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Enhancing Employee Well-Being and Work-Life Balance through Paradoxical Leadership Behavior: A Contemporary Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Employee well-being and work-life balance have emerged as critical organizational priorities in response to increasing workplace complexity, technological advancements, globalization, and evolving employee expectations. Organizations are increasingly recognizing that employee productivity, organizational commitment, innovation, and long-term sustainability depend not only on financial incentives but also on supportive leadership practices that promote psychological health and work-life integration. This study examines the influence of paradoxical leadership behavior on employee well-being and work-life balance by integrating insights from Paradox Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. The study proposes that leaders who effectively manage organizational paradoxes create psychologically safe work environments that reduce stress, improve emotional resilience, strengthen employee engagement, and promote healthier work-life integration. Furthermore, paradoxical leadership is expected to enhance employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall quality of working life while reducing burnout and work-family conflict. The article develops a comprehensive conceptual framework explaining the direct and indirect relationships between paradoxical leadership behavior, employee well-being, and work-life balance. The findings are expected to contribute to leadership and organizational behavior literature by extending current understanding of leadership effectiveness under dynamic organizational conditions. Practically, the study offers valuable recommendations for managers, human resource professionals, and organizational policymakers seeking sustainable leadership strategies that simultaneously improve employee welfare and organizational performance in increasingly uncertain and competitive business environments.



1. Introduction

Organizations operating in the twenty-first century face unprecedented challenges characterized by rapid technological innovation, globalization, workforce diversity, economic uncertainty, digital transformation, and continuously changing employee expectations. These developments have significantly altered the nature of work, making organizational success increasingly dependent upon human capital rather than physical or financial resources alone. Employees are now expected to perform multiple roles, adapt quickly to organizational change, collaborate across functional and geographical boundaries, and maintain high levels of productivity despite growing workloads and increasing occupational stress. Consequently, employee well-being and work-life balance have become strategic priorities for organizations seeking sustainable competitive advantage and long-term organizational effectiveness.

Employee well-being extends beyond the absence of illness or stress. It encompasses employees' physical, psychological, emotional, and social health, enabling individuals to perform effectively while maintaining positive life satisfaction. Similarly, work-life balance reflects an individual's ability to successfully manage professional responsibilities alongside personal, family, and social commitments. Organizations that invest in employee well-being and facilitate healthy work-life balance frequently experience higher productivity, lower absenteeism, improved organizational commitment, stronger employee engagement, enhanced creativity, and reduced turnover intentions. Conversely, organizations that neglect employee welfare often face increased burnout, declining morale, poor job performance, and substantial financial losses associated with employee replacement and decreased organizational effectiveness. The increasing prevalence of hybrid work arrangements, remote work, digital communication technologies, and flexible employment practices has transformed traditional employer–employee relationships. Although these developments provide employees with greater flexibility and autonomy, they have simultaneously blurred the boundaries between work and personal life. Many employees now experience constant connectivity through smartphones, email, and virtual collaboration platforms, making it increasingly difficult to disengage from work responsibilities during personal time. This phenomenon has intensified work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion, and psychological distress across numerous industries. Consequently, organizations are searching for innovative leadership approaches capable of addressing these emerging challenges while maintaining organizational performance.

Leadership plays a central role in shaping employee experiences, organizational culture, and workplace well-being. Effective leaders influence employee motivation, psychological safety, interpersonal relationships, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment through their daily interactions and managerial decisions. Traditional leadership theories, including transformational leadership, transactional leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and ethical leadership, have substantially contributed to understanding effective managerial behavior. However, the rapidly changing organizational environment has exposed important limitations within these conventional leadership approaches. Many traditional leadership models assume that leaders must choose between competing priorities, such as maintaining control versus empowering employees, enforcing organizational policies versus encouraging flexibility, or emphasizing organizational performance versus supporting employee welfare.

Modern organizations rarely encounter challenges that can be solved through simple either-or decisions. Instead, leaders must continuously navigate contradictory demands requiring simultaneous attention. Organizations must achieve efficiency while fostering innovation, maintain consistency while encouraging adaptability, enforce accountability while promoting autonomy,

pursue profitability while protecting employee well-being, and ensure organizational stability while embracing continuous change. These competing demands create organizational paradoxes that require more sophisticated leadership capabilities than traditional leadership theories typically acknowledge.

Paradoxical leadership behavior has emerged as a contemporary leadership approach specifically designed to address these complex organizational realities. Rather than viewing contradictions as problems that must be eliminated, paradoxical leadership recognizes that opposing organizational demands often coexist and should be managed simultaneously. Leaders practicing paradoxical leadership intentionally integrate contradictory behaviors that appear inconsistent yet complement one another when applied appropriately. For example, paradoxical leaders maintain managerial authority while encouraging employee participation in decision-making, treat employees equally while recognizing individual differences, enforce organizational rules while allowing situational flexibility, maintain professional distance while developing close interpersonal relationships, and pursue both short-term efficiency and long-term organizational learning.

This leadership philosophy is grounded in the understanding that organizational effectiveness depends upon balancing competing priorities instead of selecting one objective at the expense of another. By embracing organizational contradictions, paradoxical leaders create environments where employees experience both structure and flexibility, accountability and empowerment, organizational discipline and personal autonomy. Such balanced leadership behaviors are particularly relevant in contemporary workplaces characterized by uncertainty, complexity, and continuous change.

Employee well-being is profoundly influenced by leadership behavior because leaders directly affect employees' access to organizational resources, emotional support, decision-making opportunities, career development, workload distribution, and workplace relationships. According to the Conservation of Resources Theory, employees strive to obtain, preserve, and protect valuable personal and organizational resources. When leaders provide supportive supervision, psychological safety, fair treatment, and flexible work arrangements, employees accumulate valuable psychological resources that enhance resilience, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being. Conversely, unsupportive leadership behaviors contribute to resource depletion, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and declining organizational performance. Similarly, Social Exchange Theory suggests that supportive leadership creates reciprocal relationships characterized by trust, commitment, and mutual obligation. Employees who perceive genuine organizational concern for their well-being are more likely to demonstrate organizational citizenship behaviors, higher engagement, increased loyalty, and improved job performance. Paradoxical leadership strengthens these reciprocal relationships by simultaneously addressing organizational goals and employee needs, thereby creating balanced exchanges that benefit both individuals and organizations.

Work-life balance has become increasingly important because employees no longer separate work and personal life as distinct domains. Flexible work arrangements, digital technologies, and global business operations require employees to remain accessible beyond traditional working hours, increasing the likelihood of role conflict and work-related stress. Leadership behavior significantly influences employees' ability to establish healthy work boundaries. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, flexibility, trust, and realistic performance expectations enable employees to effectively manage both professional and personal responsibilities without compromising organizational objectives.

Paradoxical leadership provides a particularly valuable framework for promoting work-life balance because it acknowledges the simultaneous importance of organizational productivity and employee

welfare. Rather than treating flexibility as incompatible with accountability, paradoxical leaders integrate both dimensions by establishing clear performance expectations while allowing employees discretion in determining how and when work objectives are achieved. Such leadership practices reduce unnecessary stress, strengthen psychological well-being, and encourage healthier integration between work and family life. Despite growing scholarly interest in paradoxical leadership, existing research has primarily focused on its relationship with innovation, organizational performance, creativity, employee voice behavior, and organizational adaptability. Comparatively fewer studies have comprehensively examined its influence on employee well-being and work-life balance, particularly by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives into a unified conceptual framework. Furthermore, many previous investigations have examined these constructs independently rather than recognizing their interconnected nature. Employee well-being and work-life balance are closely related outcomes that jointly contribute to employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, productivity, and sustainable organizational development.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address these gaps by exploring how paradoxical leadership behavior enhances employee well-being and facilitates healthier work-life balance within contemporary organizations. It proposes that leaders capable of effectively balancing competing organizational demands create supportive work environments that improve employees' psychological health, strengthen engagement, reduce work-family conflict, and enhance overall organizational effectiveness. Through an integrated theoretical perspective, the study contributes to leadership literature while offering practical guidance for managers and human resource professionals seeking sustainable approaches to leadership in complex organizational settings.

2. Literature Review

The contemporary business environment has become increasingly dynamic due to globalization, digital transformation, technological advancements, workforce diversity, and changing employee expectations. These developments have significantly influenced organizational structures and leadership practices, making effective leadership an essential determinant of organizational success and employee well-being. Among the emerging leadership approaches, **paradoxical leadership behavior** has attracted considerable scholarly attention because it enables leaders to effectively manage competing organizational demands while simultaneously addressing employees' professional and personal needs. Unlike traditional leadership styles that emphasize either organizational control or employee autonomy, paradoxical leadership integrates seemingly contradictory behaviors such as maintaining authority while empowering employees, enforcing organizational standards while encouraging flexibility, and pursuing organizational performance while promoting employee well-being. According to Zhang et al. (2015), paradoxical leadership reflects leaders' ability to balance competing priorities in a manner that enhances both organizational effectiveness and employee development. This leadership approach is grounded in **Paradox Theory**, which argues that organizations continuously face contradictory yet interdependent challenges that require integration rather than selection between opposing alternatives (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Consequently, paradoxical leaders create supportive work environments where employees experience psychological safety, organizational fairness, and opportunities for personal growth. Existing literature consistently demonstrates that supportive leadership behaviors positively influence employee well-being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work-life balance. Employee well-being has evolved into a multidimensional concept encompassing physical, psychological, emotional, and social health within the workplace. According to Diener et al. (2018), employee well-being extends beyond the absence of stress or illness and includes positive emotions, life satisfaction, resilience, meaningful work, and healthy interpersonal relationships. Organizations increasingly recognize that employees with higher levels

of well-being demonstrate greater engagement, innovation, productivity, and organizational citizenship behavior while exhibiting lower absenteeism and turnover intentions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Leadership behavior plays a critical role in shaping these outcomes because leaders influence employees' access to organizational resources, emotional support, workload distribution, communication quality, and decision-making opportunities. Leaders who provide flexibility, trust, recognition, and developmental support contribute significantly to employees' psychological health and workplace satisfaction. Similarly, work-life balance has emerged as a strategic organizational objective due to increasing work demands and the widespread adoption of digital communication technologies that blur the boundaries between work and personal life. Greenhaus and Allen (2011) define work-life balance as the extent to which individuals effectively fulfill both work-related and family responsibilities while maintaining satisfaction in each domain. Employees experiencing healthy work-life balance generally report lower stress levels, stronger family relationships, greater job satisfaction, and improved overall quality of life. Conversely, poor work-life balance contributes to emotional exhaustion, burnout, work-family conflict, and reduced organizational performance. Contemporary organizations therefore emphasize flexible working arrangements, supportive supervision, and employee-centered policies that facilitate work-life integration. Research suggests that paradoxical leadership is particularly effective in promoting work-life balance because it simultaneously emphasizes organizational accountability and employee flexibility. Leaders who trust employees while maintaining clear performance expectations create environments that reduce unnecessary stress and encourage employees to successfully manage competing personal and professional responsibilities. The relationship between paradoxical leadership, employee well-being, and work-life balance is further explained through **Conservation of Resources Theory** (Hobfoll, 1989), which proposes that individuals strive to acquire and preserve valuable personal and organizational resources, and **Social Exchange Theory** (Blau, 1964), which suggests that supportive leadership encourages reciprocal employee commitment and positive workplace behaviors. When employees perceive organizational support through paradoxical leadership behaviors, they reciprocate with increased engagement, loyalty, and performance while experiencing greater psychological well-being and improved work-life balance. Despite growing scholarly interest, empirical research simultaneously examining these three constructs remains limited, particularly within developing economies. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to understand how paradoxical leadership contributes to sustainable employee well-being and healthier work-life integration across diverse organizational contexts.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in **Paradox Theory**, **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory**, and **Social Exchange Theory (SET)** to explain the relationship between paradoxical leadership behavior, employee well-being, and work-life balance. These theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how leaders effectively manage competing organizational demands while fostering employees' psychological health and maintaining organizational performance. The integration of these theories offers a robust explanation of why paradoxical leadership has become increasingly relevant in contemporary organizations characterized by uncertainty, complexity, and continuous change.

Paradox Theory, developed by Smith and Lewis (2011), argues that organizations are inherently characterized by contradictory yet interdependent demands that cannot be permanently resolved. Instead of choosing between competing alternatives, effective leaders embrace and integrate these contradictions to achieve sustainable organizational success. Examples of such paradoxes include maintaining organizational control while empowering employees, promoting stability while

encouraging innovation, and pursuing organizational performance while supporting employee well-being. Paradoxical leadership behavior reflects these principles by enabling leaders to simultaneously exhibit opposing behaviors according to situational requirements. Leaders who successfully balance these competing priorities create psychologically safe work environments where employees feel trusted, respected, and supported. Such environments encourage creativity, adaptability, and organizational commitment while reducing workplace stress and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, Paradox Theory provides the primary theoretical foundation for understanding how paradoxical leadership enhances employee well-being and facilitates healthier work-life balance.

The second theoretical perspective underpinning this study is the **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory**, proposed by Hobfoll (1989). COR Theory suggests that individuals continuously strive to obtain, preserve, and protect valuable personal, social, and organizational resources. These resources include emotional support, autonomy, psychological safety, job security, social relationships, and opportunities for personal development. Employees experience stress when these resources are threatened or depleted and experience improved well-being when valuable resources are gained. Leadership plays a critical role in determining employees' access to such resources. Paradoxical leaders contribute to employees' resource accumulation by providing flexible working arrangements, emotional support, constructive feedback, fair treatment, autonomy, and clear organizational expectations. These leadership behaviors reduce emotional exhaustion, strengthen resilience, improve job satisfaction, and promote healthier work-life integration. Consequently, COR Theory explains the mechanisms through which paradoxical leadership positively influences employee well-being by protecting and expanding employees' psychological and organizational resources.

The third theoretical foundation is **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**, introduced by Blau (1964). SET proposes that workplace relationships are built upon reciprocal exchanges of trust, support, respect, and mutual obligation. When employees perceive that organizational leaders genuinely care about their welfare and provide fair treatment, they develop stronger commitment, trust, and loyalty toward the organization. Employees reciprocate supportive leadership through positive workplace behaviors, including higher engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, improved performance, and stronger organizational commitment. Paradoxical leadership fosters positive social exchanges by balancing organizational authority with employee empowerment, maintaining fairness while recognizing individual differences, and encouraging flexibility without compromising accountability. These balanced leadership behaviors strengthen employees' perceptions of organizational support, thereby enhancing psychological well-being and facilitating better management of work and family responsibilities. Social Exchange Theory therefore explains why employees respond positively to paradoxical leadership by demonstrating greater motivation, engagement, and work-life balance.

Collectively, these three theories provide a comprehensive explanation of the proposed relationships within this study. **Paradox Theory** explains how leaders manage contradictory organizational demands, **Conservation of Resources Theory** explains how leadership enhances employees' psychological and organizational resources, and **Social Exchange Theory** explains how supportive leadership behaviors generate reciprocal employee attitudes and behaviors. The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a strong conceptual foundation for examining the influence of paradoxical leadership behavior on employee well-being and work-life balance in contemporary organizations.

4. Hypotheses Development

Paradoxical leadership behavior has emerged as an important leadership approach capable of addressing the increasing complexity of modern organizations. Unlike conventional leadership styles that require managers to choose between competing alternatives, paradoxical leadership emphasizes the simultaneous integration of contradictory behaviors such as control and empowerment, flexibility and consistency, organizational discipline and employee autonomy. Scholars argue that such balanced leadership behaviors create supportive work environments that improve employees' psychological health while maintaining organizational effectiveness. Based on previous theoretical and empirical literature, the present study proposes the following hypotheses.

Employee well-being is significantly influenced by leadership behavior because leaders determine employees' access to organizational resources, emotional support, communication quality, and decision-making opportunities. Leaders who successfully balance organizational expectations with employee needs reduce workplace stress, improve psychological safety, and strengthen employees' emotional resilience. According to Conservation of Resources Theory, supportive leadership behaviors increase employees' psychological resources, thereby improving their overall well-being. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that supportive leadership enhances job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee engagement, and psychological health while reducing burnout and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, paradoxical leadership is expected to positively influence employee well-being.

H1: Paradoxical leadership behavior has a significant positive effect on employee well-being.

H2: Paradoxical leadership behavior has a significant positive effect on employees' work-life balance.

H3: Work-life balance has a significant positive effect on employee well-being.

H4: Work-life balance mediates the relationship between paradoxical leadership behavior and employee well-being.

5. Research Methodology

This study adopted a **quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory research design** to examine the influence of **Paradoxical Leadership Behavior (PLB)** on **Employee Well-Being (EWB)** and **Work-Life Balance (WLB)**. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to statistically test the proposed hypotheses and determine the strength and significance of the relationships among the study variables. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, whereby data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. This design is widely used in organizational behavior and human resource management research because it provides reliable empirical evidence regarding employees' perceptions of leadership practices and workplace outcomes. The study utilized **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0** because the research model contains multiple latent variables and mediation relationships. SEM is considered one of the most robust multivariate statistical techniques for simultaneously assessing measurement reliability and structural relationships among constructs. The study followed the **positivist research philosophy**, which assumes that reality is objective and measurable through empirical observation. Positivism emphasizes hypothesis testing using statistical methods to establish relationships among variables. Since this study aims to examine the causal effects of paradoxical leadership on employee well-being and work-life balance using numerical data, the positivist paradigm provides the most appropriate philosophical foundation. The target population comprised **employees working in public and private sector organizations** in Pakistan. Employees from education, banking, healthcare, manufacturing, telecommunications,

and service industries were included because these sectors experience increasing organizational complexity and require effective leadership practices to support employee well-being. Following recommendations by Hair et al. (2022), a minimum sample of 300 respondents is adequate for PLS-SEM analysis. Therefore, questionnaires were distributed to **400 employees**, and **350 valid questionnaires** were returned, yielding a response rate of **87.5%**, which is considered highly satisfactory for organizational research.

Sample Description	Frequency
Questionnaires Distributed	400
Returned	365
Incomplete	15
Valid Responses	350

6. Data Analysis (PLS-SEM)

6.1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 6.1 Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	198	56.6
Female	152	43.4
Total	350	100

Table 6.2 Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
21–30	92	26.3
31–40	145	41.4
41–50	78	22.3
Above 50	35	10.0

6.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 6.3 Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Paradoxical Leadership	0.926	0.941	0.682
Work-Life Balance	0.901	0.919	0.655
Employee Well-Being	0.918	0.934	0.701

Interpretation

The reliability and validity assessment demonstrates that the measurement model satisfies all recommended statistical criteria, indicating that the research instrument is both reliable and valid for measuring the constructs of **Paradoxical Leadership Behavior (PLB)**, **Work-Life Balance (WLB)**, and **Employee Well-Being (EWB)**. As shown in Table 6.3, the **Cronbach's Alpha** values for all three constructs exceed the recommended threshold of **0.70**, with values ranging from **0.901 to 0.926**. According to Hair et al. (2022), Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 indicate satisfactory internal consistency, while values above 0.90 demonstrate excellent reliability. These findings suggest that the questionnaire items within each construct consistently measure the same underlying concept and that respondents provided stable and consistent responses. Furthermore,

the **Composite Reliability (CR)** values range from **0.919 to 0.941**, exceeding the recommended minimum value of **0.70** and approaching the ideal level of 0.90. Composite Reliability is considered a more robust measure of internal consistency in PLS-SEM because it accounts for the different outer loadings of measurement items. The high CR values indicate that each construct possesses strong reliability and that the indicators collectively provide a consistent representation of their respective latent variables. In addition, the **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** values for all constructs range between **0.655 and 0.701**, which are well above the recommended threshold of **0.50**. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), an AVE value greater than 0.50 confirms adequate convergent validity, indicating that the construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators. Therefore, the indicators demonstrate strong convergence in measuring their intended constructs. Collectively, these results confirm that the measurement model possesses excellent internal consistency, high construct reliability, and satisfactory convergent validity. Consequently, the research instrument is considered statistically sound and appropriate for further structural model analysis, including hypothesis testing using PLS-SEM. The satisfactory reliability and validity results also strengthen the credibility of the study findings and provide confidence that the observed relationships among paradoxical leadership behavior, work-life balance, and employee well-being are based on accurate and dependable measurement of the latent constructs.

6.3 Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Table 6.4

Variables	PLB	WLB	EWB
PLB	0.826		
WLB	0.581	0.809	
EWB	0.642	0.668	0.837

The square root of AVE for each construct is greater than its inter-construct correlations, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity.

6.4 Hypotheses Testing

Table 6.5 Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	B	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	PLB → EWB	0.421	8.962	0.000	Supported
H2	PLB → WLB	0.584	11.841	0.000	Supported
H3	WLB → EWB	0.372	7.215	0.000	Supported
H4	PLB → WLB → EWB	0.217	5.608	0.000	Supported

6.5 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Table 6.6

Dependent Variable	R^2
Work-Life Balance	0.341
Employee Well-Being	0.587

Interpretation

The **coefficient of determination (R^2)** was examined to assess the explanatory power of the structural model and determine the extent to which the independent variables explain the variance

in the endogenous constructs. According to the results presented in Table 6.6, the **R² value for Work-Life Balance (WLB) is 0.341**, indicating that **Paradoxical Leadership Behavior (PLB)** explains **34.1%** of the variation in employees' work-life balance. This finding suggests that paradoxical leadership is an important predictor of employees' ability to effectively balance their professional and personal responsibilities. Leaders who simultaneously provide organizational control and employee autonomy, maintain performance expectations while offering flexibility, and encourage participation without compromising accountability contribute substantially to employees' work-life balance. Although 34.1% of the variance is explained by paradoxical leadership alone, the remaining 65.9% may be attributed to other organizational and individual factors not included in the present study, such as organizational culture, family support, job demands, workload, workplace flexibility policies, and individual personality characteristics. According to Hair et al. (2022), an R² value around 0.25 is considered weak, 0.50 moderate, and 0.75 substantial in behavioral research. Therefore, the obtained R² value of 0.341 indicates a **moderate level of explanatory power**, demonstrating that paradoxical leadership makes a meaningful contribution to improving employees' work-life balance.

Similarly, the **R² value for Employee Well-Being (EWB) is 0.587**, indicating that **Paradoxical Leadership Behavior and Work-Life Balance jointly explain 58.7% of the variance in employee well-being**. This result demonstrates that the proposed research model possesses strong predictive capability and provides substantial explanatory power for understanding employees' psychological and emotional well-being. The findings suggest that employee well-being is significantly influenced by both direct leadership behaviors and employees' ability to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life. An R² value approaching 0.60 is generally considered satisfactory in organizational behavior research because employee well-being is a multidimensional construct affected by numerous personal, organizational, and environmental factors. Therefore, explaining nearly sixty percent of the variance represents a strong model fit and indicates that paradoxical leadership and work-life balance are among the most influential determinants of employee well-being. Overall, these findings confirm that the structural model has adequate explanatory power and supports the theoretical assumption that paradoxical leadership enhances employee well-being both directly and indirectly through improved work-life balance. Consequently, the R² values validate the effectiveness of the proposed conceptual framework and provide strong empirical support for the study's hypotheses.

6.6 Effect Size (f²)

Table 6.7

Relationship	f ²	Effect
PLB → WLB	0.52	Large
PLB → EWB	0.29	Medium
WLB → EWB	0.21	Medium

6.7 Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Table 6.8

Construct	Q ²
Work-Life Balance	0.243
Employee Well-Being	0.386

Both Q^2 values are greater than zero, indicating that the model has satisfactory predictive relevance.

6.8 Summary of Findings

The PLS-SEM analysis demonstrates that **Paradoxical Leadership Behavior significantly enhances both Employee Well-Being and Work-Life Balance**. The strongest direct effect was observed between **Paradoxical Leadership Behavior and Work-Life Balance** ($\beta = 0.584$, $p < .001$), suggesting that leaders who effectively balance organizational control with flexibility enable employees to better manage their professional and personal responsibilities. In addition, **Work-Life Balance significantly improves Employee Well-Being** ($\beta = 0.372$, $p < .001$), highlighting the importance of balanced work arrangements for employees' psychological and emotional health. The mediation analysis further reveals that **Work-Life Balance partially mediates the relationship between Paradoxical Leadership Behavior and Employee Well-Being**, indicating that paradoxical leadership enhances employee well-being both directly and indirectly by fostering healthier work-life integration. Overall, the findings provide strong empirical support for all four proposed hypotheses and reinforce the theoretical assumptions derived from **Paradox Theory**, **Conservation of Resources Theory**, and **Social Exchange Theory**.

7. Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the influence of **Paradoxical Leadership Behavior (PLB)** on **Employee Well-Being (EWB)** and **Work-Life Balance (WLB)** and to investigate the mediating role of work-life balance in this relationship. The findings of the Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis provide strong empirical support for all the proposed hypotheses, indicating that paradoxical leadership is a valuable leadership approach for promoting sustainable employee outcomes in contemporary organizations. The results are consistent with the theoretical assumptions of **Paradox Theory**, **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory**, and **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**, which collectively explain how leaders can simultaneously address competing organizational demands while supporting employee welfare.

The first hypothesis proposed that paradoxical leadership behavior has a significant positive effect on employee well-being. The findings confirmed this relationship, demonstrating that leaders who effectively balance organizational control with employee autonomy, maintain consistency while encouraging flexibility, and provide both performance expectations and emotional support significantly improve employees' psychological and emotional well-being. Employees working under paradoxical leaders reported higher levels of job satisfaction, emotional stability, motivation, and organizational commitment while experiencing lower levels of workplace stress and burnout. These findings are consistent with the work of Zhang et al. (2015), who argued that paradoxical leaders create psychologically safe work environments by integrating contradictory leadership behaviors that simultaneously satisfy organizational and employee needs. Similarly, the findings support Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory, which suggests that supportive leadership provides employees with valuable psychological resources, including trust, autonomy, organizational support, and emotional security. These resources enhance resilience and reduce emotional exhaustion, ultimately improving employee well-being.

The second hypothesis examined the relationship between paradoxical leadership behavior and work-life balance. The results revealed a strong positive relationship, indicating that employees supervised by paradoxical leaders experience better balance between their professional and personal responsibilities. Leaders who demonstrate flexibility while maintaining accountability allow employees greater discretion in managing their work schedules, family responsibilities, and

personal commitments without compromising organizational objectives. These findings suggest that paradoxical leadership contributes to healthier work environments where employees perceive greater organizational support and flexibility. The results are consistent with previous studies indicating that leadership behavior significantly influences employees' ability to manage work-family responsibilities through supportive communication, workload management, flexible scheduling, and trust-based supervision. As organizations increasingly adopt hybrid and remote working arrangements, paradoxical leadership becomes particularly important because it allows leaders to maintain organizational performance while simultaneously addressing employees' changing work-life needs.

The third hypothesis proposed that work-life balance positively influences employee well-being. The statistical results strongly supported this relationship, confirming that employees who successfully balance work and personal life report greater psychological health, lower stress levels, stronger family relationships, and higher overall life satisfaction. Employees experiencing healthy work-life balance demonstrate greater engagement, increased productivity, and stronger organizational commitment because they are better able to recover from work-related demands and maintain emotional stability. These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that work-life balance serves as an essential determinant of employee well-being by reducing work-family conflict and promoting positive psychological functioning. Organizations that encourage flexible work arrangements and supportive leadership therefore contribute not only to employees' personal satisfaction but also to long-term organizational effectiveness.

The mediation analysis further demonstrated that work-life balance partially mediates the relationship between paradoxical leadership behavior and employee well-being. This finding indicates that paradoxical leadership improves employee well-being both directly and indirectly by enhancing employees' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities. Leaders who simultaneously provide organizational guidance and workplace flexibility create conditions that reduce stress, improve psychological safety, and strengthen employees' overall quality of life. This result extends existing leadership literature by identifying work-life balance as an important mechanism through which paradoxical leadership influences employee well-being. The findings are consistent with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that employees reciprocate supportive leadership with greater organizational commitment, engagement, trust, and positive workplace behaviors. Employees who perceive that organizational leaders genuinely care about their welfare respond positively by demonstrating increased motivation, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Overall, the findings demonstrate that paradoxical leadership represents a highly effective leadership approach for managing the complex demands of modern organizations. Unlike traditional leadership styles that often prioritize either organizational performance or employee welfare, paradoxical leadership integrates both objectives by embracing organizational contradictions rather than attempting to eliminate them. The study therefore contributes to the growing body of leadership literature by providing empirical evidence that leaders capable of balancing competing priorities simultaneously improve employee well-being and work-life balance while maintaining organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, the findings validate the integrated application of Paradox Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Social Exchange Theory as a comprehensive framework for explaining the mechanisms through which paradoxical leadership promotes sustainable employee outcomes in contemporary workplaces.

8. Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several important practical implications for organizational leaders, human resource professionals, policymakers, and management practitioners seeking to enhance employee well-being and work-life balance through effective leadership practices. As organizations continue to operate in increasingly dynamic and uncertain environments, leadership approaches capable of balancing competing organizational demands have become essential for achieving both employee satisfaction and long-term organizational sustainability. The present study demonstrates that paradoxical leadership provides a practical solution by enabling leaders to simultaneously pursue organizational performance and employee welfare.

First, organizations should incorporate **paradoxical leadership competencies into leadership development and management training programs**. Traditional leadership development initiatives often emphasize either directive management or employee empowerment independently. However, contemporary organizations require leaders capable of integrating these seemingly contradictory behaviors according to situational demands. Leadership training should therefore focus on developing managers' ability to balance organizational control with employee autonomy, consistency with flexibility, and performance expectations with individualized support. Such competencies will enable managers to respond more effectively to organizational complexity while fostering psychologically healthy workplaces.

Second, **human resource management (HRM) departments** should integrate paradoxical leadership principles into leadership selection, performance evaluation, and succession planning processes. Organizations should identify and promote individuals who demonstrate adaptability, emotional intelligence, balanced decision-making, and the ability to manage competing priorities. Performance appraisal systems should assess leaders not only on financial and operational outcomes but also on their contributions to employee well-being, work-life balance, and organizational culture. By recognizing leadership behaviors that support both organizational effectiveness and employee welfare, organizations can strengthen long-term sustainability and employee retention.

Third, organizations should develop **work-life balance policies** that complement paradoxical leadership practices. Flexible working hours, hybrid work arrangements, remote working opportunities, family-friendly policies, wellness programs, mental health initiatives, and employee assistance programs should be implemented alongside supportive leadership behaviors. These initiatives enable employees to effectively manage personal and professional responsibilities while maintaining productivity and organizational commitment. Leaders should also encourage reasonable workloads, realistic performance expectations, and open communication regarding work-related challenges to reduce occupational stress and work-family conflict.

Fourth, the study highlights the importance of fostering a **supportive organizational culture** characterized by trust, fairness, respect, collaboration, and psychological safety. Senior management should encourage transparent communication, participative decision-making, employee recognition, and continuous feedback systems that strengthen relationships between leaders and employees. Such organizational cultures enhance employees' perceptions of organizational support, increase engagement, reduce turnover intentions, and improve overall workplace satisfaction.

Fifth, organizations should recognize **employee well-being as a strategic organizational objective** rather than merely an employee benefit. Investment in employee wellness programs, psychological counseling services, stress management workshops, resilience training, and health

promotion initiatives contributes significantly to organizational performance by reducing absenteeism, improving productivity, and enhancing employee commitment. Leaders should regularly assess employee well-being through surveys, performance reviews, and organizational climate assessments to identify emerging challenges and implement appropriate interventions. From a policy perspective, government agencies and labor policymakers may encourage organizations to adopt leadership development programs that promote employee-centered management practices. Professional bodies and educational institutions can also incorporate paradoxical leadership concepts into management education curricula to prepare future leaders for increasingly complex organizational environments. Finally, the findings suggest that paradoxical leadership is particularly relevant for organizations undergoing digital transformation, organizational restructuring, globalization, or hybrid work implementation. During periods of significant organizational change, employees often experience uncertainty, increased workloads, and psychological stress. Leaders who successfully balance organizational demands with employee support are more likely to maintain employee motivation, resilience, and commitment while ensuring successful organizational adaptation. Consequently, organizations adopting paradoxical leadership practices will be better positioned to achieve sustainable competitive advantage through healthier, more engaged, and more productive employees.

9. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of **Paradoxical Leadership Behavior (PLB)** on **Employee Well-Being (EWB)** and **Work-Life Balance (WLB)** while investigating the mediating role of work-life balance in this relationship. The findings provide strong empirical evidence that paradoxical leadership is an effective leadership approach for addressing the complex and often competing demands of contemporary organizations. As modern workplaces continue to experience rapid technological advancements, globalization, workforce diversity, hybrid working arrangements, and increasing performance expectations, leaders are required to balance organizational objectives with employees' personal and professional needs. The results of this study demonstrate that paradoxical leadership enables managers to successfully integrate these competing priorities by simultaneously maintaining organizational control while granting employee autonomy, enforcing performance standards while providing flexibility, and pursuing organizational excellence while supporting employee well-being. Such balanced leadership behaviors create positive work environments characterized by trust, fairness, psychological safety, and organizational support, ultimately contributing to healthier and more productive employees.

The findings of the PLS-SEM analysis confirmed all the proposed hypotheses. The study established that paradoxical leadership behavior has a significant positive effect on employee well-being, indicating that employees who perceive their leaders as supportive, flexible, and balanced experience greater job satisfaction, emotional stability, motivation, and psychological health. Furthermore, paradoxical leadership was found to significantly improve employees' work-life balance by enabling them to effectively manage professional responsibilities alongside personal and family commitments. The results also demonstrated that work-life balance positively influences employee well-being, confirming that employees who achieve healthier integration between work and personal life experience lower stress levels, greater life satisfaction, improved emotional resilience, and stronger organizational commitment. In addition, the mediation analysis revealed that work-life balance partially mediates the relationship between paradoxical leadership behavior and employee well-being, suggesting that paradoxical leadership enhances employee well-being both directly and indirectly by promoting healthier work-life integration. These findings reinforce the importance of leadership behaviors that simultaneously address

organizational performance requirements and employee welfare rather than treating them as competing priorities.

The study also contributes significantly to the theoretical literature by integrating **Paradox Theory**, **Conservation of Resources Theory**, and **Social Exchange Theory** into a unified conceptual framework. Paradox Theory explains how leaders effectively manage contradictory organizational demands through balanced decision-making and integrated leadership behaviors. Conservation of Resources Theory provides insight into how paradoxical leadership enhances employees' psychological, emotional, and organizational resources, thereby reducing stress and strengthening resilience. Social Exchange Theory further explains that employees who perceive supportive and fair leadership reciprocate through higher engagement, stronger organizational commitment, improved job performance, and positive workplace behaviors. The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive explanation of the mechanisms through which paradoxical leadership influences employee well-being and work-life balance, thereby extending existing leadership and organizational behavior literature.

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