocol.

Interviews were halted once saturation was reached (i.e., participants ceased to provide new information compared to prior interviews). Researchers have had varied recommendations about the number of qualitative interviews that are necessary for thematic saturation, such that guidelines have ranged from 6 to 17 (Bertaux, 1981; Guest et al., 2006). In addition, through a comprehensive review, Mason and colleagues (2010) indicate 50-60 interviews is almost never necessary with regard to saturation. Based on similar qualitative studies on leadership and leader behavior and their respective sample sizes (e.g., Rupprecht et al., 2019; Sergent & Stajkovic, 2020), I had anticipated reaching saturation within approximately 30 interviews. However, in practice, we reached saturation around 28 interviews. Still, four additional interviews were conducted to ensure that no new themes emerged.

Transcription

Upon completion of each interview, audio recordings were transcribed using Whisper, which is an online automatic speech recognition (ASR) software provided by OpenAI that approaches human-level robustness (Xie et al., 2023). Whisper was run via Google Colaboratory (i.e., Google Colab) using Python code to enable the graphics

processing unit (GPU) acceleration which facilitates faster transcription generation.

Transcripts were double checked by myself and the research assistants for accuracy (e.g., corrected errors, removed words spoken twice) and identifying information was removed. Once transcripts were finalized, they were imported into our data analysis software (i.e., Atlas.ti).

Data Analysis

The research team handling the data consisted of the primary investigator, as well as three research assistants, who had varying degrees of familiarity with the primary constructs of interest. Interviews were coded independently (i.e., individually with no input from other coders) to reveal overarching themes using Atlas.ti software, which is an accessible and easy-to-use platform for qualitative data analytics. Reflexivity exercises (i.e. journaling after each interview, collaboration with coders of varying backgrounds, developing narrative autobiographies; Olmos-Vega et al., 2022) were completed recurrently to bring any biases, assumptions, and beliefs to the awareness of the investigator to prevent such influences from altering the conclusions reached in this study. See Appendix C for brief reflexivity statements (i.e., narrative autobiographies) from each coder.

Interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis via *in vivo* (i.e., a priori research questions were set aside to let the data drive the creation of codes) and axial coding (i.e., coding technique that facilitates the identification of linkages between initial codes; Braun & Clark, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Tracy, 2018). Thematic analysis is appropriate for studies that aim to be exploratory and form a

foundational guide for future science (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It also presents researchers with the flexibility to use both inductive and deductive coding techniques, allowing for both data and previous theory to facilitate interpretation. I use thematic analysis in combination with the phronetic iterative approach which allows researchers to ask a) what are the data telling me, b) what is it I want to know (based on current empirical and theoretical knowledge), c), what is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know? (connecting data back to research questions) (Tracy, 2018). For this reason, I could not take a purely grounded theory approach.

Specifically, the research team first worked to independently generate descriptive initial codes (i.e., in vivo coding/open coding). Open coding refers to coding the “who, what, when, where, and why” of participant responses (Tracy, 2018) and using participants’ own language as the basis for the code when possible (Strauss, 1987). For example, one participant described the dynamic interplay between costs and benefits of their supportive role as “worth it”, which was retained as a code and subsequently used to capture an overarching positive perspective theme that was seen across leader participants. Such practice allows for new and unanticipated phenomenon to emerge. From there, the research team moved to axial or secondary coding using a concurrent and iterative process in order to determine connections across codes that best represent the phenomena of interest while retaining participants’ voices and abstracting second-order codes. It is at this point in the coding cycle that utilizing previous empirical and theoretical knowledge to guide interpretation becomes beneficial (Tracy, 2018).

It is also important at this stage to connect code names to pre-existing terms within current science by engaging in additional research to ensure that code names were precise and descriptive of the literature in which the study aims to contribute. For example, the code RUMINATION was adjusted to WORRY to connect to the way this phenomenon was already being discussed in the occupational health psychology literature. However, it is important to note that this was only completed when pre-existing terms were capturing the phenomenon fully, rather than only partially, to prevent loss of detail in results. Finally, once secondary codes were established, the research team moved to extrapolating distinct themes that encapsulated groups of related secondary codes. In this phase, the research team discussed to ensure that the themes were representative of what the participants were sharing with us. Once themes were agreed upon, they were defined and named. See Table 4.1 for an overview of all themes as well as how they map onto and answer the a priori research questions.

Rigor

The rigor of qualitative analysis is determined through various dimensions of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, confirmability, dependability, and audit trails (Nowell et al., 2017; Padgett, 2017). To meet the requirement for credibility (i.e., are findings reasonable and based on participant views/experience?), we engaged in member checking (also called reflexive participant collaboration; Motulsky, 2021) as a validation technique to ensure the accuracy of our conclusions. A randomly selected portion of the participants who consented to serve as member checkers ($n = 7$, 20% of the total sample and 40% of those who agreed to serve as member checkers) were sent a short summary of

results (see Appendix D) and were asked to provide any feedback on whether they resonated with the results/felt the findings were representative of their experience. Previous member-checking involved researchers sending participants actual transcripts to provide feedback on; however, researchers have noted that this is time-consuming and ineffective given how little feedback is usually received from participants when they are presented with raw transcripts (McKim, 2023). Instead, it is advisable to give participants what will be shared with readers. In other words, participants should be provided a synopsis of the findings, including quotations, given that they are the experts and should have a larger say in the final product of the study (McKim, 2023). Such a process also allows participants to visually see how readers will view their stories or experiences, allowing them more agency in how their perspective is being communicated to a larger audience. Seven participants responded to the following four questions in their review of the synopsis document: 1) After reading through the findings, what are your general thoughts? 2) How accurately do you feel the findings captured your thoughts/experiences? 3) What could be added to the findings to capture your experiences better? 4) If there is anything you would like removed, what would that be and why? (McKim, 2023). As such, the final results are representative of a reflexive participatory collaboration between the research team and the participants themselves.

To establish transferability (i.e., generalizability of findings to other circumstances, contexts), I intentionally had a more stringent list of inclusion criteria (e.g., in-person/hybrid work structures, professional/technical/scientific industry) to attempt to recruit a sample of leaders that represent a large portion of the American

workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022) as well as understand exactly who the conclusions derived in this study are applicable to. However, it is important to note that one of the limitations of qualitative research is generalizability (Gelo et al., 2008; McKim, 2023; Vasileiou et al., 2018), given that the approach's strength is to capture rich and detailed answers to complex research questions (McKim, 2023). As such, this study attempts to be generalizable to populations that share the characteristics of the sample (e.g., leaders in white-collar industries with an increased level of decision authority to provide support).

To establish both confirmability (i.e., neutrality of the coder) and dependability (i.e., consistency in the collection and analysis of data), I followed principles of observer triangulation (i.e., using multiple researchers to investigate a phenomenon; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Specifically, as the primary investigator, I met regularly with the team of research assistants to review codes, identify similarities, and resolve differences to ensure data quality. Given that each coder has a unique combination of backgrounds, experiences, and biases that can influence the interpretation of the data, having multiple individuals iteratively discuss and agree upon codes and themes is thought to neutralize individual thought frameworks that might plague the results if such codes were derived in isolation by a singular researcher. In addition, we also were sure to code for negative cases of codes (i.e., cases that diverge from or refute the main body of evidence provided by the majority of participants; Henry, 2015) to prevent confirmation bias and ensure we are approaching the data in a consistent way. This study was reviewed by a panel of experts (i.e., peer debriefing; Spall, 1998) in which the data and research process will be

presented to a collection of peers that are familiar with the science behind the phenomenon of interest to get feedback and incorporate alternative perspectives that are based in empirical and theoretical expertise.

Finally, audit trails (i.e., transparency in the decision-making processes throughout each stage of analysis; Padgett, 2017) were established following guidelines from Carcary (2020). For example, one of the key documentation practices for establishing our intellectual audit trail in the analysis stage was through a shared codebook through Google sheets that facilitated live tracking of decisions on code changes, definitions, and organization of codes between iterations. An example of establishing a physical audit trail includes the memos that were created by each individual research assistant in between meetings, as well as memos for the collaborative meeting in which decisions and adjustments were made.

To further establish reliability, intercoder reliability (ICR) was calculated. However, the practice of ICR is controversial within qualitative methodology, with some arguing that it is inappropriate and misaligned with the goals and iterative process of qualitative research (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Specifically, qualitative researchers' overarching goal is not to reveal generalizable objective facts, but to apply theoretical expertise to interpret the complexity of perspectives on a given phenomenon (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Thus, qualitative researchers often refute ICR as an "unwarranted attempt" to impose quantitative standards to a practice that is, at its core, meant to serve a different, descriptive purpose (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; O'Connor &

Joffe, 2020). However, ICR has also been argued to illustrate the systematicity, communicability, and transparency (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020) of qualitative studies.

As such, to further demonstrate the reliability and rigor of the present study, ICR was calculated across the research team by having each individual code a randomly selected subsample (approximating 25%) of the full dataset independently (i.e., without conferral), following recommendations from O'Connor (2020). The subsample was selected randomly to ensure representativeness of the entire data set. To calculate ICR, I exported each coder's data from the randomly selected subset of interviews in Atlas.ti into SPSS. If a given code had been applied to a data unit (i.e., quote), the relevant data are coded as 1, and if that code had not been applied, the cell shows 0. Thus, each code had four corresponding columns representing coders' applications of a given code, following guidelines provided by MacPhail and colleagues (2015). SPSS' statistical functionalities were then used to calculate Cohen's kappa. Calculations suggest that, across three independent coders, the kappa value was 0.81. Researchers indicate that a conclusive criterion for a kappa value that denotes sufficient agreement remains elusive, yet Burla et al. (2008) suggest that kappa values of 0.40–0.60 are considered satisfactory agreement and values above 0.80 suggest perfect agreement, whereas other researchers suggest .90 is acceptable. As such, intercoder reliability of this study was adequate.

Results

Below, I provide a synthesis of how leaders described their experience providing support as a leader in a workplace by highlighting five major emerging themes from interviews, which emerged from lower-level codes. The themes outlined below represent

the most salient leader concerns and experiences. Broadly, leaders indicated that although there were positive benefits to providing support, there also were some associated costs. These themes are organized such that the first four represent the most pressing and immediate obstacles that leaders were facing in relation to their ability to provide support. I organize these three themes in a descending order in attempt to illustrate the amount of emphasis on each concern demonstrated by leaders (i.e., Theme #1 was the biggest concern). Because Theme #5 and Theme #6 were discussed as something that happened to the leader as a result of providing support, they are placed at the end of the results section to illustrate that these themes likely explain the outcomes of the support provision process for leaders. Overall, the extracted themes were selected as they seemed the most meaningful to leaders, were the most perspective-shifting in comparison to our current understanding of the support provision process, and also were the most targetable factors that we can begin to improve in practice. Then, in the discussion, I utilize these themes to help pinpoint answers to the three overarching research questions of the present study. Supplementary quotes can be found in Table 4.2.

Theme #1: Support structure breakdown

First, I identified various characteristics in the leader's environment that they believed were critical in relation to their ability to provide effective support. Leaders explained two sub-themes that fall within this category. First, leaders in this study consistently reflected on the lack of support they have from their own leader as well as the broader organization. In other words, leaders were describing a hierarchical support structure breakdown, such that they were expected to provide support, but did not receive

it themselves from their own leader, and subsequently experienced a decline in their performance as a support provider. Secondly, leaders often felt a lack of support from the broader organization surrounding a lack of acknowledgement regarding their value as a leader as well as a lack of understanding regarding the reality of leader's jobs on a day-to-day basis. I describe the leader's story below to illustrate their experience with different facets of a support structure breakdown.

Lack of support from the leader's leader

Participant leaders held the assumption that organizations are traditionally structured hierarchically such that those on the top level (i.e., CEO) are expected to lead and support those under them in the hierarchy. Leaders in this study suggested that support functions as a trickle-down process, such that support provided by leaders at the top is a resource that facilitates the functioning of leaders and employees at lower levels. This hierarchical support system within an organization can be thought of as a garden hose; when the hose is unobstructed, the water (i.e., support) flows freely. Yet, when the hose is bent at any point, the water cannot flow properly and the functioning of the hose is impaired. As such, leaders in this study described experiencing a failure of the trickle-down system of support. For example, one leader noted they felt a sense of inequality when reflecting on the amount of support they were expected to provide but were not receiving. In addition, this leader notes how this lack of support was a major obstacle in their ability to provide support to their own employees:

That's kind of a downside to giving a lot of support to people, but something I would also feel like I would need a little more support in that sense. I feel like all the time I spend supporting the crew, sometimes I don't get that myself from

others. I could probably benefit or would appreciate it, I guess, from a few people at a level or two above me, you know, more regular, more structured, and formal way to kind of check in and give me a little bit more clear guidance when I struggle with things. [P43; Man, 47 years old, 11 years as leader, 25 direct reports]

Participants seemed to suggest, that in an ideal workplace environment, leaders should exist as both a recipient and a provider of support. This is particularly important given that in reality, leaders are “sandwiched” between individuals that expect their support (i.e., employees) and individuals that should be providing support (i.e., the leader’s leader). Unsurprisingly, leaders were frustrated at being put in this position. One leader creatively elaborated on this phenomenon of being a provider of support, but not a recipient, by describing a metaphor between their supportive role and being an eldest sibling:

It was just impossible and unrealistic and hard for me to be able to meet that happy place where I felt like, okay, yeah, I was able to give you all the support you needed. I tried my best to give the attention they needed. But I know that it wasn’t enough. And it’s just because I didn’t even get the attention I needed. It’s difficult to be doing your job and not let it kind of seep into your subconscious and be like, “Wait, hold up! But where’s like my support?” I know, like I have to be the person it’s kind of like that big sister dynamic or mentality. Not exactly, but it’s an example. Like a lot of times the parents put a lot of the pressure on you, and you’re the oldest, and you have to take care of everyone. [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

This participant touches on how “impossible” and “unrealistic” it felt to provide sufficient support to their employees when they felt abandoned by their own leader. The same participant described having set one-on-one meetings with their leader, but they were always postponed, pushed back, or cancelled, resulting in the leader feeling like they were “overall ignored” [P55]. Broadly, leaders in this study felt their own leader was

absent or unavailable when they needed guidance on how to navigate difficult day-to-day situations. These narratives highlight the incongruency between the amount of pressure that is put on leaders to perform and the lack of support that leaders are provided.

The implications of the support structure breakdown were not simply behavioral but psychological as well. Apart from the lack of general support that leaders were experiencing, other leaders tapped into the feeling that their emotions were not considered or cared for by their own leaders. One leader, for example, describes how receiving encouragement and appreciation would make them more excited to do a good job in their role at work, thereby demonstrating the value of support from the leader's leader:

When you rise to a level on the org chart or the pyramid or whatever, the 'good jobs' and the 'attaboys' and the 'thanks for everything' kind of go away. And that's a fallacy. That's a problem because we're still human and it's still nice to know every now and then, especially a person like me. I'm a words of encouragement kind of person. Tell me I'm doing a good job and I will show you tomorrow. You ain't seen nothing yet. I'm going to take it to the next level. [P79; Man, 53 years old, 13 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

Interestingly, leaders were not only descriptive of the experience of not receiving support, but went one step further to describe how the amount of support from their leaders decreased as they moved into higher leadership roles. Leaders expressed frustration and isolation when reflecting on their experiences as novice leader when they took on the new task of supporting employees. When probed about this experience, leaders described feeling like they had to "wing it" when navigating their new role as a leader with direct reports without any support from their own leader, forcing them to

spend extra time and energy to seek mentorship or education from other sources to cope with the transition and novel job tasks:

I'd say there is an expectation now more than there was previously that I know what I'm doing or know the details of my position and the nuances of my job that I just don't know. And I have to teach myself or find a mentor to help me out with those things. The truth is, when we take on a new role, it's a new role, right? It's new for us. If we haven't done it before and there's no one there as a sort of mentor for us, we wing it and we figure it out on the fly. And that's not very comforting. Probably not only for ourselves, but for my employees. [P81; Man, 54 years old, 34 years as leader, 100 direct reports]

This leader notes how needing to learn on the fly is likely an uncomfortable experience not only for them, but their employees. Specifically, this participant is describing how the lack of support they are experiencing in relation to their new role as a leader is likely salient because they are unsure of how to best support their own employees. Another leader exasperatingly describes why this might occur: "That's the way I see Corporate America is you get to a certain point or a certain elevation, if you will, and it's just expected that you're fine and that you're there for everybody else" [P79; M, 53, 13 years as leader, 8 employees]. As such, these leaders call attention to the broad cultural misconception that leaders are "fine" and therefore do not need support, which may be the root cause of this support structure breakdown.

Lack of support from the organization

On a similar note, leaders also described feeling a lack of support from the organization as a whole. Given that the majority of leaders in this sample felt a lack of support from their own leaders, it is not surprising to see the same sentiment being carried over to the organization. One participant described the phenomenon of feeling

like they could not rely on the organization to support them if they needed it, creating a “toxic” environment that prevents the leader from supporting their employees:

There’s a lot of pressure on leaders, and they’re not always given the help that they need from the organization. You need a community that’s there to help you as inevitably, you’re going to fall and someone needs to help you stand back up. And sometimes you need to fall and realize that that situation is not the right leadership situation for you, because it’s toxic. And you will not be able to support your people appropriately if you continue to stay in that situation. [P400; Man, 36 years old, 9 years as leader, 13 direct reports]

Leaders described an incredibly lonely experience as it relates to their role within the workplace, given that they felt they lacked a “community” to fall on if they made mistakes or needed support. This is particularly important given that, as described earlier, leaders are having to figure out their leadership role “on the fly” [P81], which may entail making mistakes throughout the learning process. However, leaders did not feel safe to have such missteps because they did not feel supported. Beyond broad organizational support, some leaders elaborated on feeling a disconnect between resources the organization was willing to provide, and what they actually need:

Managers are the backbone of your organization, but very rarely do companies really fully enable them to do what they need to do. And unfortunately, my company is no different in that regard. I think there are some resources, but not the kind of key resources we need, at least at a systemic level, to help us face the day-to-day challenges of supporting our employees. [P150; Woman, 44 years old, 2 years as leader, 1 direct report]

This may suggest that there is a gap in communication between leaders and the larger organization, such that the organization may not have a clear picture of what the leaders are actually doing and therefore what they need to succeed in their role. As the organization was not providing adequate resources, the same leader participant described

having to go out of their way to ask other individuals in the organization for help.

However, even being proactive in seeking out resources was still met with a lack of support:

I straight up asked our HR VP “Hey, do you have any resources?” When I first became a manager, “do you have any resources that’ll help me?” She was like, “sure.” And then I never heard anything. Well, it doesn’t look like I’m going to get anything. [P150; Woman, 44 years old, 2 years as leader, 1 direct report]

Leaders generally felt thwarted given that their efforts to support the organization were not reciprocated. One leader expressed enduring years of frustration and defeat from this lack of support, forcing them to step back from their role and exhibit less commitment to the organization, which should be especially concerning given the essential value of leaders in organizational and employee success:

I have felt very, very frustrated for a very long time, and sadly, honestly, the organization I’m with, lost a very long time ago, my best capacity, my willingness to put 100 percent into my role. [P260; Woman, 54 years old, 4 years as a leader, 1 direct report]

Overall, this emerging theme alludes to the breakage of the embedded hierarchical support structure within organizations. Specifically, leaders reflected on the experience of needing to be a provider of support when they are rarely the recipient of such support – either from their own leader or the organization as a whole. As participants describe, this phenomenon causes an obstruction in the necessary trickle-down of resources in a traditionally structured organization. Illustratively, if a leader does not support their leader employee, this may cause a disruption in the flow of support to lower levels of the organization, making it less likely that employees at the frontline receive support. This theme is aligned with previous theorizations and empirical research on support as a

resource in the workplace (Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012), yet the nuances of leaders being providers of support, but not recipients, is often overlooked in support literature. Thus, it seems to be the case that many workplace leaders are providing support out of a place of deficiency and isolation –in other words, leaders are pouring out of an empty cup.

Theme #2: Navigating multi-role/multi-demand tensions

Another emergent theme uncovered was that a major barrier to the provision of support, from the leader's perspective, was difficulty navigating tensions between competing roles and demands. Specifically, leaders described unique tensions that they are experiencing, above and beyond that of non-leader employees. First, leaders were confused about whether they should support organizational needs or employee needs, particularly in instances where such needs were conflicting. In addition, leaders were frustrated because they felt as though they had to choose between fulfilling the requirements of their individual contributor role or their supportive role, leaving them to abandon one or the other. Overall, participants delved into the intricacies of their role as a leader in the workplace to describe how such tensions impede their ability to provide support to their employees.

Organization vs. employee needs

Leaders expressed feeling stuck when deciding whether to support the needs of the organization or their employees when such needs were at odds with one another. In comparison to a non-leader employee, leaders are unique in that supporting employees and supporting organizational goals are both components of their position and

performance yet can often be in contention. One leader succinctly captures this tension by providing an example of a time they had difficulty navigating whether to support an employee's nonwork need (i.e., eldercare) or meet the needs of the organization:

My employee has had especially difficult conversations with her parents lately who are aging and she is trying to manage her time between supporting her parents and giving them the attention and time that they need. They live about three hours from our [workplace]. It was an especially busy time when we were just getting started so it was also a time when she really needed to be here, but she also just as a person needed to be home with her family and her aging parents. So, yeah, it was difficult to navigate that. [P81; Man, 54 years old, 34 years as leader, 100 direct reports]

Inherent in this tension is the lack of clarity that leaders may have when it comes to what aspects of their job they should prioritize. Leaders found themselves wondering if supporting the employee with nonwork needs, such as providing flexibility or time off due to eldercare demands, would cause their own performance to suffer given that the leader was also responsible for ensuring that their team is meeting organizational expectations. Participants suggest that, without a clear and supportive messaging from the organization about supporting work-family issues, leaders may experience dissonance between their role in fulfilling organizational directives and supporting their employees. In fact, leaders were unsure of whether they had permission from the organization to support employee nonwork needs and whether they would face punitive consequences if they did:

Sometimes when it comes to a personal life, you need to put the person first and put the corporation behind them. Like what happens if your employee can't come to the meeting, but the organizational expectation is that everyone's at the meeting. How do you navigate that? Because I guarantee other leaders would give very negative feedback to that employee for not making it whereas I'm like "your family comes first like you do what you need to do". Sometimes I do really

second guess myself. Like am I doing the right thing by the company by being kind of lenient? Does me being okay with them missing work for X, Y, Z or putting sick time for a mental health day, would the company be okay with that or if they actually heard I was doing that, would they criticize me for that? [P82; Woman, 26 years old, 4 years as leader, 20 direct reports]

Notably, leaders often equated support with “leniency”. Participants expressed a level of fear and anxiety that providing accommodations to employees for emerging nonwork issues, such as a mental health day or sick time, would somehow come back to hurt the leader in the future (e.g., criticism from the organization, backlash from other leaders). Some leaders even painted this tension as a “battle” such that they are bridging the gap between “administration” and the “foot soldiers” [P275; F, 40, 10 years as leader, 5 employees]. Other leaders referred to this tension as a “sweet spot” that can be arduous to identify:

I find that sometimes it’s really difficult to navigate human behavior or to find that sweet spot of being honest and loving and to be an effective supervisor, to be good at what I do. [P318; Man, 42 years old, 8 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

This leader succinctly described this intense cognitively taxing process that they had to participate in when faced with organizational and employee needs that were misaligned. It is interesting that participants described this experience as having a cost regardless of which need they choose to support. For example, the leader above described being “honest and loving” but at the cost of “being an effective supervisor” and “good at what [they] do”. This illustrates that leaders are engaging in deep and complex reasoning processes such that providing support is at odds with being an “effective” and high-quality leader. Therefore, there is some level of cognitive misalignment within leaders

that support detracts from their ability to successfully perform in the eyes of the organization.

Individual contributor vs. supportive role

Relatedly, another tension that leaders described is the experience of being forced to choose between providing sufficient support to their employees or completing job tasks that were unrelated to their supportive role. Interestingly, this tension has been largely omitted from research drawing from role theory, leadership, and support. Yet, this was a major contention for leaders in this study when asked to describe their capacity to support their employees. Specifically, leaders were frustrated and mildly annoyed when reflecting on their experience of moving into leadership roles with support expectations without shedding any of the responsibilities of an “individual contributor” (i.e., an employee who has no direct reports), as one leader noted:

Organizations see managers as just managers. It's like we're not managers, only most of the time. We're working managers, meaning we manage, lead, and support, while we also have another 40 hours a week job that we're doing, and it's just on top of it. And I don't think a lot of times that's taken into consideration when it comes to the workload. [P400; Man, 36 years old, 9 years as leader, 13 direct reports]

Leaders in this study consistently suggested that transitioning into a leader role was only associated with increase in workload and was rarely coincident with readjustment or removal of responsibilities to make high performance an attainable objective in either of their roles (i.e., individual contributor or supporter). As a result, leaders often felt as though their performance was insufficient and that they were left to their own devices when it came to organizing their work tasks. In other words, leaders

did not have the capacity to adequately meet expectations in both their individual contributor and supporter roles. For example, one participant explained the conflict between their leader and individual contributor roles day-to-day and how they felt it impacted their performance:

There are moments where my responsibilities as an individual contributor had to be put aside in order to support my team. So I think that was what I maybe struggled with at those times where it was like, I have this to do, but my first responsibility in managing this team is to make sure they are getting their stuff done and that they're able to sort their problems through. I could be really focused on something and somebody walks up to my desk or messages me, I've got to pay attention to that person in lieu of accomplishing what I need almost 100% of the time. [P292; Man, 41 years old, 8 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

Interestingly, when leaders were probed about this conflict between roles, participants described having to abandon one of the roles as a tactic or a coping strategy with the goal of meeting performance expectations in at least one role. For example, some leaders described how they were more likely to neglect supporting their employees to fulfill their responsibilities as an individual contributor:

My capacity was very limiting, and I feel like I would say neglect. I would say "Sorry I neglected you. I'm right here". I would neglect them and not intentionally. It's just at that moment it's just so much was that for me that it was hard. It was hard for me to be there when they needed me at times. And I admit it. [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

In fact, of the leaders who discussed putting their support responsibilities "on the back burner" [P41], some also indicated that support is often the first responsibility that they are willing to drop:

I think you just have to make [support] a priority, because it's often the first thing that will go. It's easy to say I have to make this presentation, or I have to do this expense report. [P89; Woman, 37 years old, 9 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

However, leaders differed in whether they were more likely to drop their individual contributor role in favor of supporting their employees. In contrast to the leaders above, other leaders were interestingly more situated toward prioritizing their employee's needs, making their own tasks come second:

My performance was affected in the fact that I had to spend a lot more time at work. Meaning that my other job responsibilities, whether it was budgetary or other corporate requirements, were always back burnered. Because of the importance of working with the employees and having the leadership aspect part of it. That was my main focus and so I always dealt with those things first and foremost. And then my other job responsibilities always took the back burner. [P41; Man, 59 years old, 35 years as leader, 25 direct reports]

Regardless of which role leaders were more willing to drop, leaders consistently mourned the lack of opportunity to develop as an individual due to their already limited capacity. Leaders described their high workload, particularly the demands related to their supportive role, as a substantial barrier to the pursuit of professional development opportunities as an individual contributor. Some leaders suggested that they have remained "stagnant" [P259; F, 42, 10 years as leader, 30 employees] in their development and expressed frustration with their lack of ability to better themselves. This presents a significant and concerning obstacle to career advancement for leaders:

I still have other areas that I want to pursue and gain knowledge in, but sometimes supporting the needs of my team have prevented me from finding the time to be able to do that. And I haven't made that a priority. whether it's some technical information, some training, just developing myself a little bit. I'll have to sacrifice some of that. [P43; Man, 47 years old, 11 years as leader, 25 direct reports]

Overall, an emergent theme of interviews was related to leaders needing to navigate tensions between multiple roles and demands. This theme is important as it elucidates the complex and intricate mental negotiation that leaders do on a daily basis

when determining the extent to which they are able to engage in their supportive role without surrendering their responsibilities to the organization and their own personal job tasks or career development.

Theme #3: Importance of the employee

Apart from the break in support structure (Theme #1) and difficulty navigating tensions (Theme #2), leaders described how their employees' behaviors often was an obstacle in their ability to provide support. Interestingly, leaders tended to approach the subject of support from a dyadic perspective, which is in contrast to the predominant top-down theoretical narrative in the support literature (Guo et al., 2024). Leaders highlighted the critical role of the employee in the support provision process, such that employee behaviors either enhance or inhibit a leader's ability to provide sufficient high-quality support. Specifically, leaders pinpointed how (a) communication from employees on their needs and (b) employee lack of trust and segmentation preferences influenced the degree to which they could fulfill expectations related to their supportive role.

Improved upward communication

Leaders collectively emphasized how improved upward communication from their employees, specifically related to employee nonwork needs, would facilitate the support provision process. In contrast to the typical view of support that has placed the onus on the leader, leaders in this study suggest that employees have a critical role in whether or not support is provided. When thinking about this theme in combination with the themes described previously, leaders hesitantly mentioned strategies how employees can ease the cognitive load leaders carry, on top of everything else on their plate.

Specifically, leaders desired improved communication from employees to facilitate the exchange of information that could guide the leader to provide better support, as one participant describes:

I feel like better communication from them [the employees] would help me guide them better because if you're suppressing thoughts and ideas and it really makes it difficult. I'm not a mind reader, so I want to help, but I need that information. I need data to make informed decisions. [P48; Man, 37 years old, 3 years as leader, 12 direct reports]

A particular scenario that leaders struggled to navigate was when an employee's performance quality was suffering, yet the employee was not communicative that they were experiencing conflict between work and nonwork demands in the first place:

I went through discussion with one of my employees just a few weeks ago, who has been very challenging to work with lately. Once we sat them down and had a really long good discussion with them, they acknowledged it, and they felt like they were being difficult to work with, and making other people not want to work with them. At the bottom of it all, they said they had a lot going on in their personal life and they were struggling. They said, "I'm sorry, but I'm probably bringing it to work". So, after talking to me for a while, they did say, "Yeah, I feel a lot better, and I think I just need to talk to you more frequently". Okay, that's what it takes. Do it. We're available. [P43; Man, 47 years old, 11 years as leader, 25 direct reports]

This leader brings specific attention to the fact that employees often wait to communicate until it is too late, suggesting that some employees may be hesitant to tell leaders about why their performance is suffering and request support. Although it is the leader's responsibility to create an environment where employees feel comfortable to request support, these particular leaders describe *wanting* employees to tell them what is going on but feeling exasperated that employees were not communicating, resulting in the leader needing to expend extra cognitive and emotional resources to read between the

lines. Specifically, leaders explained that they had to provide reactive support because of a lack of employee communication, when they would have rather provided proactive support to prevent the employee from having to struggle as well as having to deal with the repercussions of a decline in performance on their team:

I've asked like, "Hey, what happened like this was supposed to get done like, what? Yeah, what happened?" And then they would just say "I'm sorry. Maybe I should have told you that" so having more of like sometimes they just needed to communicate more with me, cause at times it turns out that a person was struggling longer than I would have wanted them to and at times I wish that they could have just expressed that sooner. [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

Although leaders described being unable to provide support due to a lack of communication, participants in this study also described how a presence of communication –specifically feedback –actually enabled them to provide support. Leaders emphasized how informal feedback from employees was particularly useful in understanding the state of their performance as it relates to support provision. One leader happily described how receiving employee feedback allowed them to adjust support behaviors to better meet the needs of their employees:

I think my direct reports have done a really great job of holding up a mirror to me about what they need from me, so that they can be more successful. They've been very forward in giving me feedback on how I can improve in that area. It's that 2-way communication of what can I do differently, so that they can feel supported. [P89; Woman, 37 years old, 9 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

Thus, participant leaders believe that employee communication –specifically information exchange and feedback –is a critical bottom-up resource that would improve the leader's ability to provide higher-quality support and subsequently, increase employee perceptions of such support. This is contradictory to the typical top-down

approach of science and practice related to support provision. These narratives suggest that leaders do not exist within a vacuum such that the behaviors exhibited by employees can determine the extent to which a leader can provide support. In sum, these leaders call attention to support provision as dyadic process that involves two key players –the leader and the employee.

Employee lack of trust and segmentation preferences

A related yet distinct facet of employee communication that leaders regularly identified was employee trust. Research has shown that employees may prefer to have integration between their work and nonwork lives, whereas others may prefer to keep their work and nonwork lives separate (i.e., “segmentation”; Marescaux et al., 2020). Leaders reflected on trust as it relates to employee boundary preferences as a unique barrier to providing nonwork support. In other words, leaders felt that employees who were more open or vulnerable allowed them to provide better support compared to employees who were more closed off or distrustful. Employee segmentation preferences and trust level may become a burden to the leader when, as one participant describes, nonwork issues begin to spillover to the workplace:

A big problem is when people are not vulnerable about [nonwork], but it’s clearly affecting their work. That’s really problematic, because I can’t necessarily ask or know to ask or want to pinpoint that for somebody. But then you’re like, “Okay, something’s going on, and I don’t know what it is, and you’re missing work a lot, or you’re not able to focus”. It’s just very hard to feel in the dark about that stuff because it creates a barrier. So yeah, I think disclosing more to your supervisors is better. [P250; Woman, 43 years old, 10 years a leader, 2 direct reports]

In this scenario, the leader describes the complexities in dealing with employees who take more of a segmentation approach to their work and nonwork life. The leader

explains how they have to tease apart what is going on in an employee's nonwork life that is impacting their performance, but doing so runs the risk of overstepping an employee's established boundaries. Leaders in this study consistently expressed desire for increased employee trust/vulnerability as it relates to support requests, as employee nonwork issues can impact work performance, regardless of the employee's boundary preferences. This can create challenges for the leader to navigate because they must balance being respectful of an employee's boundaries or addressing the obvious need for support, as one leader describes:

Trust is huge. I wish more employees were open. The more open an employee was, the better the long-term relationship seemed to be. Like there are some people that don't want to bring that [nonwork] into the workplace, but it's impossible not to. I think her being open really helped us find that balance. [P292; Man, 41 years old, 8 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

Some leaders even described the tension they feel when having to push against a segmentation boundary to provide necessary support, but losing trust as a result and further exacerbating the problem. Thus, leaders are forced to perform this intricate dance between doing their job and maintaining relationships with their employees, as one leader describes:

Sometimes you know you need to do the right thing and that's what you're trying to do. But if that person's holistically not susceptible to it, then you can kind of push them away more than you can gain an ally or gain their respect or trust. [P88; Woman, 36 years old, 7 years as leader, 74 direct reports]

Thus, by emphasizing the leader's perspective, we dissected two key employee-centric resources that leaders believe would be conducive to their performance in their

supportive role, thereby emphasizing both the leader and the employee as active participants in the relationship-building and support-provision process.

Theme #4: Leader tenure

Participants in this study seemed to suggest that the length of time they had been a leader played a role in how well they were able to support their employees. The leaders in the present study had a wide range of tenures (i.e., 2 to 35 years) with the average leader tenure being 11.9 years ($SD = 9.01$). Leaders indicated that the length of time in which they have been a leader contributed substantially to their subjective evaluations of how easy it is to navigate their role as a support provider. Specifically, leaders believed that they were better able to tailor their support to employees as they gained experience and became aware of what types of support individual employees need:

I kind of changed the way I was supporting people based on experience. When I started I was young and not aware of everything you could provide for a team. It made me change a lot, like taking care of my employees a little more. Not that I was not taking care of them before. But way more now. [P57; Woman, 51 years old, 30 years as leader, 12 employees]

Apart from awareness, other leaders believed that experience in a leader position granted them the skill to separate themselves from their employee's situation that was requiring support. Interestingly, participants seemed to suggest that separation or distance from employee needs was a beneficial skill in providing support. This seems contradictory as one might think that being closer to the employee issue begets better support, yet leaders believed that detaching was actually the key because their own feelings, thoughts, or past experiences did not drive the way they supported their employees. One leader described even being able to better handle the emotional toll of

support through detachment as a specific strategy, particularly as they progressed in their tenure as a leader:

I think I've honed support skills over the years. The more I mature as a leader and know when to just let things go, or make sure I'm not channeling my feelings, and just putting what I think aside, not necessarily in a situation, but like just not getting caught up in scenarios. [P88; Woman, 32 years old, 7 years as leader, 74 direct reports]

Some leaders noted a reevaluation of priorities throughout their tenure as a specific way that allowed them to be more supportive of their employee's nonwork needs, compared to when they were an emerging leader. Specifically, participants seemed to suggest that pride was an initial barrier in their ability to provide support when they were a new leader, indicating that new leaders may be more rigid or strict when it comes to providing nonwork support. However, once leaders had enough experience under their feet, they felt their values shift from being work-oriented to life-oriented, based on what they believed to be most important. This came across in how willing they were to be flexible with or attentive to employee nonwork needs, as one leader described:

I've learned how to just say, it's just a job. You know, like, it's okay. So I had to reset that. It took me a long time to reset that. And when I feel myself going down that, oh my God, I'm like, wait a minute, what's important? There's a girl in my team whose family's is struggling, so I say your health is more important. I look out the window and it's sunny. Like I have to like reset my wheels, but it's a long time to do that because you have professional pride or at least I do. [P78; Woman, 58 years old, 10 years as a leader, 6 direct reports]

Taking a step back, this theme is a bit contradictory to assumptions that as leaders gain tenure, they become more distant from their employee's needs, and therefore provide worse support. These narratives about tenure are also inconsistent to the first theme found (i.e., support structure breakdown) which suggests that leaders feel their

leader (who likely has longer tenure) is unsupportive. This may indicate that leaders gain experience and improve their supportive behaviors over time, but may plateau at a given point in their tenure if they are guided by the assumption that their employees (who are likely leaders themselves) are “fine” as mentioned in Theme #1. Overall, leaders tended to reflect on their experiences as a new leader and supporting their employees as something that was really hard, demanding, awkward, and confusing. Yet, leaders suggested that over time, they were able to settle into their supportive role and engage in such behaviors with ease either from increased awareness, acquisition of skills, or reevaluation of priorities. For this reason, it is important to consider this in the context of the findings of the present study, as different demands and resources may be more effective and salient for newly appointed workplace leaders when considering the support provision process.

Theme #5: Health and well-being impairment

Apart from the contextual barriers leaders described experiencing in relation to their support responsibilities, an emerging theme highlighted the potential toll that their supportive role can have on leader health and well-being. Broadly, leaders in this study felt as though the care and concern for employees that they demonstrated through supportive behaviors carried over into the leader’s nonwork life and impacted their health and well-being. Participants suggest that leaders can be set apart from the non-leader employee because they describe focal point of their stress as stemming from their role in supporting employee struggles. One leader describes how their supportive role causes stress:

I talk about it with my partner at home. Like “this is what’s going on at work. So-and-so is really struggling with something” and I explain my role in that. I don’t like the fact that it’s creating stress for them. And then it in turn creates stress for me. [P81; Man, 54 years old, 34 years as leader, 100 direct reports]

Leaders in this study described the emotionality of providing support as “draining” and a “downside” of their supportive role [P206; Woman, 54 years old, 4 years as leader, 1 direct report]. Some leaders even mentioned that supporting their team had a particular toll on their mental health, to the point that it was noticeable to those around them, as one leader describes:

Supporting my team definitely drained my mental health. It impacted my mental health to a point where my family was concerned for me for sure. My family was pretty much like, “Yeah, no, you’re not okay. You’re not healthy. This job is too much. You should consider other things.” [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

Apart from leaders acknowledging that support had a broad impact on their physical and mental health and well-being, leaders consistently described two specific health-impairing phenomena: (a) sleep loss coincident with support-related worry and (b) the consequences of empathy.

Support-related worry and sleep deficiency

One recurring health-impairment theme that leaders noted was an increase in worry related to the leader’s supportive demands and their subsequent experiences with sleep deficiency (e.g., loss of hours of sleep or restlessness throughout the night) as a result. Specifically, leaders described worrying about what struggles their employees are enduring, how to solve them, and anticipating future challenges they may face when attempting to support their employees adequately. Some leaders described that these

worries would be so tormenting that their mind would attempt to solve problems in their head while sleeping:

If something has come up with an employee issue, then I'll probably not sleep so well. I'll work at night in my head. When you care about your employees, things will keep you up at night. [P88; Woman, 36 years old, 7 years as leader, 74 direct reports]

Leaders mentioned that they would worry or have higher rates of anxiety when they felt unsure about how to provide support for a specific employee issue. Participants suggested the engaging in worry as a negative coping mechanism for when they have difficulties fulfilling their supportive role. For example, one leader describes experiencing worry/anxiety with regard to the resolution of an employee need and subsequent impacts to their sleep:

I think that when I think about my own well-being and sleep in particular, my sleep is disrupted when I have anxiety about an [employee issue] I have to address or don't know how to solve. Sometimes it's more about what I internally don't know how to do. Or maybe I'm concerned. That's when it starts to impact my own sleep. [P86; Woman, 48 years old, 10 years as leader, 2 direct reports]

Indeed, leaders described that worry had a central role in their sleep health. Specifically, leader felt providing support and anticipating support needs were a substantial obstacle in their ability to get healthy sleep given that they would be relentlessly concerned about how to support those who they care about—their employees. Leaders expressed that support-related worry, specifically in the evenings and early morning, would be the biggest contributor to their lack of sleep because they were unable to turn their mind off, as one participant details:

If I wake up at two o'clock or three o'clock in the morning, the gears start turning and what I need to do today, who's hurting, how can I help? And it's tough for me

to turn that off as soon as it's on, it's just like it's on. Now, I may lay there for a little bit, but typically I get up, get a cup of coffee and start processing how I can be effective and supportive today. [P79; Man, 53 years old, 13 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

Overall, the leaders in this study describe worry as a consequence for taking on their employee's burdens due to the care and concern they must demonstrate to be good supportive leaders. Some leaders described the inherent emotional nature of providing support as the reason for why they are restless throughout the night. It is interesting to note that some leaders believed this was the most challenging part of their role as a leader given that the nature of their role is rooted in both work and nonwork and therefore carries more emotion than tasks that are solely just work-related and has more potential to bleed into their nonwork life.

That is actually the biggest challenge of my role. Everything is both professional and personal. When it hits [an employee issue], it can be high emotion. And definitely, it's the kind of thing that keeps me up at night. [P244; Woman, 47 years old, 14 years as leader, 2 direct reports]

Thus, leaders spotlight a particularly unique phenomenon of support-related worry, such that they are unable to detach and escape from their employee's struggles at the end of the workday. Specifically, leaders were spending time and effort in their nonwork life trying to solve the problems of their employees because they felt responsibility for easing employee struggles. In the end, leaders believed that their sleep suffered due to the worry stemming from extreme levels of care and concern they held for their employees.

Empathy takes a toll

Relatedly, the participants of this study collectively expressed that having empathy when providing support can actually take a toll. This is particularly interesting because empathy is generally thought to be a positive quality, yet leaders in this study emphasized the cost of having empathy for their employees, as one participant describes:

I think when you open yourself up to being empathic towards a number of people, the cost is that you are exposed to the human condition in a lot of ways. When you hear the worst days of people on your team, day in and day out, it can take a toll on you. When they take that “risk” to connect with me, and tell me about what matters to them, I have empathy for them. And I care about them deeply, I want them to live healthy and fulfilling lives. And if they’re not getting a chance to do that, I think that can weigh on my heart a little bit. I’ve had to see my staff mourn, grieve, struggle with loss, or with let down and disappointment. That can be really difficult, that certainly weighs on my heart, or can sit in my mind. [P318; Man, 42 years old, 8 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

As this leader describes, they feel as though their employees emotionally charged nonwork struggles, such as grief or loss, is something that they “risk” also experiencing when they have empathy for their employees through the development on high-quality dyadic relationships. One participant describes how their employees are “an extension of them” and therefore the leader almost experiences the same emotions or struggles that their employees are experiencing:

When people were bringing, like their personal aspect of things like if they’re in a negative mindset, then it would impact my mindset like we’ve kind of talked about before. It’s kinda hard to ignore that or to focus on my job when there’s stressors impacting other parts of the team. Because in a way, they’re just an extension of me so if they’re not doing well, then I kind of feel it as well. [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

Inherently, empathy requires caring deeply for another person which, as leaders described, can enhance the personal nature of providing support to their employees. One participant even describes experiencing their own heavy emotional event as a result of

their employee's intense nonwork struggles, suggesting that leaders may be experiencing high levels of stress because they want to help resulting in them taking on their employee's heavy emotions:

You take it so personally. I actually had an employee that, back at the height of COVID, her husband got COVID and was like in the hospital for like three weeks and almost died. And I cried. I literally cried and I'm like this is impacting my life even though it's not my life. Like you're my people and like I care about and want to help you and your health and well-being and it kind of drags into my day. So, it's definitely hard...like their stressors and their downfalls, it really sticks with you. [P82; Woman, 26 years old, 4 years as leader, 20 direct reports]

The same leader describes having to walk a fine line between wanting to care and support their employees but having to take a step back in order to develop a protective shield so that their employee struggles have less of an impact on their personal life:

I had an employee that lost their partner a few months ago and they have been struggling now at work. And they called me crying about, you know, being alone on the holidays. And I'm like, I can't drive up there and be with there on the holidays. It just breaks your heart sometimes. And sometimes they just need someone to listen to. So, I try to just remember that I can't be their personal life support all the time. I just try to balance because can't let it impact my personal life like that anymore. [P82].

Most leaders were cognizant that empathy is necessary to provide high-quality support but also are aware that it can come at a cost. Participants seemed to suggest that this left them in somewhat of a "Catch-22" situation, such that they must have empathy for their employees to be a good leader but empathy opens them up to absorb their employee's negative experiences and weigh heavily on the leader. As such, leaders were confused and had difficulty finding that balance in protecting employees versus protecting themselves :

I don't think you can supply meaningful and true support without taking some burden on from another person. Like you have to be empathetic to really provide support. You can't be sympathetic. That's not gonna do anything. It can be belittling to take on some of that burden of whatever that support is. And if you take on too much, you get weighed down, and it kinda goes back to that thing. If you can't take care of yourself as a human, you can't take care of others. So you have to find that balance of how much you take. You can manage it and then give back in a way that helps them move forward with whatever situation they're needing support with. [P400; Man, 36 years old, 9 years as leader, 13 direct reports]

As such, leaders described a potential contingency to the benefits of empathy by tapping into the leader's perspective on support. Specifically, many leaders reflected on the toll of feeling deep empathy for their employees when providing support, particularly for negative nonwork experiences such as loss or illness. Overall, this theme demonstrates how workplace leaders, particularly those who are highly empathetic, may be experiencing a decline in their health and well-being as a result of the support provision process.

Theme #6: Motivating leader appraisals of support

Although leaders identified potential costs of their supportive role, as highlighted in Theme #4, participants in this study still retained a positive and driven perspective of the support provision process. In other words, providing support may harm the leader, it may also benefit them. Interestingly, the initial research question that drove this study was focused solely on the *capacity* of leaders to provide support yet surprisingly, leaders were also excited to discuss their *desire* to provide support despite their limited capacity. Leaders described feeling positive about and fulfilled by their supportive role because of the opportunity to see employee successes as their own. Leaders also engaged in a mental

cost-benefit analysis to determine that overall, providing support and seeing positive payoffs made the associated costs worth it.

Deriving personal success from employee success

Leaders in this study illustrated that they are able to derive positive benefits and a personal sense of fulfillment from employee successes that are a result of the leader's supportive behaviors. Undeniably, leaders believed support provision was in line with their overarching and individual goal to make progress in their performance as a supporter as well as improve the situations of their employees. When asked how they viewed their role in supporting employees, one leader energetically described how support is an avenue to achieve success as a leader, given that they believed employee success represents their own:

The measure of success for a true leader is the fruit, is the outcome, is the product. If my people are thriving, I'm a great leader. [P79; Man, 53 years old, 13 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

Some leaders described situations in which employees were struggling in their personal life and having troubles at work as a result. However, through providing support, they were able to see the employee's situation improve and then felt rewarded by having a role in that success. One leader describes this experience:

You know, I can remember a few people who were having challenging personal lives and bringing it to work and their work wasn't going well. Their performance is way down and I was able to work with them to help them get through certain things and you see them begin to perform at a high level again. Super rewarding. [P41; Man, 59 years old, 35 years as leader, 25 direct reports]

Even if leaders were not able to fully improve an employee's situation, they were able to still derive value from even *attempting* to provide support, as one leader describes:

I really want this stage of my career to not just be about money and nuts and bolts, but bringing value, bringing the next generation forward, even the employee that is not going to stay at this company. I've taught them a lot. I've taught them a lot of how to use this as a wakeup call and do better at the next gig. And I think that's great. [P90; Man, 63 years old, 20 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

Relatedly, leaders went beyond just improving their employee's situations within the organization. It was interesting to hear that leaders were not bound by their commitment to promote organizational success, such that they also found motivation in supporting their employee broadly so that the employee can be successful in their lives as well as other organizations, should the employee choose to move on:

I think it's really satisfying to see people hone skills that they didn't have before or learn things that they didn't know or continue to pursue subjects that they're interested in that they might not otherwise have been able to pursue just because of my support. It's pretty amazing to see people develop like that. And even if they don't want a career on my team, or if they don't want to stay in this position for 10 years, that's fine. I'm still here to help them develop their career in the ways that they want to develop. [P91; Man, 30 years old, 2 years as a leader, 3 direct reports]

The leader above illustrates that providing support may be more intrinsic and personal compared to extrinsic and for the purpose of the leader's performance as it exists within the organizational setting. Participants seem to suggest that, although there are associated costs to providing support, leaders may be particularly motivated to engage in supportive behaviors if they are guided by the assumption that supporting an employee's success in their work and nonwork life is their own success, as one leader describes:

The upsides for me, just seeing people flourish and realizing that they are so much more capable than they think they are. When I can help unlock that in another person and make them realize that you are smart, and you do know what you're doing. And you have so much to add, not only to this organization, but the world. That's what is an upside for me. [P400; Man, 36 years old, 9 years as leader, 13 direct reports]

Overall, these insights provided by leaders call attention to a potential cognitive framework that motivates leaders to continue providing support behaviors. Namely, leaders in this study were motivated and derive positive benefits from seeing employee successes and attributing such achievements to their own personal support behaviors. As one leader describes: "one of the most wonderful things you could do is to create a flower bed and allow your employees to grow" [P318; Man, 42 years old, 8 years as leader, 5 employees].

Positive cognitive appraisals

As seen in the quotes above, leaders were aware of the costs associated with providing support but also acknowledged that they were able to obtain benefits such as feelings of fulfillment when providing support had a successful outcome. However, apart from deriving success from employees, leaders were often reasoning through a nuanced cost-benefit mental analysis when considering whether participating in the support provision process is worth the associated costs (e.g., effort, time, stress).

I absolutely love supporting my employees. But can you see my hair? There's less of it and it's changed colors. So, there's a price to everything. And that's where you have to really weigh, is it worth the cost? Because it's... stressful. [P79; Man, 53 years old, 13 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

Participants seem to suggest that leaders may be faced with deciding between their own health, well-being, and productivity and supporting their employees. However,

what is most interesting is that, regardless of the costs, leaders in this sample still retained positive cognitive appraisals about the support provision process. More specifically, leaders pondered their supportive role as having embedded sacrifices, but that such sacrifices were indeed “worth it” [P88; F, 36, 7 years as leader, 74 employees], as one participant described:

I love my people. I love everybody that I get to work with and if they're struggling, I want to help get them to a good point. It takes a toll on you, but I think that's okay. I think that's a sacrifice that I'm willing to make. [P79; Man, 53 years old, 13 years as leader, 8 direct reports]

Some participants noted specific costs, such as losing time to work on other tasks (as noted in Theme #2), but ultimately, leaders *still* believe the associated gains made it worth the effort:

Supporting them probably pulled me away from some stuff that I needed to get done, or it might have forced me to open up my laptop a few times at night during the week. But to me, it felt like such a valuable thing. And I want my legacy as a supervisor to be full of thoughtful ways to show my team that I see them. So, it doesn't it doesn't feel like a sacrifice, or it doesn't feel like an impedance. [P318; Man, 42 years old, 8 years as leader, 5 direct reports]

As demonstrated above, leaders generally went beyond personal gains as a result of support to express their inherent desire to see their employees succeed in their personal and professional lives. Although there are embedded personal gains to employee achievements for a leader (e.g., performance, retention), leaders in this study were instead driven to provide support by forming meaningful connections with their employees, seeing them grow, and improving their current situation—even if it came at a cost.

I enjoy [supporting my employees]. It's also challenging at times but I think I enjoy it. Yeah, I enjoy being able to help develop others. Help guide them through challenging situations. Enjoy seeing people grow, you know. I generally enjoy it.

But managing people sometimes can be very difficult. [P43; Man, 47 years old, 11 years as leader, 25 direct reports]

Overall, the narratives about support provided by leaders in this study demonstrate that leaders generally appraise support as a positive job demand and feel particularly motivated by the success of their employees, even if it may have some downsides.

Discussion

The overarching goal of the present study was to guide the support literature toward a more holistic approach by building an initial understanding of the support provision process from the leader's (i.e. provider) perspective. Specifically, thematic analysis of 32 interviews with self-identified leaders in the U.S. revealed six emerging themes. These themes shed light on how to improve workplace contexts to facilitate support provision, how and why support –as a specific relational leader behavior – impacts the leader themselves, and broadly, how leaders are appraising the supportive function of their role. In the next section, I draw from Straub (2012) and Kossek and colleagues' (2022) frameworks of support provision to identify points of alignment and deviation as it relates to the broader research questions of the present study. See Figure 4 for a depiction of how the identified themes correspond to the different entities that a leader is situated within (i.e., the organization, the leader's leader, the leader's employees) as a way to demonstrate the unique enmeshment of a leader's position within various contexts as well as the different multi-level tensions that are experienced by leaders.

What is facilitating or inhibiting a leader's ability to provide support?

The first research question of the present study was aimed at exploring the potential barriers or resources that leaders believe play a role in their ability to provide effective support. As such, *Theme #1: Support structure breakdown*, *Theme #2: Navigating multi-role/multi-demand tensions*, and *Theme #3: Importance of the employee*, and *Theme #4: Leader tenure* answer the first research question as each theme draws attention to key factors at differing levels that can impede or facilitate a leader's support provision.

Theme #1: Support structure breakdown drew attention to the importance of a healthy hierarchical support structure, such that leaders are feeling as though they are having to be the provider of support and rarely the recipient. Specifically, leaders experienced a lack of support leader as well as the larger organization. Leaders did not reap the benefits of support in the workplace and consequently the trickle-down provision of support to the leader's own employees was inhibited. Leaders noted the lack of instrumental support (i.e., reactive provision of support for day-to-day management needs; Hammer et al., 2009) and emotional support (i.e., perceptions that one is cared for or feelings are being considered; Hammer et al., 2009) from their own leaders as a barrier to their ability to succeed in their supportive role. Although absent from theory and literature on support provision specifically (Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012), this notion is supported by resource-based theories in the organizational sciences (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2007; Gyu Park et al., 2017; Hobfoll, 1989), which

suggest that appreciation and encouragement as a form of support can serve as a resource that promotes engagement in one's job tasks.

Theme #2: Navigating multi-role/multi-demand tensions dissects the leader's unique liaison positioning between organizational strategy and the day-to-day task of supporting employees as a potential barrier to support. This tension that leaders described supports the research on the middle management perspective (Wooldridge et al., 2008), which highlights how leader's hierarchical position within the organization allows such individuals to function as mediators between the organization's strategy and day-to-day activities (Anicich & Hirsch, 2017; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Major et al., 2008; Major et al., 2007; Nonaka, 1994). Leaders experienced difficulty detangling which demand –between an organizational objective and employee nonwork need –they should fulfill, particularly when such demands were at odds with each other. Drawing from research outside of the support literature, this theme is in alignment with research that indicates how employees are more likely to neglect behaviors that are not explicitly included in their job description (i.e., prosocial behaviors; Bindl & Parker, 2011; Ellis et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2022; Sluss et al., 2011). Specifically, researchers have noted that a lack of inclusion of nonwork-supportive behaviors within formal leader job descriptions and performance requirements allows for the potential of leader discretion to flourish and impact the provision of support (i.e., Ellis et al., 2022; Hammer et al., 2009). Inherent in this tension is the consequence of ambiguous organizational expectations as it relates to supportive work-family culture (Major & Lauzun, 2010; Thompson et al., 1999) which refers to norms that recognize employees' nonwork demands and encourage use of work-family

policies, permitting leaders to be supportive of resolving conflict between employee work and nonwork needs. Previous research has demonstrated that organizational constraints, such as the lack of a clear supportive work-family culture driven by top level executives, can be a substantial barrier to leaders in adequately resolving the work-family needs of their employees (Morganson et al., 2017). In addition, leaders faced conflict when deciding whether to make progress on their own tasks as an individual contributor, or sacrifice their personal performance to engage in their supportive role as a leader. As Kossek and colleagues (2022) note, we know little about how support exists as a task within the larger bucket of leader responsibilities as it has been omitted from prior theorizations (Straub, 2012) resulting in tensions and leader confusion about what to prioritize. Thus, our existing theorizations surrounding support are insufficient at capturing the internal struggles that a leader may face when providing support.

Theme #3: Importance of the employee shifts the predominant perspective of support from a top-down approach and captures more of the dyadic (i.e., top-down *and* bottom-up) nuance in the support provision process by identifying behaviors that employee engage in that facilitates or prevents support provision. Indeed, the majority of literature on leader support behaviors for nonwork demands has drawn from principles of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory as a resource-based theoretical framework (Hobfoll, 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2018), such that leaders provide resources to employees through support behaviors at work (top-down). Interestingly, leaders in this study tended to approach the subject of support from a social exchange dyadic perspective (e.g., Bagger & Li, 2014; Guo et al., 2024; Rofcanin et al., 2018), in contrast to a resource

theoretical framework, when highlighting the resources (i.e., information exchange, feedback, trust, segmentation preferences) that could be provided by the employee to further enhance their ability to provide high-quality support and subsequently improve the exchange relationship. This aligns with Straub's (2012) conceptualization that LMX is a predictor of the extent to which a leader provides support. However, the narratives provided by leaders in this study go a step beyond simply quality of the dyadic relationship to highlight the need for employees to provide certain resources to the leader to enhance their ability to provide support.

Finally, *Theme #4: Leader tenure* highlights how leaders believe they get better at their supportive role the longer they are a leader. Leader tenure is not a factor that has been acknowledged in support literature and theory (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012), however such findings are in alignment with research that suggests employees gain useful knowledge over time that enhances performance (e.g., Harris et al., 2012; Schmidt et al., 1986), yet these narratives are at odds with empirical research and theorization related to job design and job characteristics theory which suggest that employees may become bored, demotivated, or distant from the job content the longer they remain in a given position (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

Alternatively, this theme could be supported by socioemotional selectivity theory (SST) which suggests that as humans age, they reprioritize their values based on the perception of limited time (Carstensen, 2006). More specifically, with age, human motivation orientation changes such that we are more affectively motivated by our appreciation for the fragility and value of human life rather than individual successes (e.g., knowledge

acquisition, career planning), which tends to take priority in a human's early age (Carstensen, 2006). Overall, this theme may align with Theme #1 that suggested leaders are not supported by their own leaders and are thus expected to "wing it" when entering their first leadership role. As leaders in this study describe, only experience eased the discomfort that early leaders experienced in providing support given that resources were scant at the beginning of their leadership career. Overall, this theme highlights the need to support leaders early on in their tenure to ensure that they have the resources to engage in their supportive role.

How does providing support impact the leaders themselves?

For the second research question, I engaged in an initial exploration of how leaders were affected by the support provision process. *Theme #5: Health and well-being impairment* and *Theme #6: Motivating leader appraisals of support* were the two emerging themes that addressed this research question.

In particular, *Theme #5: Health and well-being impairment* captured two unique phenomena related to the support provision process that have the potential to harm a leader's health and well-being. First, leaders were particularly reflective of how work-related worry in the evening or early morning, such as anticipating or mentally working through a resolution to an employee nonwork need, impacted their ability to obtain healthy sleep. Our current theorizations largely omit leader outcomes of support such as worry or sleep (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012), yet previous empirical research has linked repetitive thought, defined as "perseverative, intrusive activation of cognitive representations of stressful events or negatively valenced affect",

p. 201; Pillai & Drake, 2015), to sleep disturbances and impairment (Lancee et al., 2017; Takano et al., 2012; Tutek et al., 2020). For example, if an individual is more susceptible to worrying during the nighttime, they are more likely to experience trouble with falling or staying asleep, restlessness throughout the night, and focusing on or completing tasks in the daytime due to sleepiness (Marques et al., 2016; Tutek et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2011). In addition, leaders noted that their empathy toward employee needs, although necessary for support, can actually have a toll on the leader given that they feel they take some of the employee's burden upon themselves. Empathy (i.e., emotional response to another's hardship or shared suffering; Davis, 1980; Singer & Klimecki, 2014) has long been considered a key mechanism for leaders to develop high-quality relationships with their employees (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Mahsud et al., 2010), is necessary to be perceived as a sufficient or transformational leader (Barling et al., 2000; Kellett et al., 2002; Sadri et al., 2011), and is critical for providing effective emotional support (Hammer et al., 2011; House, 1981; Langford et al., 1997; Longmire & Harrison, 2018; Mathieu et al., 2019; Yoon & Thye, 2000). Thus, the majority of leader support research has focused on how empathy is a positive mechanism for leaders to show care and concern about their employees and derive positive benefits (Zivkovic et al., 2022), but less on how empathy may be a negative mechanism linking support to a decrease in leader health and well-being. This theme is also aligned with empirical research on emotional contagion (Barsade et al., 2018), which refers to the tendency for emotions to diffuse from one person to another through conscious or unconscious processes and physiological responses (Barsade et al., 2018; Hatfield et al., 1994). Research has

documented the positive potential for emotional contagion between leaders and employees (Barsade et al., 2018), such that leaders can utilize emotional contagion as a critical part of transformational and charismatic leadership by promoting positive moods in their employees (Cheng et al., 2012; Cherulnik, et al., 2001; Erez et al., 2008). However, minimal research has examined bottom-up emotional contagion, spreading from the employee to the leader via support processes. Overall, this theme urges scientists to begin considering the nuances of support provision and how it can impact the provider.

Another identified theme, *Theme #6: Motivating leader appraisals of support*, details how leaders generate positive feelings vicariously through employee triumphs. Leaders felt as though engaging the support provision process was rewarding and allowed them to derive a sense of achievement and professional performance from their employees' successes. Given that investigations and theorizations into motivating mechanisms of support or leader outcomes of the support process have been scant, particularly within support provision theorizations (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012), we know relatively little about how leaders may benefit. A small line of literature has begun to examine subjective occupational success (i.e., "positive and meaningful work events that are related to work goals and one's working behavior and which are salient for the individual in terms of subjective goal attainment or reasonable goal progress"; Grebner et al., 2010, p. 70; Richter-Killenberg & Volmer, 2022) as a resource that can generate positive outcomes (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), such as improved health and well-being.

In particular, prosocial success refers to achievement in improving the situations of others. As support provision is both related to a leader's performance goals and improves the situation of their employees (Grebner et al., 2010), leaders are likely to experience subjective occupational success and derive positive benefits when they see improvements in the employee situations. This concept is aligned with intrinsic motivation, which can be defined as an innate human desire to engage in a certain behavior for inherent satisfaction or a need for growth and development, suggests that perceived fit between a goal and a given activity can promote intrinsic motivation and subsequent reengagement in such activities (Deci & Ryan, 2013; Fishback & Woolley, 2022). However, leaders may also be extrinsically motivated (i.e., desire to engage in behaviors for external rewards) if support behaviors are evaluated as part of their formal performance at work, which drive bonuses and career advancements. Interestingly, the leaders in the present study seemed balanced in whether they were intrinsically and extrinsically driven to provide support. Although leaders experienced inherent satisfaction with seeing employee growth and development as a result of provided support, they also acknowledged employee successes as a large component of their performance evaluations which are inevitably tied to external rewards. However, leaders did not mention raises or accolades as a primary driver of their decision to provide support (potentially due to social desirability bias) which may suggest that the majority of leaders in this study were largely intrinsically motivated to engage in the support provision process. Overall, this suggests that our current understanding of the support provision process is limited, yet there is potential to tap into leaders' underlying drives to

provide support to both mitigate negative outcomes as well as promote positive outcomes.

What are current leader perspectives on the support provision process?

Given that the leader's voice has been relatively scarce when reviewing the current state of supervisor support literature, I sought to understand how workplace leaders were thinking about their supportive role. Although each identified theme provides insights into different facets of the support provision process from the leader's perspective, *Theme #6: Motivating leader appraisals of support* emphasizes that broadly, leaders have positive reflections about the support provision process overall.

Theme #6 illustrates that, although associated with costs, supporting employees is a worthy endeavor. This theory diverges from prior theorizations that omit leader motivations and outcomes to provide support by highlighting a unique cost-benefit mental analysis that a leader engages in when evaluating the purpose of support (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012). Drawing from organizational research, studies suggest that employees who are higher in psychological capital (i.e., optimism, hope, resilience, self-efficacy; Luthans et al., 2007) may have specific resources that allow them to have positive cognitive appraisals of a given demand. Past research has focused on how the provision of support can increase an employee's psychological capital (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Morganson et al., 2014; Voydanoff, 2004). However, as suggested by the leaders in the present study, psychological capital may also play a role in the leaders' positive appraisal of support as a specific job demand such that they feel more self-efficacious and optimistic when they see their support make a difference.

Indeed, past research has demonstrated that in cases when job demands cannot be reduced, job resources, such as psychological capital, can act as a buffer of the negative relationship between job demands and negative outcomes (e.g., Bakker et al., 2007; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Overall, this emerging theme provides insight into potential motivating factors driving leaders to engage in support behaviors as well as potential ways to improve leader personal resources, such as psychological capital, to promote optimistic appraisals among key actors of the support provision process.

Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study offer valuable theoretical implications. Prior theory has remained limited on the contextual factors that may play a role in a leader's ability to provide adequate and high-quality support. Of the leader-oriented factors that have been theorized and empirically studied (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012), very few have examined the proximal and modifiable context surrounding the leader that can influence the degree to which leaders are able to provide support to their employees. Due to the well-established benefits of supportive leaders (e.g., Kelloway & Gilbert, 2017; Koch & Binneweis, 2015), I contribute to the support literature by turning our focus to the needs of the leader when attempting to promote supportive behaviors in the workplace. One of the most critical themes that was uncovered was a support structure breakdown. Specifically, leaders in this study expressed feeling a lack of support from their own leader as well as the broader organization. By applying a qualitative lens, I discovered that leaders were experiencing a breakage in the trickle-down support process that is embedded within traditionally structured organizations.

Leaders were expected to provide support, but did not receive it themselves, which subsequently impaired their ability to provide support to their employees. Given how important we know support is from empirical literature (Kossek et al., 2022), it is incredibly concerning that leaders across industries are experiencing a loss of support once they reach a certain level in the organization and that this phenomenon stops the flow of support from reaching employees at the lower-levels of the organization. In addition, apart from top-down support, leaders also indicated that employees engage in behaviors that are unsupportive of their goal of providing support. As most of the research on support has taken a top-down approach, this study emphasizes the dyadic nature of support and suggests that support should be examined as a multi-level phenomenon. It is important to examine the supportive resources (e.g., mentors, the leader's leader, the organization) that leaders have to obtain a better understanding of the leader's capacity to be effective in the way that scientists and practitioners expect them to be. Thus, this study expands previous theorizations by identifying the support structure around the leader as a notable factor to consider when scientists are attempting to understand and promote the support provision process.

The second contribution is the uncovering of various tradeoffs that leaders experienced when providing support. First, leaders described having to choose between supporting their employee and meeting organizational goals. This is aligned with theory that suggests organizational endorsement of work-family issues removes the ambiguity for leaders regarding the alignment between support and organizational values (Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012). However, leaders also suggested that they often must choose

between supporting their employees and completing their own job tasks due to capacity concerns, which diverges from prior theory and expands our understanding of support as just one small aspect of what a leader does in their day-to-day job. Indeed, leaders often expressed frustration with moving into a supporting role without shedding any responsibilities from their prior role as an individual contributor. Apart from their own role and demands, leaders also suggested that having empathy came with tradeoffs as well. Specifically, leaders acknowledged that empathy was necessary to be supportive of employees but that having deep empathy also took a toll on the leader, suggesting that being empathetic and perceived as a good supporter could come at a cost to the leader's health and well-being. These tradeoffs suggest that leaders are frequently placed in situations where they are unsure of the path forward, leaving them to abandon one of their roles or demands or participate in a tight-rope walk between empathy and support. As such, these leaders call attention to the immediate need for work design integration into support trainings to prevent leaders from being poorly positioned to provide support if their own demands are not evaluated. For example, while leaders may feel experienced responsibility and meaningfulness of providing support to employees, they may not be satisfied with the context of their job characteristics (e.g., competing demands), which can derail their motivation and effectiveness (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Tiegls et al., 1992). Overall, by obtaining rich descriptions about the tradeoffs that leaders are experiencing through qualitative methodology, we can learn how to target their environment as a viable way to promote leader support behaviors.

Finally, the majority of research focuses on the benefits of support for employees and organizations, but consistently overlooks how a leader may be affected –either positively or negatively –by engaging in support behaviors (Byrne et al., 2014; Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012). Leaders in this study described worrying about their employees during nonwork hours, leading to impacts to their sleep health. In addition, as mentioned above, leaders described how having empathy for their employees took a toll. This is aligned with a very small line of literature beginning to examine the “dark” side of helping behaviors (e.g., Yang et al., 2018). Interestingly, however, leaders believed providing support was worth the costs. In fact, leaders were able to derive a sense of success and fulfillment from seeing their support behaviors pay off. Although researchers should attempt to minimize any costs that leaders may experience as a result of the support provision process, this contribution offers a novel angle to the support literature by suggesting that while support may lead to negative outcomes for the leader, it can also be beneficial for them. As such, this study provides a preliminary guide to expanding the nomological network of support by centering the leader and identifying potential outcomes that have gone previously unrecognized.

Limitations

Participant bias. As always, it is important to consider biases that may be at play when considering how participants enlist themselves into the study as well as how they engage with the questions posed by interviewers. Specifically, there may be undetected shared characteristics among participants that influenced their decision to partake in the present study (i.e., self-selection bias). For example, leaders who are particularly

passionate about leadership or identify strongly with their role as a leader may be more willing to spend an hour with researchers to discuss the intricacies of their experiences compared to those who do not. In fact, participation in a research study related to one's job could be considered an organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; i.e., voluntary, nonrequired behaviors that are beneficial to the organization or individuals within the organization; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Specifically, participants captured in this study may be more inclined to engage in OCBs compared to leaders who did not sign up for this study. Future studies could consider enrolling both employees and supervisors as a dyad or enrolling employees first and utilizing their assistance to recruit their respective supervisors. Such an approach would allow for a robust examination of support from both parties involved in the supportive provision process as well as capture a wider range of leaders. Other solutions may include adding more pointed language in the recruitment materials (e.g., help us improve your situation as a leader) rather than general language (e.g., are you a leader?) to attempt to capture a wider range of participants by invoking emotions within leaders who are either succeeding or struggling.

Another potential bias is that leaders may have seen the recruitment materials and did not feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Although efforts were made to assure potential participants that their identity would be kept confidential, participants with largely negative experiences may be deterred from signing up for the study fear of identification or retaliation from their organization. On a similar note, the participants who did choose to partake in the present study may also be susceptible to social desirability bias, which refers to the phenomenon in which participants answer questions

in a manner that is likely to be viewed favorable by others. For example, in response to the question “*How much do you enjoy the supportive role of your job?*”, an individual might be hesitant to share their dislike for supporting others as it may be perceived as a negative quality. In efforts to mitigate social desirability bias as much as possible, interviewer-participant rapport and trustworthiness was intentionally cultivated by utilizing humor, self-disclosure, and validation of participant experiences with understanding, respect, and empathy to promote cooperativeness and vulnerability (Bergen et al., 2019). In addition, recurring meetings with the research team allowed for interviewers and transcribers to discuss signs of social desirability or tactics that were felt to minimize such bias (e.g., probing, requesting specific examples, prefacing questions, disclosing the purpose of the study to prevent leaders from perceiving the interview to be an assessment of their performance). Although efforts were in place to minimize social desirability, it is difficult to capture the true extent to which such bias played a role in participant responses. One option that future studies may consider is allowing participants to anonymously respond to sensitive interview questions that may be more susceptible to social desirability bias on the pre-screening survey. However, this prohibits the researcher from probing further. As such, the primary way that future researchers should seek to minimize social desirability is having experience with the phenomenon being studied to establish rapport.

Finally, demand characteristics (i.e., cues that may reveal the true purpose of a given study to participants) may have been apparent through the recruitment or interview process that allowed participants to change their responses accordingly thereby reducing

the validity of a study. For example, a participant may “figure out” the purpose of a study if a researcher subtly smiles or nods when the participant responds in a way that is aligned with the study aims. In addition, by asking participants if there is anything that the organization could do to help them support their employees, the aim of the study (i.e., to improve leader’s supportive behaviors) may have inadvertently been revealed. Such cues may have guided participants to either respond with suggestions they feel aligned with the researcher’s expectations or intentionally act in the opposite way, by suggesting that there was nothing anyone could do to improve their supportive behaviors because they are already supportive. The primary way future researchers could avoid demand characteristics is through deception, such that researchers guide participants to believe the aim of the study is one thing when it is actually something else entirely. In addition, future researchers could implement a follow-up survey, which should be required as part of receiving the full incentive, where participants are given the opportunity to write what they believed the aim of the study to be. This would allow researchers the opportunity to check whether participants were able to “catch on” to the purpose of the study rather than having to guess if demand characteristics were a major influence in the conclusions.

Leader demographics and intersectionality. It is important to carefully note the predominant demographics of the sample that was drawn from in the present study. Specifically, the large majority of participants were white, heterosexual, married, women who lived in the United States, and without a disability, children at home, or eldercare responsibilities. Research has suggested that a leader’s demographics (e.g., race/gender) can influence the relationship or exchanges with their employees depending on whether

or not employees and leaders share similar identities (i.e., relational demography; Avery et al., 2011; Randolph-Seng et al., 2016; Schemmel et al., 2023). In addition, leaders who are outside of the traditional “white” and “male” prototype of leaders (Rosette et al., 2008) may experience different barriers (i.e., “glass cliff”; Ryan et al., 2016) or draw on unique resources (e.g., Sargent et al., 2022; Straub, 2012) that may influence their performance in the support provision process. Given that the majority of this population is reflective of the stereotypical leader (with the exception of the larger number of women-identifying participants), this study is likely to have not captured any intricacies in the support provision process as it relates to nuanced leader experiences for those with marginalized identities. In addition, this study was primarily focused on capturing the leader’s perspective of the support provision process and therefore, the demographic makeup of each leader’s employees were not obtained. As such, I was unable to capture the complex interplay between leader and employee identities as it relates to a leader’s ability to provide support. Future qualitative studies that are only able to capture the perspective of one individual about a phenomenon that is inherently dyadic should collect information in the pre-screening survey about the demographics of the other individual that plays a part in the dyadic process that is being studied.

Methodology. Despite the precautions taken to reduce the amount of bias introduced throughout the process, qualitative research is, by nature, subjective. For this reason, it is important to acknowledge that my background, experiences, knowledge, and values, as well as that of my research assistants, likely played a role in the results generated from this study. Specifically, it is possible that a team of individuals with

differing backgrounds may reach an alternative conclusion than what was obtained in this study. For example, as the majority of my doctoral level training has been focused on occupational health psychology, I may have been particularly attuned to comments related to health, well-being, and work-family issues whereas another researcher with a different training may have coded a given excerpt differently. However, as mentioned previously, substantial steps were taken to reduce the influence of bias in this study such as triangulation across research assistants with varying backgrounds and knowledge, member checking, and reflexivity exercises. In addition, as someone who holds health and well-being as a core value, I initially framed the interview protocol with a prevention-focused lens such that I wanted to understand how to prevent the potential costs of providing support. For example, one of my questions used the word “sacrifice” and some participants felt as though that may be too strong of a word for how they felt about the tradeoffs of providing support. I quickly realized my questions were too narrow as both my collaborators and participants guided me towards not only focusing on the costs but also acknowledging that support provision might actually promote positive outcomes. As a result, I adjusted my interview protocol to be more balanced. Although I retained the question about sacrifices as it often generated rich conversations with participants, future studies should aim to first ask broader questions to get a sense of the language the participant uses and then utilize similar language in follow-up inquiries to both generate rapport and minimize investigator bias. As such, future studies should be flexible in adjusting the language within their interview protocol to allow participants to reflect on a broader range of experiences.

In addition, the methodological choice to utilize and analyze qualitative interviews was aligned with my overarching goal to understand underlying complexities of the support provision phenomena from the leader's perspective, while being intentional to retain the voice and lived experiences of the leader in the development of this research stream. For this reason, I wanted to ensure that I recruited leaders who likely have the decision authority to provide support to their employees. However, because of the choice to have more specific eligibility criteria for the industry, it resulted in having to sacrifice criteria that leaders must be "front-line" managers such that their employees underneath them are non-leader employees and have no direct reports. It is important to note that the objective of qualitative research is obtaining theoretical generalizability rather than statistical generalizability (Stake & Trumbull, 1982; Vough et al., 2015), such that I do not aim to apply such findings to other populations or contexts but instead want to identify emergent themes that may apply/generalize to pre-existing theory in efforts to expand on what is currently known to guide future research and practice. Thus, although the purpose of this study was to obtain a general understanding of leader experiences of support provision and obtain a specific yet broad sample of leaders, these experiences may change in relation to where a leader is located in the organizational hierarchy. For example, front-line managers may be younger in their organizational tenure and therefore have less experience providing support which may raise new barriers compared to those who have been leaders for a longer period of time (as demonstrated in Theme #4). Although the majority of the leaders in this study are front-line, there is a small number who have direct reports that are also leaders. It is my recommendation that future studies

are stricter with their specification of the level at which leaders are located within an organization to better isolate the phenomenon of interest.

Future Directions

As this study employed qualitative methodology as a first step to developing a leader-centric lens to the support provision literature, future research could seek to establish further empirical evidence of relationships outlined in the five emerging themes through quantitative approaches. Although qualitative research is appropriate for conducting initial explorations to inform practice and guide empirical investigations (Locke, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 2008), such methodology is unable to determine temporality or causality. Specifically, future studies could seek to determine whether perceived support from the leader's leader, role tensions, or employee behaviors may function as antecedents of the support process (Theme #1, #2, #3). For example, results of this study point to the critical role of the employee in promoting fluidity in the support provision process. However, most approaches to support involve training the leaders, thereby taking a top-down approach. Although improving the social support relationship should rightly be the responsibility of the leader given that such individuals hold more power within the workplace, it does not remove the dyadic nature of the support process. Employees must share information, provide feedback, and be willing to trust leaders so that leaders have sufficient resources to be able to effectively address any conflict that may be occurring between an employees work and nonwork life. For example, leaders believed that increased upward communication from employees (in the form of information exchange and feedback) would not only enable the leader to provide support,

but would also improve the quality of support. As such, we should not only train leaders on how to provide supportive behaviors but also include information on how to communicate with their employees about what would be helpful for them to do so that the social exchange process was beneficial for both parties. Thus, future studies should attempt to conduct a multi-pronged intervention that first executes a needs analysis to determine leader pain points such as lack of communication from employees, for example. Then, multilevel trainings (e.g., leaders *and* employees) could be conducted to create a collaborative environment that is conducive to support. For example, trainings could involve providing employees with strategies in approaching their leader and requesting support (Wong et al., 2020).

Future studies could also dissect the different facets of a leader's health and well-being as either positive or negative outcomes of providing support (Theme #4 and #5). For example, daily diary studies may reveal that on days where leaders provided more support, they also reported more emotional exhaustion, work-family conflict, fatigue, unhealthy eating habits, substance use, or irritability. In contrast, longitudinal regressions may indicate that while leaders may experience negative short-term outcomes as a result of support, they may also have long-term positive benefits in terms of health and well-being due to the fulfillment and sense of competency and relatedness such behaviors bring when employees succeed. As such, centering the leader in future quantitative investigations of supervisor support research would be complementary to the perspective outlined in this study.

In addition, as indicated by *Theme #6: Importance of the employee*, it would be inadequate to consider leader support without also understanding the perspective of the employee. Given that the core purpose of this study was to understand the leader's perspective, my inclusion criteria only focused on recruiting those who were leaders. However, future research, should consider including both leaders and their direct employees. For example, comparing qualitative interviews across leaders and their linked employees could further elucidate discrepancies or breakdowns in the dyadic process as it relates to support provision that would not otherwise be uncovered through quantitative analysis. Indeed, researchers have called for investigation into the contextual factors that determine whether or not leader support is deemed sufficient or insufficient when leaders attempt to meet employee needs (e.g., Mathieu et al., 2019). In addition, including both the employee and leaders within study designs that seek to investigate questions related to the phenomena support provision may help generate ideas on how to facilitate trust between leaders and followers via a two-way influence (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Overall, future research should consider taking a dyadic, if not multilevel, approach to the investigation of support provision to understand the phenomena as it truly functions within the workplace. Future studies could aim to recruit linked leader-employee dyads and interview them separately with aligned protocol that is adjusted to capture the rich nuances of each stakeholder's experience of the support process. For example, researchers could gather a deeper understanding of how each member of the dyad align on their provided versus wanted nonwork support behaviors for a given employee's nonwork background.

Although most leaders in this study tended to reflect on nonwork support as it related to eldercare, childcare, employee health issues, or work-family conflict, some leaders did indicate that they were having to support employees through stressors such as war, politics, diverse identities such as LGBTQ+, Roe v. Wade, and the climate crisis. However, more research is needed to understand the breadth of nonwork needs that a diverse workforce may be having as well as how to support leaders in meeting such a wide variety of employee needs. Future research should also explore what facets of an employee's nonwork life leaders are willing to or are actively supporting. For example, recent events over the last few years, such as the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the death of George Floyd and racial unrest, the #MeToo movement, numerous mass shootings, war, climate catastrophes, and political divisiveness and rulings, may become nonwork stressors that spillover into an employee's work life, potentially requiring a leader to intervene or support in order to resolve the conflict. In addition, an increasingly diverse workforce (e.g., more women, aging adults, racial/ethnic minorities, immigrant workers, LGBTQ+ workers; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022) is creating new demands for leaders needing to support this diversity in the workplace as well as the unique stressors that diverse individuals may be experiencing. For example, instances of racialized violence have been shown to negatively impact Black, Indigenous, and people of color's (BIPOC) emotional well-being and productivity at work such that BIPOC employees divert energy, attention, and resources toward coping with collective trauma, leaving little left over for work tasks (Avery & Ruggs, 2020; Dhanani et al., 2022; Ruggs et al. 2022). As such, it is becoming imperative to understand the different forms of

nonwork support that leaders may be needing to engage in to adequately assist the current diversifying workforce that may have more nuanced nonwork and work needs.

Finally, there is limited theoretical guidance related to understanding the support provision process from the point of view of the leader. It is important to note that a small handful of theoretical frameworks attempt to explain the support provision from differing perspectives. For example, Straub (2012) explains how leader work-family interference, life course stage, social identification, gender roles, and LMX act as antecedents to FSSB. Building from this, Kossek and colleagues (2022) highlight the few leader-centric variables that have been examined throughout both the leadership and support literatures as predictors of subsequent leader support for work-life demands (e.g., FSSB), which include leader childhood environments, familial violence or aggression, family-to-work conflict, caregiving responsibilities, or romantic relationship conflict. However, we are lacking in theory that provides justification for proximal, work-centric factors that may predict or influence the degree to which a leader is able to provide support to their employees. This lack of clear theoretical framework has resulted in “piecemeal” justifications, such that researchers must draw from various areas in the organizational sciences. Instead, a synthesized theory with a particular focus on the leader as a key player in the support provision process is needed to guide both practice and science.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest various practical implications. First, my predominant focus on employee and organizational outcomes have steered our approach to support-oriented interventions toward training the leader on what such behaviors are,

how to demonstrate behaviors, and the value such behaviors have for employees, organizations, and society (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Hammer et al., 2007; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016). However, organizations and practitioners who aim to promote leader supportive behaviors in the workplace through training interventions may first need to evaluate the state of given contextual factors as a way to ensure that the leader has adequate resources to participate in the trained behaviors. Themes revealed in this study suggest that practitioners who want to promote leader support behaviors should be concerned with a leader's available resources and current demands. For example, do leaders have a mentor within the organization that is supportive? Is their performance being evaluated in a way that represents all that they may be doing on a day-to-day basis? Are their job responsibilities clearly communicated or are they ambiguous, leaving it up to the leader to decide which tasks to abandon? As such, practitioners should be regularly conducting job analyses to ensure that they are capturing all of the different aspects of a leader's job as it evolves, potentially coupled with a needs analysis to dissect the complex intricacies that may be occurring under the radar, such as those depicted in this study.

Research has suggested that supervisors within an organization may serve as a great point of intervention as they bridge the gap between an employee's work and nonwork life (Major & Lauzun, 2010). However, this may not be possible if leaders feel unsupported by their own leader or the organization, if they are experiencing difficulties in navigating multiple competing roles and demands, or if their employees are not participatory in their half of the social exchange of support through communication or trust. These themes suggest that practitioners should consider the leader as a primary

stakeholder when evaluating support interventions. Many of the existing support interventions evaluate employee and organizational antecedents such as perceptions of support, job performance and attitudes (Ode-Dusseau et al., 2016), safety (Brossoit et al., 2023), and health and well-being (Hammer et al., 2021b). On the other hand, leader outcomes are rarely considered when evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention. This oversight contributes to our lack of understanding of how support interventions are impacting the leader.

In addition, we know little about what could be done to improve interventions in the future with regard to leader motivations. For example, many of the previous interventions have focused on training leaders on behaviors and explaining the benefits for the organization and employees, perhaps taking a more extrinsic approach. However, given how leaders in this study seemed to be intrinsically motivated to provide support through their gratifying interpersonal relations with employees, this may suggest that incorporating a relational work design approach to support interventions (e.g., promoting perceptions that leader's work creates a positive change in employee's lives, focusing on the depth, scope, frequency, and magnitude of connection points with employees; Grant, 2007; Grant & Parker, 2009) may be beneficial in tapping into leader's innate motivation to make a prosocial difference. Overall, researchers and practitioners alike should be sure to promote leader voice through participatory approaches when implementing initiatives or evaluating performance in efforts to tap into the motivating factors underlying support behaviors for leaders as well as avoid oversights on leader-centric contextual barriers or outcomes of the intervention. Given that leaders in this study identified various multi-

level contextual barriers that get in the way of their ability to be supportive, a leader's perspective should, at minimum, be taken into consideration before expecting effective support behaviors to be enacted and perceived by employees. As such, this study provides a first step in guiding practitioners to include leader-level variables within their assessments of intervention success. Such an approach could guide future interventions to be better designed support today's leader, and ultimately their employees.

Similarly, before interventions are implemented, leader resources should be fortified to facilitate the support provision process. Although needs analyses should guide practitioners on what resources leaders in specific organizations may need, the conclusions reached in this study can offer some guidance. For example, leaders noted that they felt tensions between their role as an individual contributor and their role as a supporter such that there was not enough time in the day to adequately perform in both roles. As such, organizations and practitioners could consider implementing or endorsing schedule flexibility for leaders where they are allowed to reserve certain day(s) of the week for the completion of their individual contributor tasks. Another option is to offer well-being resources through a robust employee assistance program (i.e., EAP) with leader specific resources, such as leader support groups or therapy sessions, given that leaders often do not feel like they have a support system in place. Additionally, given the tensions and confusion that leaders felt in navigating employee communication and segmentation preferences, organizations, practitioners, and researchers should work together to identify strategies that leaders can use to best facilitate one-on-one meetings where employees need nonwork support. It is important to note that a long-standing

recommendation within the support field is to implement explicit organizational expectations surrounding nonwork support to minimize the discretionary nature of such behaviors (Ellis et al., 2022). However, the themes in this study suggest that enforcing explicit expectations can actually be problematic and lead to harmful outcomes for leaders. As such, I recommend that leader-specific resources are identified and fortified prior to implementation of explicit job expectations or interventions.

Finally, *Theme #4: Leader tenure* illustrates that leaders struggled when first transitioning into their leader role. Leaders were unaware of how to support, what to support, and how to protect themselves from the emotional toll that supporting their employees can bring. In addition, leaders felt rigid and inflexible at the start of their leader career, potentially as a result of pride, but became more open to supporting employee nonwork needs as they gained tenure due to a reevaluation of what they thought was important. These narratives suggest that organizations and practitioners should attempt to improve new leader experiences. One avenue for approaching this is occupational socialization, which is the process of familiarizing workers with norms, knowledge, and procedures of a new position (Bauer et al., 2007; Frese et al., 1982). Broadly, socialization would provide resources (e.g., social connections, material information) to the new leader which may ease their adjustment into their new role by reducing uncertainty, promoting self-efficacy, role clarity, and learning (Ellis et al., 2014), as well as minimizing any work-nonwork conflict a new leader may experience (Ellis et al., 2023). Indeed, socialization has been linked to outcomes such as performance and job attitudes (Ellis et al., 2014), suggesting that new leaders who are

properly socialized may experience more ease with their new job tasks such as supporting employees. As such, practitioners should seek to improve new leader experiences to promote supportive behaviors and more positive experiences earlier on.

Conclusion

I argue that the leader's voice has been largely absent from the research on the support provision process in the workplace. I found that the narratives that leaders offered both align and deviate from existing theory surrounding support provision by expanding our current understanding to include hierarchical support, role tensions, and employee behaviors as potential factors that play a role in whether or not a leader feels they can provide support, as well as how a leader's health and well-being can be positively or negatively impacted by support as a specific and nuanced job task (e.g., Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012). Overall, results suggest there are targetable, multi-level, contextual factors that could be improved as a way to facilitate the provision of support and obtain the maximum potential benefits for employees, organizations, *and* the leader.

Table 4.1. Mapping of themes onto research questions

| Theme | Research Question 1: <i>What is facilitating or inhibiting a leader's ability to provide support?</i> | Research Question 2: <i>How does providing support impact the leaders themselves?</i> | Research Question 3: <i>What are current leader perspectives on the support provision process?</i> |
|--|---|---|--|
| Theme 1: <i>Support Structure Breakdown</i> | X | | |
| Theme 2: <i>Navigating Multi-Dimensional Role/Multi-Dimensional Tensions</i> | X | | |
| Theme 3: <i>Importance of the Employee</i> | X | | |
| Theme 4: <i>Leader Tenure</i> | X | | |
| Theme 4: <i>Health & Well-Being</i> | | X | |
| Theme 5: <i>Motivating Leader Appraisals of Support</i> | | X | X |

Table 4.2. Overview of emerging themes and exemplar quotes

| <i>Themes</i> | <i>Subthemes</i> | <i>Exemplar Quotes</i> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Support Structure Breakdown | Lack of Support from Leader | <p>I feel like I had my own set of one on ones with the higher ups, but they were always postponed or pushed back, so actually sticking to those one on ones and having those conversations with me, and just actually generally listening to what I am bringing to the table or like why I'm asking clarification on something, because a lot of the times these people would end up multitasking. So they would be working on the computer while talking to me, and you can't do that. You have to be looking at the person and actually listening to what they're doing. [P292; Man, 41 years old, 8 years as a leader, 8 direct reports]</p> <p>Oh, it's kind of lonely to be a manager, leader, or supervisor cause during that in between of I have to keep the people above me happy, but then also keep the people below me happy, who is keeping me happy? So, like I find myself stuck in a place where I myself didn't have a mentor that I could look up to and I feel like I was just kind of being used. And that's not a good feeling. [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as a leader, 4 direct reports]</p> <p>My boss is not consistent. I think that would be helpful. A little bit more consistent communication and support from above would probably push me along to do a little bit more on those times where I'm having a little bit of a rough time [P76; Woman, 56 years old, 15 years as a leader, 11 employees]</p> |
| | Lack of Support from Organization | <p>It's a business climate, and so I don't think the organization really values the benefit of a strong leader. I haven't seen a lot of companies that do cause you start to do it [be a leader], and then, you know, you get bombarded with all the day-</p> |

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| | | <p>to-day activities, and sometimes I don't think companies value the amount of time it takes. And what's really needed to be a strong leader. [P83; Woman, 58 years old, 27 years as a leader, 10 direct reports]</p> <p>If you place true leadership on top, much of your hours are likely spent on the support piece, and I don't think the company understands the amount of time that requires. [P91; Man, 30 years old, 2 years as a leader, 4 direct reports]</p> <p>The organization is not quite walking their talk in some ways. So it's hard to kind of trust that they will have my back for anything. [P260; Woman, 54 years old, 4 years as a leader, 1 direct report]</p> |
| <p>Navigating Multi-Role/Multi-Demand Tensions</p> | <p>Organization v. Employee Needs</p> | <p>Leaders are in this unique situation, depending on where they are within the organization. In my position as a front-line manager, I am a mouthpiece for the organization. So there's always this dichotomy of trying to figure out like is what the organization wanting me to say is that in alignment with how I want to support my employees? Which is a lot more taxing and takes a lot more energy and effort and commitment. [P400; Man, 36 years old, 9 years as a leader, 13 direct reports]</p> <p>I try to really be compassionate and understanding and balance between what I'm, as a leader, required to do and hold people to certain things that are part of the job. It's hard. [P275; Woman, 40 years old, 10 years as a leader, 5 direct reports]</p> <p>There's been moments where I've provided –I don't want to think of support as always flexing on when we deliver something –but a lot of times like an employee could have a personal issue and it means we cannot get our work done. That kind of plays out that way. And so I have to make sure that I have the right balance of flexibility, but not too much. It's hard to find.</p> |

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| | | [P292; Male, 41 years old, 8 years as a leader, 9 direct reports] |
| | Individual Contributor v. Supportive Role | <p>Every day felt like there was just no way to catch up. In my current role, I'll give one example of what definitely can put strain. And it's when I have my existing workload. And then some kind of support crisis comes in that drops in that requires immediate attention. [P244; Woman, 47 years old, 14 years as a leader, 2 direct reports]</p> <p>I stepped into my [leader] role, but I didn't shed any of the other responsibilities that I [previously] had. So, I still have support responsibilities for several different groups, and if anything, that's kind of grown since then. So, it's kind of hard for me to break away sometimes if I'm working on something that I need to do and one of my reports is sitting next to me asking for support, I don't want to tell them no, but I also don't want to break away from what I'm doing. So, it makes it a little bit difficult. [P91; Male, 36 years old, 2 years as a leader, 4 direct reports]</p> <p>Honestly, there were times where what was expected of me besides just management, I was just doing juggling so much more. That at times I didn't have that capacity and it's a terrible feeling because with all sincerity I feel like what I was doing in my position probably was to work for two people but I wasn't able to support my team because of that. [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as a leader, 4 direct reports]</p> |
| Importance of Employee | Improved Upward Communication | <p>My employee was not afraid to say you're not supporting me the way I need. How do we figure this out? Because we did have very different personalities and ways of thinking about things. [P90; Man, 63 years old, 20 years as a leader, 5 direct reports]</p> <p>We talk to them a lot and try to take the burden off their shoulders, because sometimes, if they don't, we feel like if they don't communicate with us, they hold on to too much of it and some</p> |

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| | | <p>of it's not warranted. I think they're over worrying, or they're not understanding that it's not all on them. They need to talk to us and we can help with some of these things that they're stressing out over. [P43; Man, 47 years old, 11 years as a leader, 25 direct reports]</p> <p>I think being open and sharing, so any dialogue should be two ways. I don't want to go into a room and talk at somebody about solutions, and they're just sitting there waiting for it to be done. [P91; Man, 30 years old, 2 years as leader, 4 direct reports]</p> |
| | Employee Segmentation Preferences & Trust | <p>You have to be open. It's better to tell me than not tell me. There's already been a couple of instances where one of them is less than open. You have to have a hard discussion. That wasn't fun, but you can't waste time. So, I think that they just need to be comfortable that I'm really here to help. Sometimes I think they're just like, oh, well, our other leader was like this. They were different. But at the end of the day, I'm the leader and this is what I need. [P78; Woman, 58 years old, 10 years as a leader, 6 direct reports]</p> <p>If they're not ready, they're not ready. There were plenty of times where I had an individual who is like, "I don't want to talk to you about this" and I was like, "All right", I said, "I'll be around every day this week if you change your mind." And then, like Thursday, they showed up, but if I would have forced them in that room and said, "No, we're gonna talk." It wouldn't have gone anywhere. It might have gone backwards. It's difficult to navigate. [P3; Man, 47 years old, 20 years as a leader, 20 direct reports]</p> <p>One of the people I'm working with is not open to support. Like if I see them crying or something, I message them and just say, how are you doing? But I know I can't go have a more deeper conversation about this. I know that they're more aligned to dealing with their</p> |

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| | | <p>problems themselves than needing that support system. If you don't recognize that, it can come unhinged pretty quick. [P48; Man, 37 years old, 3 years as leader, 12 direct reports]</p> |
| Leader Tenure | | <p>It's very easy for me now to find that sweet spot. But, like I said, maybe 10 years ago, I was not supporting as much. [P57; Woman, 51 years old, 30 years as a leader, 12 direct reports]</p> <p>I got better with time because I was learning how to manage the team and again manage people. Different personalities. I feel like it was just really hard for me to be able to really, really, ultimately find that sweet spot, because it got better. [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as a leader, 4 direct reports]</p> <p>I've learned [how to better support] because I have more experience. I'm like, "Okay, I see a problem. Okay. This is one of those kinds of situations." [P150; Woman, 44 years old, 2 years as a leader, 1 direct report]</p> |
| Health & Well-being Impairment | Work Related Worry & Sleep Deficiency | <p>Yeah, it [supportive role] affects my sleep. I think it's almost a situation where my work is not an eight to five job. Work, at least for me, it's constant because I'm always thinking about those relationships. I'm thinking about how my colleagues are being developed or fulfilled or unhappy and how to try to change that situation. [P81; Man, 54 years old, 34 years as a leader, 100 direct reports]</p> <p>Part of my sleep issues is that my mind's always moving. It's like, for a week sometimes, so it's not that it would keep me up, but it would be what my mind would dwell on. It's like I'm trying understand how to make today valuable and not worry about the past. [P3; Man, 47 years old, 20 years as a leader, 20 direct reports]</p> <p>The more negative interactions that I had - and by that I mean employees coming to me that I would then have to address or work with them on</p> |

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| | | <p>- the more difficult it was to sleep soundly at night because I was worried. Made for some long days, where I was exhausted during the day. [P41; Man, 59 years old, 35 years as a leader, 25 direct reports]</p> |
| | Empathy Takes a Toll | <p>I don't think you can supply meaningful and true support without taking some burden on from another person. Like you have to be empathetic to really provide support. You can't be sympathetic. That's not gonna do anything. It can be belittling to take on some of that burden of whatever that support is. And if you take on too much, you get weighed down, and it kinda goes back to that thing. If you can't take care of yourself as a human, you can't take care of others. So you have to find that balance of how much you take. You can manage it and then give back in a way that helps them move forward with whatever situation they're needing support with. [P315; Man, 42 years old, 8 years as a leader, 5 direct reports]</p> <p>When I have people that are struggling, I carry that because I just, I love my people. I love everybody that I get to work with and if they're struggling, it takes a toll on you. [P79; Man, 53 years old, 13 years as a leader, 8 direct reports]</p> <p>[The employee's needs] most certainly encroaches on my health, well-being and sleep. And I don't know if that's just the way I'm made. I'm kind of an empath or I'm deeply empathetic with my people. So it affects me, no doubt. [P81; Man, 54 years old, 34 years as a leader, 100 direct reports]</p> |
| Motivating Leader Appraisals of Support | Deriving Success from Employee Success | <p>I love working side by side with them. It's how you develop bonds and you share things to laugh about. And I like that, and teaching them just how to navigate just little bit better. I think that's what really sparks joy is when I see it happening. [P88; Woman, 36 years old, 7 years as leader, 74 direct reports]</p> |

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| | | <p>I think just with all sincerity, seeing people grow in their life and career like there's nothing more that would make my day than somebody coming up to me and telling me like, "Oh, my God! I was able to do this. Thank you so much for your guidance, for your support." With them being happy, then it makes my life a lot easier, too. [P55; Woman, 27 years old, 2 years as a leader, 4 direct reports]</p> <p>I was in a role where I didn't have a direct report for a while. And it was quiet and I could get work done. I could work out on my lunch break. I felt my work life balance was so much better than it is now but I was missing that aspect of like having a part in the success of others that I am really truly in love with. [P82; Woman, 26 years old, 4 years as a leader, 20 direct reports]</p> |
| | Positive Cognitive Appraisals | <p>I'm exercising what I've been given to do. And that's changing people's lives. For the few amount of days that I get to be able to be on this earth. That, to me, is more important than the toll that it takes on me physically and even sometimes in a psychological or mental way because it's a lot to carry. [P79; Man, 53 years old, 13 years as a leader, 8 direct reports]</p> <p>If my employee's sick four percent of the of the time and if like once every four years somebody in their family dies or some other major life event happens, well then every single time I supervise another person I multiply the chances that one of those things could happen. None of them are like bad but they can be stressful or take time and effort to navigate. It can take a toll or it certainly can take up a lot of headspace but it's very rarely do I resent the headspace that it takes up. [P318; Man, 42 years old, 8 years as a leader, 5 direct reports]</p> <p>I think as much as [supporting my employees] may stress me out a little bit to go and think through, it might affect my work-life balance for</p> |

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| | | a week or so. I wouldn't describe it as a sacrifice because I think the reward of having a team that's doing well is totally worth it. [P292; Man, 41 years old, 8 years as a leader, 9 direct reports] |
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Note. "P" stands for participant and is used to denote the participant identification number.

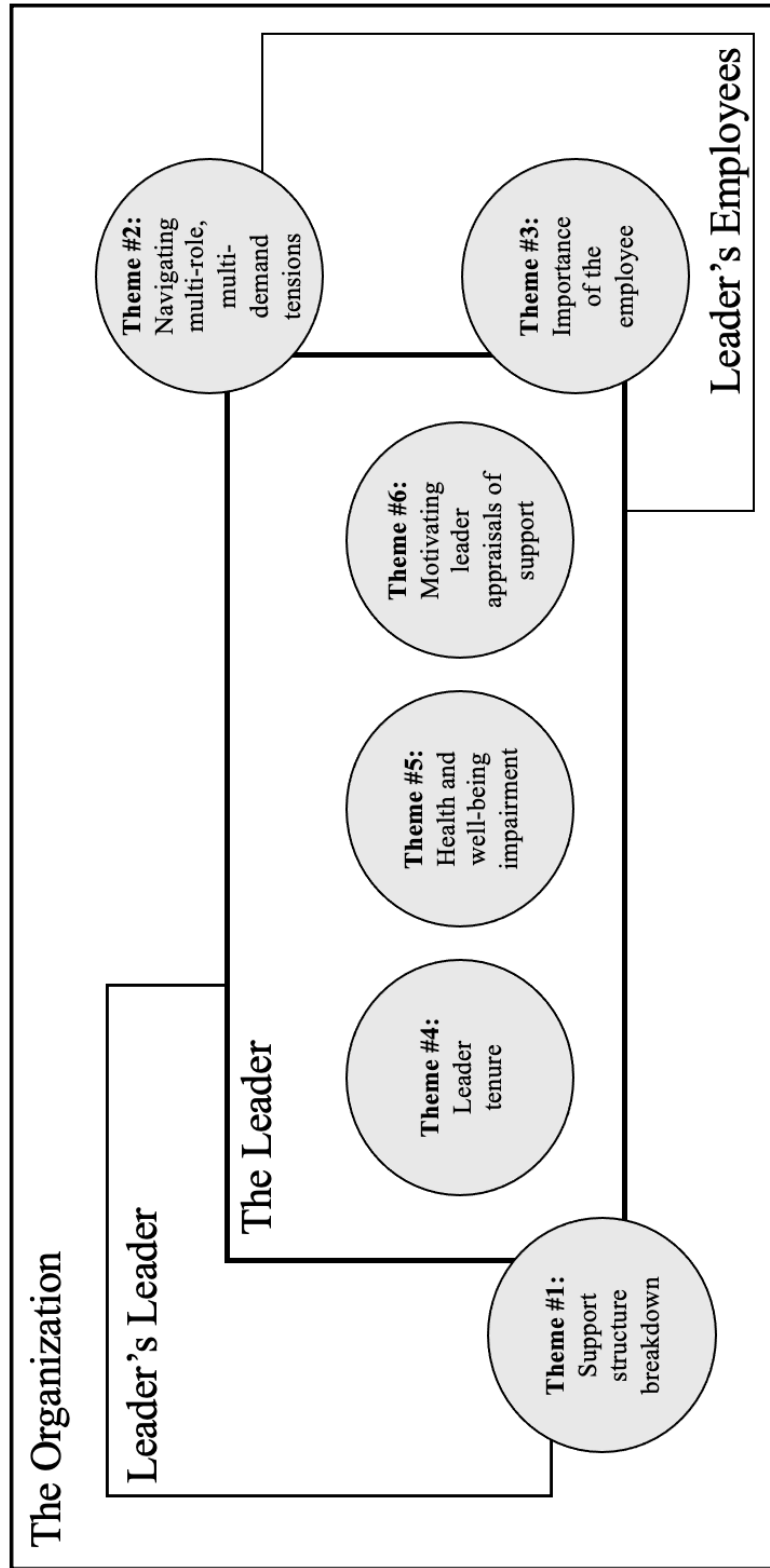


Figure 4.1. A depiction of the enmeshed nature of the leader within multiple entities (i.e., the organization, the leader's leader, and the leader's employees) and how each theme corresponds to the various stakeholders surrounding the leader.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This dissertation sought to evaluate the importance of leader-centric variables in the work-life support provision process between leaders and their employees. Through a series of three studies, this body of work pushes research in a new direction at a time when support in the workplace is more necessary than ever, given that over one-third of our nation reporting that stress is completely overwhelming most days to the point they cannot function (APA, 2022). Furthermore, the current research motivates future interventions aimed at promoting leader supportive behaviors by identifying potential obstacles that may be slowing or even prohibiting enactment of these behaviors as well as considering the impact of such interventions on the leader, rather than just the employee and organization. Findings from these three studies aim to suggest that the vast majority of research and practice has overlooked the key player in leadership and leader support – the leader themselves.

Revisiting Contributions

Though my work on this dissertation, I make various contributions to both science and practice. To my knowledge, this is the first systematic body of work to emphasize the leader as a critical piece to the work-life support process. Specifically, Study 1 is one of the first studies to investigate various dimensions of leader sleep health as a predictor to a constellation of support behaviors, namely family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) and sleep leadership supportive behaviors (SLSB). Study 2 presented the literature with a novel theoretical framework that places the leader front and center by delineating empirically-backed leader-centric factors that may predict or moderate the

provision of work-life support, as well as identifies the leader as a stakeholder in the support provision process such that engagement in such behaviors is likely to produce outcomes for the leader themselves. Finally, Study 3 emphasized the leader's voice by engaging in interviews with leaders about what factors or facilitating or inhibiting their ability to provide support, how providing support impacts the leader, and broadly, how leaders are thinking about their supportive role.

The findings produced from these studies expand the support research stream, but also extend upon previously traditional ways of conceptualizing, measuring, and understanding work-life support. In particular, Study 1 utilized multiple reports of support (i.e., the leader and their direct employees) over time (i.e., multi-time point design) to obtain a more realistic and representative picture of this complex, dyadic phenomenon, following recommendations from leadership experts (e.g., Hiller et al., 2011). Study 2 integrated research from the organizational sciences with the support literature to provide a guiding framework for understanding the support provision process with the leader at the center. Finally, in Study 3, I aligned the novelty of this research stream with qualitative methodology, which is particularly beneficial in the first steps of establishing a line of research and is typically absent from support and occupational health research (Schoenfeld & Mazzola, 2012). Thus, the methodological design of these studies allows this body of work to expand on past research by emphasizing a new lens in which we should view the support phenomenon.

Statement of Purpose Revisited

As outlined in chapter one of this dissertation, I aimed to answer three overarching research questions aimed at understanding the experience of the leader as it relates to the support provision process. The design of these studies was intentional such that each study provides an answer to each of the research questions. These questions include:

- 1) How does a leader's health and well-being influence the provision of support and how does engagement in support provision influence a leader's health and well-being?
- 2) What are the main leader-centric factors that influence the support provision process?
- 3) To what extent do leaders have the desire and capacity to support their employees with work and nonwork demands?

My perspective on how the findings of each of my studies answer these research questions are provided below (See Table 5.1 for a summary).

Summary of Findings

The results of Study 1 suggested that the relationship between leader sleep and downstream support behaviors is more intricate and nuanced than formerly theorized. Surprisingly, the relationship between leader sleep duration and employee-ratings of FSSB and SLSB was positive under conditions of high leader insomnia symptoms, yet negative under conditions of low leader insomnia symptoms. In addition, the relationship between leader sleep duration and leader-ratings of SLSB was positive under conditions of low leader sleep dissatisfaction, yet negative under conditions of high leader sleep

dissatisfaction. As such, sleep duration is, by itself, not strongly associated with downstream outcomes, which is in contrast to the predominant narrative in public health campaigns as well as mainstream media. In fact, it is only under conditions of certain dimensions of sleep quality that we found significant associations between sleep duration and positive support behaviors, suggesting sleep quality is more influential than previously thought. These findings are surprising given that leaders with the healthiest sleep were not the best supporters as rated by employees; instead, it is the leaders who struggled with sleep who were. Fascinatingly, the results from Study 1 are corroborated by the results of Study 3 in which leaders described worrying about their employee late into the evenings or early morning, which they felt impacted their ability to obtain healthy sleep. Thus, this study addressed the first and second research questions by suggesting that leader health (i.e., sleep) is likely to impact the provision of multiple forms of support.

Study 2 of this dissertation built off of this work by identifying leader-centric variables, in addition to leader health and well-being, that may play an influential role in the leader support provision process. Workplace leaders are the fundamental source of effective support yet their own needs are often overlooked within support research. Most research has taken the perspective of the recipient of support (i.e., the employee), but little research has examined support from the provider's point of view. As such, I review and integrate existing empirical leader-centric research with the literature on leader support to identify four main categories of variables: *leader health*, *leader job demands*, *leader role expectations*, and *leader skills*. It is important to highlight that two of these

factors –namely leader job demands and role expectations –were also acknowledged in Study 3 through qualitative interviews with leaders. The identification of these variables informs the development of the support enabling framework, which is meant to serve as a guide for future research that aims to meet leader needs as a prerequisite for sufficient and effective support provision. Thus, this study addresses both the first and the second research questions by identifying the main leader-centric variables that influence the support provision process.

Finally, building off both Study 1 and Study 2, Study 3 of my dissertation provided an in-depth exploration of the support provision process from the leader's perspective. Through interviews with self-identified leaders, I provide answers to three key questions: (a) What is facilitating or inhibiting a leader's ability to provide support?, (b) How does providing support impact the leader themselves?, and (c) What are current leader perspectives on the support provision process?. Thematic analysis revealed six emerging themes. First, *Theme #1: Support structure breakdown* detailed the leader experience in feeling a lack of support from their own leader and the broader organization. *Theme #2: Navigating multi-role/multi-demand tensions* refers to the difficulty that leaders had in deciding whether to support organizational goals or employee nonwork needs when they were at odds with each other. In addition, leaders expressed tension between fulfilling their job duties as an individual contributor and providing sufficient support to their employees. *Theme #3: Importance of the employee* illuminates the dynamic dyadic nature of the support provision process and the criticality of the employee in participating in the support exchange process through communication

and trust, providing necessary avenues for leaders to engage in support provision. *Theme #4: Health and well-being impairment* builds off of Study 1 by further documenting the nature of the relationship between leader sleep and support behaviors, such that leaders believed that they worried about supporting their employees in the evenings and early morning, preventing them from obtaining healthy sleep. In addition, leaders reflected on the necessity of empathy for support, but that the exact same empathy may actually take a toll. *Theme #5: Motivating leader appraisals of support* highlights how leaders believe the support provision process to be a positive one, such that they are able to derive feelings of personal success from their employee's success. Also, leaders acknowledged that although providing support may sometimes require sacrifice, it is a worthy endeavor. Finally, *Theme #6* illustrates that leader feel more capable and effective at providing support as they increase in tenure. It is important to note that this study provides information that corroborates the findings and conclusions reached in Studies 1 and 2, yet also extends our understanding beyond what has been examined in support empirical literature thus far. As such, Study 3 addressed all three research questions of the broader programmatic investigation of the leader experience with the support provision process. See Figure 5.2 for an overview model of all three studies.

Theoretical Implications

From this body of work, I extend theory by discovering that the link between leader health and their downstream support behaviors is not straight forward as we previously thought. In fact, there may be an underlying affective based component (e.g., worry, empathy) that is driving the nuanced relationship that suggests leaders who

struggle with sleep are actually better supporters. Interestingly, this affective component may be the same mechanism that links engaging in supportive behaviors to subsequent leader health impairment. In addition, through the completion of these three studies, I provide evidence that our current theoretical understanding of leader-centric antecedents of the support process is severely lacking. The results of this dissertation indicate that researchers should investigate proximal and targetable leader experiences (e.g., sleep, role tensions, job demands, support structures) because they may influence the degree to which leaders provide support, above and beyond our current theoretical guidance that emphasizes distal or unalterable antecedents (e.g., gender identity, family experiences; Straub, 2012). Finally, I urge scientists and practitioners to consider the leader as a primary stakeholder of the support provision process moving forward to ensure a balanced and equitable approach so as not to put one worker at risk for the benefit of another. In other words, we should not expect leaders to help others before they have put on their own mask. Overall, it is my hope that through the three studies conducted as a part of this dissertation, it can be reasonably concluded that leader experiences are critical to the enactment and perception of support in the workplace and therefore deserve attention.

Practical Implications

Broadly, the studies comprising this dissertation take an overall stance at improving the leader experience, specifically as it relates to the workplace support provision phenomenon. Indeed, the research questions for these studies were generated from the idea that leaders within the U.S. are faced with a “all work, no sleep” culture

that is perpetuated by mainstream media outlets that workplace leaders often read such as *Business Insider* (Cutrone & Nisen, 2012). In combination, scholars and practitioners are consistently promoting leader support behaviors given the range of benefits such behaviors can have for employees and organizations (Kossek et al., 2022). As such, the collection of studies presented in this body of work aim to capture the needs of leaders within the U.S. to guide practice towards the cultivation of a healthier leader culture as well as the prioritization of leaders when adding demands to their plate, given the value that leaders have for our workplaces.

More specifically, the findings generated in this body of work may inform one of the predominant approaches to the protection and promotion of employee health within the U.S. Namely, the Total Worker Health[®] (TWH) approach emphasizes the imperative role of leadership in fostering worker health, safety, and well-being (NIOSH, 2021; Punnett et al., 2020; Schill & Chosewood, 2013). Moreover, inherent to TWH is the recognition that a large and varied host of issues, both within and outside of work, threaten worker safety, health, and well-being (e.g., hazards, scheduling, technology, family, mistreatment, diverse identities). This concept has traditionally been applied to employees but this project aims to extend this to leaders specifically, given their unique role and the level of emphasis that TWH initiatives place on the effectiveness of the leader. In general, the TWH approach suggests that work and nonwork hazards need to be considered when designing policies, programs, and practices. However, for TWH initiatives that involve leaders, a major challenge will be understanding how leaders, who are themselves subject to work and nonwork hazards to health, can support a modern-day

workforce that is subject to so many hazards, stressors, and obstacles. As such, this dissertation aims to establish a line of research that will employ and guide the TWH approach to prioritize the health and well-being of leaders in order to ensure leaders have sufficient resources to drive TWH initiatives forward. As such, this body of work expands upon the TWH approach to foster leader health and well-being as well as minimize any barriers they may experience in their attempt to support their employees.

Conclusion

Overall, leaders are vital for the health, well-being, and sustainability of our workforce. For this reason, it is imperative to begin understanding the complete picture of the work-life supportive leadership process to understand the realistic way that such behaviors may be functioning within the workplace. The three studies that make up this body of work expand upon prior theory (i.e., Crain et al., 2018; Kossek et al., 2022; Straub, 2012) as well as push forward novel perspectives that can guide the development of leader support science and practice forward. This dissertation's overarching purpose was to dissect the role of the leader as the primary player in the support provision phenomenon, rather than just as an intervention point, by conducting leader-centric empirical studies and generating new theory to push this agenda forward. As such, this work will inform interventions that aim to promote and maintain a broad range of leader support behaviors that address the needs of employees, by first understanding how to ensure the leader has the resources to engage in such behaviors effectively. Thus, these studies advocate for a mutually beneficial agenda to support by allowing organizations, employees, families, and leaders to thrive.

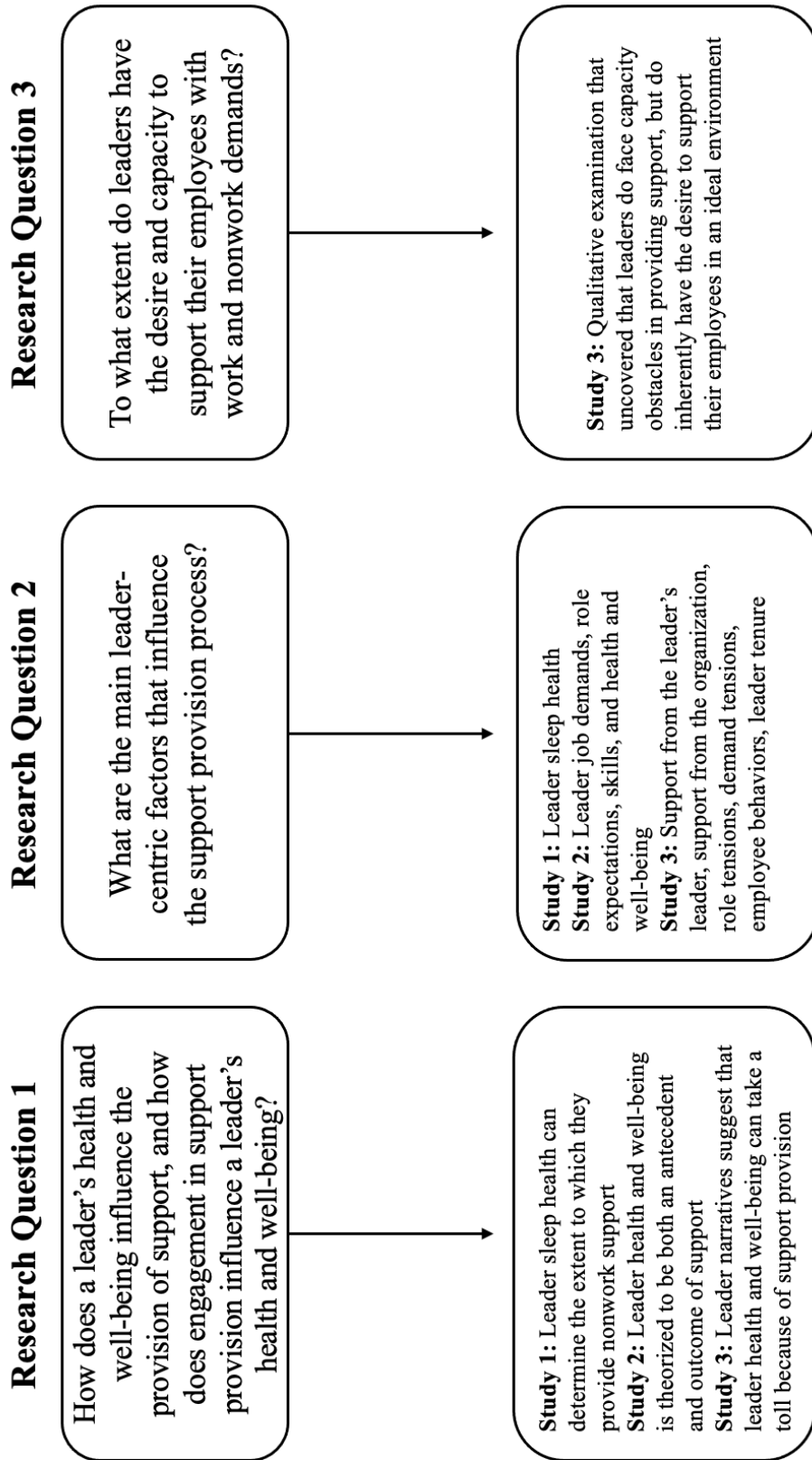


Figure 5.1. Map of the alignment between research questions and individual study results

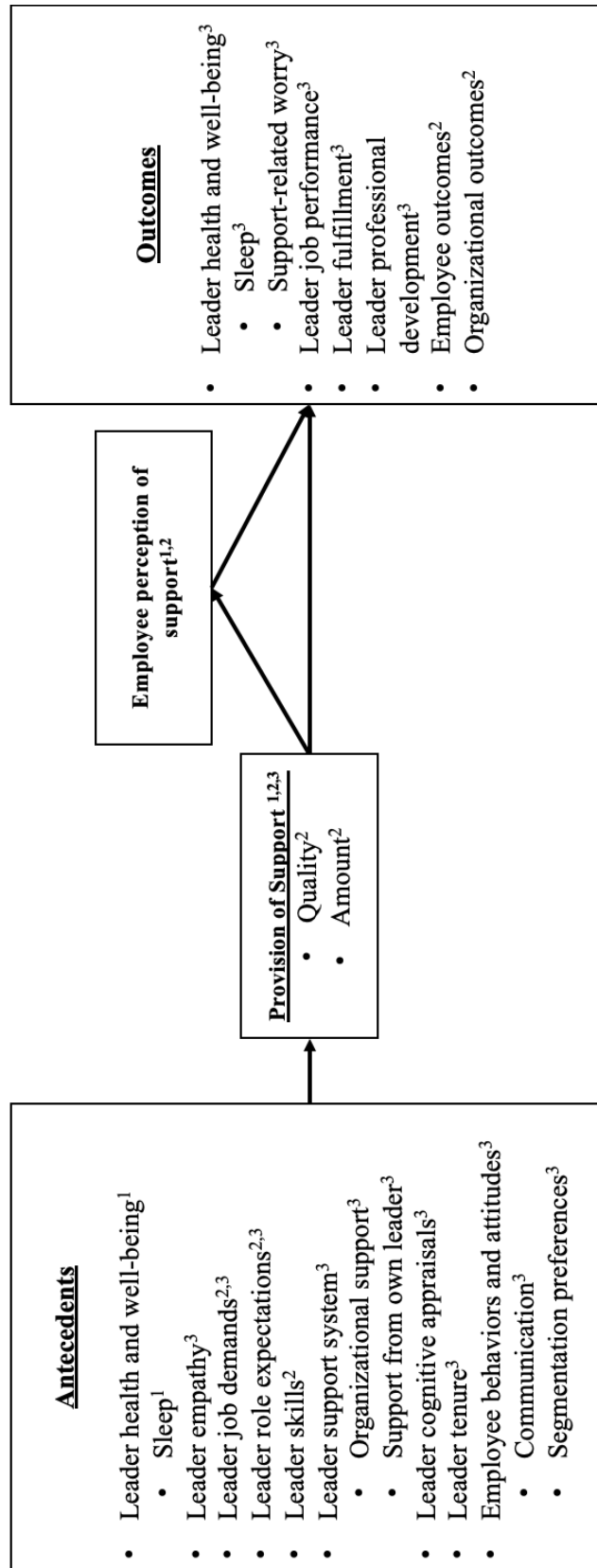


Figure 5.2. Overall model of the three complementary studies. ¹ refers to variables investigated in Study 1, ² refers to variables included in Study 2's theoretical framework, and ³ refers to themes captured in Study 3.

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Appendix A: Survey Items

Sleep Quantity (Buysse et al., 1989)

The next set of questions will address your sleep health. The following two questions relate to your usual sleep habits **DURING THE PAST MONTH only**. Your answers should indicate the most accurate reply for the majority of days and nights in the past month.

1. During the past month, when have you usually gone to bed at night?
2. During the past month, when have you usually gotten up in the morning?

Response Options: Hour: 01-12, Minute: 00-59, AM/PM

Sleep Quality (PROMIS, 2016; Cella et al., 2010; Yu et al., 2012)

The next set of questions will ask about your sleep quality. To what extent did you experience the following in the **PAST 7 DAYS?**

1. My sleep was restless.
2. I was satisfied with my sleep.
3. My sleep was refreshing.
4. I had difficulty falling asleep.

Response Options: 1=Not at all, 2=A little bit, 3=Somewhat, 4=Quite a bit, 5=Very much

5. I had trouble staying asleep.
6. I had trouble sleeping.
7. I got enough sleep.

Response Options: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always

8. My sleep quality was...

Response Options: 1=Very poor, 2=Poor, 3=Fair, 4=Good, 5=Very good

General Supervisor Support (Yoon & Lim, 1999)

Still thinking about your primary full-time supervisor ([supervisor_name]) at your full-time job in the Oregon National Guard...

1. [supervisor_name] can be relied upon when things get tough on my job.
2. [supervisor_name] is willing to listen to my job-related problems.
3. [supervisor_name] really does not care about my well-being.

Response Options: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

Family-Supportive Supervisor Behavior (FSSB) (Leader Ratings) (Hammer et al., 2013)

The following section contains questions about your behaviors as a supervisor of full-time service members at the Oregon National Guard. Please read each statement carefully and rate the extent to which you agree with each statement based on the scale below.

1. I make my subordinates feel comfortable talking to me about their conflicts between work and non-work
2. I demonstrate effective behaviors in how to juggle work and non-work issues
3. I work effectively with my subordinates to creatively solve conflicts between work and non-work
4. I organize the work in my department or unit to jointly benefit employees and the company

Response Options: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

Family-Supportive Supervisor Behavior (FSSB) (Employee Ratings) (Hammer et al., 2013)

The following section contains questions about your experiences with your primary full-time supervisor ([supervisor_name]) for your full-time job at the Oregon National Guard. Please read each statement carefully and rate the extent to which you agree with each statement based on the scale below. This information you provide will be kept confidential. Your supervisor will **not** see your survey responses.

1. [supervisor_name] makes you feel comfortable talking to him/her about your conflicts between work and non-work.
2. [supervisor_name] demonstrates effective behaviors in how to juggle work and non-work issues.
3. [supervisor_name] works effectively with employees to creatively solve conflicts between work and non-work.
4. [supervisor_name] organizes the work in your department or unit to jointly benefit employees and the company.

Response Options: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

Sleep Leadership (Leader Ratings) (Gunia et al., 2015)

The following section contains questions about your behaviors as a supervisor of full-time service members at the Oregon National Guard. Please read each statement carefully and rate the extent to which you agree with each statement based on the scale below.

As a full-time supervisor in the Oregon National Guard...

1. I ask my subordinates about their sleeping habits.
2. I encourage my subordinates to get adequate sleep.
3. I consider sleep as an important planning factor.
4. I encourage my subordinates to nap if needed.
5. I encourage my subordinates to catch up on sleep before missions that require long hours.
6. I work to encourage my subordinates to have a good sleep environment (quiet, dark, not too hot or cold).

7. I discourage my subordinates from using caffeine or nicotine within several hours before trying to go to sleep.
8. I encourage my subordinates to try to go to sleep on time.

Response Options: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always

Sleep Leadership (Employee Ratings) (Gunia et al., 2015)

The following section also contains questions about your experiences with your primary full-time supervisor ([supervisor_name]) for your full-time job at the Oregon National Guard. Please read each statement carefully and rate the extent to which you agree with each statement based on the scale below. This information you provide will be kept confidential. Your supervisor will **not** see your survey responses.

1. [supervisor_name] asks subordinates about their sleeping habits.
2. [supervisor_name] encourages subordinates to get adequate sleep.
3. [supervisor_name] considers sleep as an important planning factor.
4. [supervisor_name] encourages subordinates to nap if needed.
5. [supervisor_name] encourages subordinates to catch up on sleep before missions that require long hours.
6. [supervisor_name] works to encourage subordinates to have a good sleep environment (quiet, dark, not too hot or cold).
7. [supervisor_name] discourages the use of caffeine or nicotine use within several hours before trying to go to sleep.
8. [supervisor_name] encourages subordinates to try to go to sleep on time.

Response Options: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always

Work Schedule (Control variable; Created for the study)

Which of the following best describes your work schedule for your full-time job at the Oregon National Guard? (Select all that apply)

1. Variable schedule, one that changes day to day
2. Regular daytime shift
3. Regular evening shift
4. Regular night shift
5. Rotating shift
6. Split shift
7. Other: please specify

Branch of Service (Control variable; Created for the study)

Response Options: Army, Air

Number of Children/Eldercare Responsibilities (Control variable; Created for the study)

1. How many children do you have?

Response Options: 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11+

2. How many dependent children do you have living at home at least 3 days per week?

Response Options: 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11+

3. Are any of these children [dependent, living at home at least 3 days a week] from a previous union [your own or your partner's, or both]?

Response Options: Yes, No

4. Do you have children living at home who have a developmental disability, physical health problem, or long-term serious mental health problem?

Response Options: Yes, No

5. Are you currently providing care for one or more elderly or adult dependents at least 3 hours per week? (Caregiving activities could include providing transportation, doing yard work, managing money, etc.)?

Response Options: Yes, No

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introduction:

- Thanks for taking the time to talk with me today. As I mentioned in my email, I am a researcher at Portland State University conducting a study focused on the experiences of professionals who hold leadership status within their workplaces.

Consent:

- Before we get started, did you have a chance to read the consent form I sent you just before this meeting? Do you have any questions?
- Okay, and for our records, do you consent to the study?
- Additionally, I will be recording our conversation today to be sure we capture your answers accurately and for analysis purposes but the video will be deleted and only the deidentified transcript will be retained.
- I want to let you know that you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to and you're welcome to end this call at any time.
- And although I have a list of questions, the goal is definitely for this to be a conversation and free-flowing, so don't worry about censoring yourself.

General Questions:

1. Can you tell me briefly about the organization you work for?
2. What is your current job title? Can you briefly describe your position (i.e., what are your primary responsibilities day-to-day)?
3. In total hours per week, how much time do you spend with your direct reports? Is this in person or remote?
4. If you were to think about one of your direct reports that you spend the most time with, what are all the things you are trying to navigate with them right now?
 - a. What about the things that are not just work-focused?
 - b. Are there any things you're helping your employees navigate in their nonwork life?
 - i. If I need to define nonwork life: Nonwork can include things like familial obligations, hobbies, educational endeavors, community involvement, times with friends
 - ii. If needed to define broad nonwork domains: nonwork life, identity, societal stressors
 - c. Are there any things you're helping your employees navigate related to diversity or their diverse identities?
 - d. Are there any things you're helping your employees navigate related to societal stressors? (If needed to give examples: COVID-19, racial unrest, climate issues, mass shootings, political rulings)
5. How much do you enjoy the leadership aspect of your job?

Aim 1: Do leaders have the capacity to provide support?

1. How does your organization expect you to provide support to your direct reports?
(*Probe nonwork life if they don't bring up*)
2. Can you tell me about your capacity to provide support?
 - a. What feelings come up for you when your organization asks you to do something new?
 - i. (*If they remain positive*) I know you said _____, but do you ever feel resentful?
 - ii. Has there ever been a time where you feel like there is too much on your plate?
 - iii. Can you describe that to me?
 - iv. Do you feel like those instances have been more frequent in recent years?
 - b. When you think about working with your employees, what is the thing you don't like doing most of all?
. What's the thing you like doing best?
 - c. Broadly, do you feel like you have the necessary skills to provide support to your employees? (*Probe nonwork life if they don't bring it up*)
 - d. Which skills do you have that make it easy to support your employees?
(*Probe nonwork life if they don't bring it up*)
3. Which skills do you still need to that would make it easier to support your employees? (*Probe nonwork life if they don't bring it up*)

Aim 2: How are leaders impacted by the provision of support?

1. How has supporting your employees with work and nonwork issues influenced your...
 - a. Health, well-being? Sleep? (*probe for both positive and negative*)
 - b. Performance at work? (*probe for both positive and negative*)
 - c. Your own work-life balance? (*probe for both positive and negative*)
 - d. Anything I might be missing?
2. How does your health influence the way you're able to support your employees with work and nonwork demands?

Aim 3: What barriers do leaders face toward providing effective support? What supports do they need?

1. Can you tell me about any obstacles you run up against when trying provide support? (*Probe for nonwork life if they don't bring up*)
2. How could the organization make it more likely that you provide support? (*Probe for nonwork life if they don't bring up*)
 - a. *If they bring up support from their own leaders*
 - i. Why do you believe you stopped getting support from your own leader?
 - ii. How did this change your life?

- iii. At what point in your career progression would you say you stopped seeing the support?
 - iv. Where are you getting support then? In other words, who is supporting you?
 - v. *If they don't bring up support from their own leaders... Do you feel adequately supported by your leader? (If no, then go to questions above)*
3. What could your direct reports do that would make it more likely that you provide support? *(Probe for nonwork life if they don't bring up)*

[Extra Questions]

1. Overall, what are the upsides to providing support? Downsides? *(Probe for the report and for them)*
2. Would you say providing support to your direct reports is more of a positive or negative experience? *(probe for nonwork life if they don't bring it up)*
3. Is there something about you specifically that you believe makes you a natural at being a leader and supporting your employees?
4. Do you feel like there are instances in which you can provide too much or too little support? *(Probe nonwork life if they don't bring up)*
 - a. *(If yes)* Can you describe them to me? What good or bad things happen when you don't hit that sweet spot?
5. Do you feel like you have to make sacrifices as a leader? *(Probe about nonwork life if they don't bring up)*
6. Can you tell me about a time when you put the needs of your direct reports before your own needs?
7. In your eyes, what does a resilient leader look like in today's world as they navigate the work and nonwork needs of our current workforce?
8. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience working as a leader?

Conclusion:

- That wraps up the questions I had for you. Do you have anything else you'd like to add, or is there anything I did not touch on that you'd like to share?
- And do you have any questions for me?
- Thank you for being so generous with your time today. It's possible that as we review the interviews other questions might arise. If this happens, would you mind if I reach out to you with additional questions?

Appendix C: Reflexivity Statements

Kay has over a decade's worth of experience in service, leadership, creative production, entrepreneurship, consultation and coaching industries. Kay is a white, female, undergraduate senior Honors Psychology major at Portland State University. Kay has newly developing research interests in Afrocentric Worldview, leadership dynamics, and early adult development.

Sam is a first-year graduate student studying Industrial-Organizational psychology at Portland State University. Her interest in leadership was sparked by observations of close friends and family members who have held middle-management roles. While she didn't work at the same organizations as these loved ones, she always knew what was going on at work because the stress almost always found a way to spillover to family time. She learned that in many in these roles, when salaried, you are almost never working only 40 hours. Because of these personal experiences, she is motivated to study the dark side of leadership, specifically from the perspective of the leader.

Jennifer is a Mexican-American, cisgender, neurodiverse woman who has had experience in a variety of leadership roles within the restaurant industry. These experiences, prior to graduate school, have allowed her to understand the demands leader must juggle at different levels of the organization. Within her graduate training, she obtained general knowledge of the responsibilities and importance have on the success of an organization. A majority of her expertise examines this research from the lens of DEI, with a particular interest about the experiences of women and racial and ethnic minorities. Particularly, through professional and personal experience, minority leaders must juggle both job-related, nonwork-related, and identity-related stressors that may contribute to negative health outcomes of leaders. As such, she examines these interviews from the perspective of her previous experiences in leadership roles, as well as driven through her personal experiences as a minority.

Jordyn is a white, cisgender woman who has had five years of specialized training and experience studying leadership in the workplace as a graduate student in Industrial-Organizational psychology at Portland State University. Her interest in leadership came from personal family experiences where she saw her parents struggle with managing work-life demands as they were both leaders in their positions (i.e., front-line manager and business owner). She also has had years of her own experience as a leader in various industries where supporting employees, direct reports, or colleagues was a key part of her role. She is passionate about improving processes within the workplace to subsequent improve the quality of life for working people. Specifically, she understands that leader support is critical for navigating conflicts between work and nonwork demands but is particularly fervent about ensuring that work processes are improved for everyone (even the leader).

Appendix D: Member-Checking Document

Thank you again for participating in our study! We appreciate your willingness to collaborate with us to ensure that the results we obtained are representative of your experience as a leader. Please review the following results (supported by quotes from interviews) and tell us your thoughts by responding to the four questions at the end of this document. We will also provide a supplementary summary table at the end of this document for your convenience. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the principal investigator (PI), Jordyn Leslie, by sending an email to leaderstudypdx@gmail.com.

Theme #1: Support structure breakdown

Definition: Leaders felt as though they did not have support from their own leaders or the broader organization. As a result, they felt they were less likely to provide support to their employees.

Supporting Quote: *“It was just impossible and unrealistic and hard for me to be able to meet that happy place where I felt like, okay, yeah, I was able to give you all the support you needed. I tried my best to give the attention they needed. But I know that it wasn’t enough. And it’s just because I didn’t even get the attention I needed. It’s difficult to be doing your job and not let it kind of seep into your subconscious and be like, “Wait, hold up! But where’s like my support?””*

Theme #2: Navigating tensions between roles or demands

Definition: Leaders often felt as though supporting employee needs or the organizational goals were at odds with one another. In addition, leaders experienced difficulty meeting performance expectations in their competing roles as individual contributor and a supporter of employees. These tensions resulted in leader experiencing difficulties providing support to employees.

Supporting Quote: *“My performance was affected in the fact that I had to spend a lot more time at work. Meaning that my other job responsibilities, whether it was budgetary or other corporate requirements, were always back burnered. Because of the importance of working with the employees and having the leadership aspect part of it. That was my main focus and so I always dealt with those things first and foremost. And then my other job responsibilities always took the back burner.”*

Theme #3: Importance of the employee

Definition: Leaders felt that their employees could help them provide better support by being more communicative about stressors they are experiencing as well as by providing the leader with feedback on whether their support is sufficient. Leaders also thought that providing support to employees who were less trusting and had strict lines between their work and nonwork lives was difficult.

Supporting Quote: *“A big problem is when people are not vulnerable about [nonwork], but it’s clearly affecting their work. That’s really problematic,*

because I can't necessarily ask or know to ask or want to pinpoint that for somebody. But then you're like, "Okay, something's going on, and I don't know what it is, and you're missing work a lot, or you're not able to focus". It's just very hard to feel in the dark about that stuff because it creates a barrier. So yeah, I think disclosing more to your supervisors is better."

Theme #4: Leader tenure

Definition: Leaders believed that the more experience they had in their leader position, the better they were able to support their employees adequately.

Supporting Quote: *"I got better with time because I was learning how to manage the team and again manage people. Different skill sets, strong suits, personalities and how to use that as a strategy mindset like, okay, "this person's good with this". I feel like it was just really hard for me to be able to really, really, ultimately find that sweet spot, but it got better over time."*

Theme #5: Health and well-being impairment

Definition: Leaders described that, as a result of supporting their employees, they were often worried in the evenings and early mornings which impacted their ability to obtain healthy sleep. In addition, leaders described how feeling empathetic for their employees often took a toll on their health and well-being.

Supporting Quote: *"I think when you open yourself up to being empathic towards a number of people, the cost is that you are exposed to the human condition in a lot of ways. When you hear the worst days of people on your team, day in and day out, it can take a toll on you. When they take that "risk" to connect with me, and tell me about what matters to them, I have empathy for them. And I care about them deeply, I want them to live healthy and fulfilling lives. And if they're not getting a chance to do that, I think that can weigh on my heart a little bit. I've had to see my staff mourn, grieve, struggle with loss, or with let down and disappointment. That can be really difficult, that certainly weighs on my heart, or can sit in my mind."*

Theme #6: Motivating leader appraisals of support

Definition: Leaders described feeling fulfilled by being able to see employee successes and attributing that to the support they were able to provide to a given employee. In addition, leaders acknowledged that there were costs associated with providing support, but that the positive benefits outweighed any negatives they might experience.

Supporting Quote: *"I love my people. I love everybody that I get to work with and if they're struggling, I want to help get them to a good point. It takes a toll on you, but I think that's okay. I think that's a sacrifice that I'm willing to make."*

Questions:

- 1) After reading through the findings, what are your general thoughts?
- 2) How accurately do you feel the findings captured your thoughts/experiences?
- 3) What could be added to the findings to capture your experiences better?
- 4) If there is anything you would like removed, what would that be and why?

Appendix E: Survey

Dissertation Survey

Start of Block: Consent & Inclusion Criteria

CONSENT FORM You are being asked to participate for a research study that is being conducted by Principal Investigators Jordyn Leslie, M.S., and Dr. Tori Crain, from the Department of Psychology at Portland State University. This form will explain the research study and will explain the possible risks as well as possible benefits to you. This research study is interested in the experiences of leaders. If you agree to participate, you will first be asked to complete a pre-screening survey to determine your eligibility to be involved in the study. If you are determined to be eligible, you will be contacted by the research team to schedule a 60-minute interview with the principal investigator in which you will be asked questions about your experiences as a leader.

Key Information for You to Consider:

- **Voluntary Consent.** You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research. You may omit any items you prefer not to answer and can discontinue participation at any time.
- **Duration.** Your participation in the pre-screening survey will take approximately 10 minutes. If eligible, the interview portion of the study will take approximately 60 minutes.
- **Risks.** Some possible risks associated with participation in this study include the possibility that you may have thoughts or emotions that arise when answering the questions. You may also experience a certain level of inconvenience associated with taking the time to complete the survey and interview.
- **Benefits.** There will be no direct benefits for participating in this study, but the researchers hope to learn more about the experiences of leaders in the workplace to improve their working experience.

What happens to the information collected?

If you are an eligible participant, any personal contact information we collect from you will be for compensation purposes only and will be disconnected from your responses. The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept on a restricted access computer.

What happens if I am not eligible to participate?

Any and all information that you provide in the pre-screening survey will be immediately and securely deleted. The principal investigator will contact you to let you know of your ineligibility for the study if appropriate.

How will I and my information be protected?

We will take extensive measures to protect your privacy. All responses will be secured on a restricted access computer. The interview will be audio recorded to aid in transcription and analysis. Although we require video to be on for the duration of the interview, the video will not be recorded. None of the information you provide to the research staff will be shared with anyone external to the research team, including your current or former employer. Any information that could be used to identify you will be removed from the research staff and all data will be presented in an aggregated, de-identified form. Despite taking steps to protect your privacy, we can never fully guarantee that your privacy will be protected.

What if I want to stop being in this research?

You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you may stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to join in any study activity or completely stop your participation at any point without penalty or loss of benefits you would otherwise get. Your decision whether or not to take part in research will not affect your relationship with the researchers or Portland State University.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

There is no cost to taking part in this research, beyond your time.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

You will be compensated \$20 upon completion of the interview.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact the primary investigator and research team at leaderstudypdx@gmail.com.

Who can I speak to about my rights as a research participant?

If you have any concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact the Portland State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights and welfare of the people who take part in research are protected. The Office of Research Integrity is the office at Portland State University that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights, or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact: Office of Research Integrity PO Box 751 Portland, OR 97207-0751 Phone: (503) 725-5484 Toll Free: 1 (877) 480-4400 Email: psuirb@pdx.edu

Consent Statement: I have had the chance to read and think about the information in this form. I have asked any questions I have, and I can make a decision about my

participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions anytime while I take part in the research.

5. I agree to take part in this study (1)
6. I do NOT agree to take part in this study (4)

Q53 Please verify

Q49 Screening questions

Please note, there will be multiple questions that are designed to determine if you are paying attention. You may not be selected if you are found to be careless.

Age What is your age?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Years ()



U.S. Do you live and work in the United States?

7. No (1)
8. Yes (2)

Work hours Do you work at least 20+ hours a week?

9. No (1)
 10. Yes (2)
-

Direct reports Do you have at least one direct report (i.e., an employee that works directly under you)?

- 11. No (1)
 - 12. Yes (2)
-

Job sector Do you work within one of the following categories?

- 13. Public relations (1)
 - 14. Accounting (2)
 - 15. Tax preparation (3)
 - 16. Computer systems design (4)
 - 17. Architecture (5)
 - 18. Engineering (6)
 - 19. Creative services (E.g., graphic design) (7)
 - 20. IT services (8)
 - 21. Lawyers (9)
 - 22. Management and other consultants (10)
 - 23. Science (11)
 - 24. Advertising/Marketing (12)
 - 25. Unsure and will describe job category below (13)
-
- 26. No (14)
-

Work model What work model do you currently work under?

- 27. In-person only (1)
- 28. Hybrid (in person + remote) (2)
- 29. Remote only (3)

End of Block: Consent & Inclusion Criteria

Start of Block: Block 5

Q43 How many years old are you?

End of Block: Block 5

Start of Block: Work Model Questions

% Remote What percent of time do you work remotely?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

% of time spent working remotely ()



% Remote Interaction What percent of the interactions with your direct reports are remote?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

% of time interactions with direct reports are remote ()



In person interaction: On a typical week, how many times do you interact in-person with a given direct report?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

of in person interactions with direct report(s) ()



Average hours How many hours do you work per week on average?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Hours ()



End of Block: Work Model Questions**Start of Block: Leadership Questions**

Job title What is your job title?

Leader tenure What is your tenure as a leader, in ANY organization?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Years ()



Org tenure What is your tenure as a leader at your CURRENT organization?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Years ()



of employees ever What is the maximum number of employees you have ever supervised?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

of direct reports ()



of employees now What is the maximum number of employees you supervise currently?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



End of Block: Leadership Questions

Start of Block: Demographics

Gender How do you describe yourself?

- 30. Man (1)
- 31. Woman (2)
- 32. Transgender (3)
- 33. Nonbinary (4)
- 34. Agender (5)
- 35. Gender queer (6)
- 36. Other (7)
- 37. Prefer not to disclose (8)

Race Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be

- 3. White or Caucasian (1)
- 4. Black or African American (2)
- 5. American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native (3)
- 6. Asian (4)
- 7. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (5)
- 8. Other (6)
- 9. Prefer not to say (7)

Children How many children do you have?

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20



Children at home How many children do you have living at home under the age of 18?

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

Number of children ()



Dis. children Do you have any children living at home with a developmental disability or sickness?

38. No (1)

39. Yes (2)

Eldercare Are you caring for elderly or adult dependents at least 3 hours per week?

40. No (1)

41. Yes (2)

Marital status What is your current marital status?

42. Married (1)

43. Living with a partner (2)

44. Widowed (3)

45. Divorced/Separated (4)

46. Never been married (5)

Zip Code What is the ZIP code of your primary residence? Enter a 5 digit code.

Income What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?

- 47. Less than \$25,000 (1)
 - 48. \$25,000-\$49,999 (2)
 - 49. \$50,000-\$99,999 (3)
 - 50. \$100,000-\$199,999 (4)
 - 51. More than \$200,000 (5)
-

Q28 Do you identify with having a disability?

- 52. No (1)
 - 53. Yes (2)
-

Sexual Orientation What best describes your sexual orientation?

- 54. Asexual (1)
 - 55. Bisexual or pansexual (2)
 - 56. Gay or lesbian (3)
 - 57. Heterosexual (4)
 - 58. Prefer to self describe (5)
 - 59. Prefer not to respond (6)
-

Education What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 60. Some high school or less (1)
 - 61. High school diploma or GED (2)
 - 62. Some college, but no degree (3)
 - 63. Associates or technical degree (4)
 - 64. Bachelor's degree (5)
 - 65. Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.) (6)
 - 66. Prefer not to say (7)
-

Femininity Rate the extent to which each of the statements below describe you:

| | Never (1) | Rarely (2) | Occasionally (3) | Sometimes (4) | Often (5) | Very Often (6) | Always (7) |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Affectionate | 67. | 68. | 69. | 70. | 71. | 72. | 73. |
| Gentle | 74. | 75. | 76. | 77. | 78. | 79. | 80. |
| Loyal | 81. | 82. | 83. | 84. | 85. | 86. | 87. |
| Sensitive to the needs of others | 88. | 89. | 90. | 91. | 92. | 93. | 94. |
| Understanding | 95. | 96. | 97. | 98. | 99. | 100. | 101. |



Email If you are eligible, what is the best email address to contact you in order to schedule the paid interview portion of this study?



Confirm Email Please confirm your email.

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Block 4

Q44 What is the last month of the year?

- 102. January (1)
 - 103. March (2)
 - 104. December (3)
 - 105. Winter (4)
 - 106. April (5)
-

Q45 Cat is to kitten, as dog is to ____

- 107. Bat (1)
 - 108. Serpent (2)
 - 109. Puppy (3)
 - 110. Cub (4)
 - 111. Baby (5)
-

Q46 What year were you born?

Q51 What is your favorite movie?

Q54 Ignore the rest of the content in this passage and please choose slightly agree for this answer.

I like when the temperature outside is cold.

- 112. Disagree (4)
- 113. Slightly disagree (5)
- 114. Neutral (6)
- 115. Slightly agree (7)
- 116. Agree (8)

End of Block: Block 4