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Leadership Styles and Innovative Work Behavior as Predictors of Work-Life Balance among Non-Teaching Staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

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Abstract

The study examined leadership styles and innovative work behavior as predictors of work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Participants were 200 university staff purposively selected from five faculties within the institution. Data were collected using self-report measures, namely the Work-Life Balance Assessment Scale (WLA), Innovative Work Behavior Scale (IWBS), and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and multiple regression statistics was employed for analysis. The results revealed that autocratic leadership style did not significantly predict work-life balance among university staff. Democratic leadership style significantly and positively predicted work-life balance. Similarly, transformational and transactional leadership styles significantly predicted work-life balance among staff. Innovative work behavior did not significantly predict work-life balance. This suggests that leadership styles play an important role in employees' ability to maintain balance between work and personal life. It is then recommended that organizational administrators and university management should adopt leadership approaches that enhance employee wellbeing and foster healthy work environments.

Keywords: *Leadership styles, innovative work behavior, work-life balance, University staff*

Introduction

Work-life balance has become an increasingly important issue in contemporary workplaces due to the growing demands associated with occupational responsibilities and family life. Employees across different professions often struggle to maintain equilibrium between their work obligations and personal lives, leading to stress, burnout, and reduced productivity (Allen et al., 2015; Gragnano et al., 2020). In recent years, organizations have become more concerned with employee wellbeing because of its relationship with organizational commitment, productivity, and psychological health (Kowalski & Loretto, 2017). Work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals to effectively manage responsibilities associated with work and personal life in a harmonious manner (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Achieving a healthy work-life balance contributes to improved employee morale, commitment, productivity, and overall quality of life. Conversely, when employees experience poor work-life balance, they may suffer from burnout, fatigue, reduced job satisfaction, psychological distress, and decreased performance.

Within higher educational institutions, non-teaching staff like their academic counterpart play a critical role in ensuring the smooth functioning of universities through administrative, technical, clerical, financial, and support services (Ab Wahab et al., 2024). These employees often face demanding workloads, strict deadlines, role ambiguity, bureaucratic pressures, and increasing expectations arising from institutional growth and modernization. Such challenges may affect their ability to maintain an effective balance between work and personal life. Prolonged imbalance may negatively affect psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, and work efficiency (Okolie et al., 2024, Shanafelt et al., 2015). Consequently, identifying organizational factors that contribute to healthy work-life balance among university employees has become essential.

One organizational factor that has received considerable attention in the literature is leadership style. Leadership style refers to the pattern of behavior adopted by leaders in influencing, directing, motivating, and managing subordinates toward the achievement of organizational goals (Bass & Avolio, 1995, Jia et al., 2022). Effective leadership contributes significantly to creating a supportive work environment that promotes employee well-being and organizational success. Different leadership styles, such as autocratic, transformational, transactional, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership, have varying effects on employees' attitudes and behaviors. Transformational leadership has been found to positively influence employees' motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment by encouraging innovation, intellectual stimulation, and supportive workplace relationships (Guo et al., 2025, Jyoti & Bhau, 2015). Transactional leadership, on the other hand, focuses on reward systems and supervision, which may influence employees' work attitudes and performance. Conversely, autocratic leadership emphasizes authority and control, often limiting employee participation in decision-making processes (Chukwusa, 2018). Leaders who demonstrate support, empathy, flexibility, and effective communication are more likely to help employees manage workplace demands and reduce work-related stress, thereby enhancing work-life balance. Conversely, ineffective leadership practices may contribute to role overload, job dissatisfaction, and work-family conflict.

Another variable associated with workplace functioning is innovative work behavior. Innovative work behavior refers to the generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas that improve organizational functioning and productivity (Farrukh et al., 2023). Innovative work behavior may influence work-life balance in several ways. Employees who develop innovative approaches to their tasks may become more efficient, thereby reducing workload pressures and creating more time for personal activities (Sharifirad, 2013, Zhang et al., 2021). Studies show that organizations that encourage innovation often provide supportive work environments characterized by autonomy, flexibility, and employee empowerment, which may contribute positively to work-life balance (Abstein & Spieth, 2014, Bernards, 2024, Farrukh et al., 2023). However, innovation-related expectations may also increase job demands and responsibilities, creating potential challenges for balancing work and personal life. Therefore, the nature of the relationship between innovative work behavior and work-life balance warrants empirical investigation.

The need to examine leadership styles and innovative work behavior among Nnamdi Azikiwe University non-teaching staff is based on their contributions for the effective administration and delivery of support services in Nigerian university education. The increasing complexity of university operations, coupled with technological advancements and growing institutional demands, places substantial responsibilities on non-teaching personnel. These conditions may affect their work-life balance and overall job performance. Understanding how leadership styles and innovative work behavior predict work-life balance among these employees can provide valuable insights for improving employee welfare and organizational effectiveness.

Although researchers have previously examined leadership, innovation, and work-life balance separately, there remains limited empirical evidence on how leadership styles and innovative work behavior jointly predict work-life balance among non-teaching staff in Nigerian universities. More of these studies have focused on academic staff, employees in private organizations, or workers in other sectors of the economy. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate leadership styles and innovative work behavior as predictors of work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study is expected to contribute to existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the extent to which leadership practices and innovative work behavior influence employees' ability to balance work and personal life. The findings may also assist university management in developing policies and interventions that promote employee well-being, enhance productivity, and foster a supportive organizational climate.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were posited to guide the study.

- i. Autocratic leadership styles will significantly predict work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
- ii. Democratic leadership styles will significantly predict work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
- iii. Transformational leadership styles will significantly predict work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
- iv. Transactional leadership styles will significantly predict work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
- v. Innovative work behavior will significantly predict work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Method

Participants

Participants were 200 staff purposively selected from Nnamdi Azikiwe University across five faculties, namely Administrative, Management Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts, and Engineering faculties. The sample consisted of 82 (41%) males and 118 (59%) females and ages ranged from 25 to 60 years ($M = 38.06$, $SD = 7.96$). Demographic data also showed that 122 of the participants are married (61%) 65 are single (32.5%) and 13 are divorced (6.5%).

Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect data for the present study and the instruments include:

Work-Life Balance Assessment Scale (WLA)

The Work-Life Balance Assessment Scale developed by Greenhaus and Powell (2006) was used to assess participants' work-life balance. The scale consists of 36 items rated on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from 0 ("Not true") to 4 ("Definitely true"). Higher scores indicate better work-life balance. In the present study, the scale demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .76.

Innovative Work Behavior Scale (IWBS)

Innovative work behavior was measured using the Innovative Work Behavior Scale developed by De Jong and Den Hartog (2007). The scale contains 14 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Very ineffective”) to 7 (“Extremely effective”). Higher scores reflect greater innovative work behavior. The scale yielded a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .68 in the current study.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

Leadership styles were assessed using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). The instrument contains 18 items measuring autocratic, democratic, transformational, and transactional leadership styles. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”). The scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .78.

Procedures

Following ethical approval and permission from relevant university authorities, participants were approached in their respective faculties and informed about the objectives of the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before questionnaire administration. Participants completed the questionnaires individually during periods when they were less occupied with official duties. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed; however, only 200 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 90.91%. The completed questionnaires were subsequently used for statistical analysis.

Design/Statistics

The study adopted a correlational design. Correlational design is an appropriate research design for the present study because it enables the researcher to investigation of the relationships between the variables of interest. The statistic used for this research is multiple linear regression. It is the most appropriate statistic because the research explored the association of several independent factors with one dependent variable (Aldrich, 2005).

Results

Based on the analysis, the following findings were made.

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Leadership Styles and Innovative Work Behavior as Predictors of Work-Life Balance among Non-Teaching Staff of University

Predictors,	R ² ,	F,	df,	Sig,	β,	t,	Sig
	.09	6.32	194	.00			
Autocratic					.02	.33	.75
Democratic					.16	2.28	.02
Transformational					.28	4.00	.00

Transactional	.39	-3.58	.00
Innovative	-.01	-.09	.93

a. Dependent Variable: Work-life balance

The results showed that autocratic leadership style did not significantly predict work-life balance among university staff ($\beta = .02$, $t = .33$, $p > .05$). Therefore, hypothesis one was not supported.

Democratic leadership style significantly and positively predicted work-life balance among staff ($\beta = .16$, $t = 2.28$, $p < .05$), indicating that democratic leadership contributes positively to employees' ability to maintain balance between work and personal life.

Transformational leadership style significantly predicted work-life balance ($\beta = .28$, $t = 4.00$, $p < .05$). This finding suggests that transformational leadership enhances employees' work-life experiences through supportive and motivating leadership practices.

Transactional leadership style also significantly predicted work-life balance ($\beta = .39$, $t = -3.58$, $p < .05$). However, innovative work behavior did not significantly predict work-life balance among staff ($\beta = -.01$, $t = -.09$, $p > .05$).

Discussion

The present study examined leadership styles and innovative work behavior as predictors of work-life balance among staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Five hypotheses were posited and tested and the following findings were made.

The first finding that autocratic leadership style did not significantly predict work-life balance among non-teaching staff of the university indicates that variations in the extent to which supervisors adopted an autocratic leadership approach were not strong enough to produce a statistically meaningful change in employees' ability to balance their work and personal-life responsibilities. In practical terms, the result suggests that whether non-teaching staff perceived their leaders as more or less autocratic did not substantially determine their level of work-life balance. This finding agrees with Chukwusa (2018), who reported that autocratic leaders tend to exercise excessive control and provide limited participation opportunities for employees, which may negatively affect employees' wellbeing. This finding may be explained by the fundamental characteristics of autocratic leadership. Autocratic leaders typically centralize decision-making, exercise considerable control over employees, give limited opportunities for participation, and expect compliance with directives. Such practices may influence several workplace outcomes, but they do not necessarily have a direct effect on how employees organize their responsibilities outside work. Thus, although an autocratic leadership style may affect employees' motivation, satisfaction, or perceptions of autonomy, its influence may not be sufficiently direct to determine work-life balance.

Another possible explanation is that work-life balance is influenced by multiple factors beyond leadership style. Employees' workload, working hours, family responsibilities, organizational policies, income, commuting demands, social support, individual coping strategies, and personal circumstances can all influence their ability to balance work and non-work roles. Consequently, the leadership style adopted by supervisors may account for only a small proportion of the variance in work-life balance. The non-significant result therefore does not imply

that autocratic leadership has no effect whatsoever on employees; rather, it indicates that its unique predictive contribution to work–life balance was not statistically significant in this sample. The finding can also be understood from the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), employees seek to acquire and protect valuable resources such as time, energy, social support, autonomy, and psychological well-being. Autocratic leadership may potentially threaten some of these resources by restricting autonomy and increasing employees' dependence on supervisors.

However, employees may develop coping mechanisms or obtain resources from colleagues, family members, friends, or organizational structures that enable them to maintain their work–life balance despite an autocratic supervisor. This could help explain why the leadership style did not emerge as a significant predictor. The finding may also reflect the particular nature of non-teaching work in a university setting. Many non-teaching employees work within established administrative structures, rules, schedules, and procedures. Their work–life balance may therefore be determined more strongly by institutional policies concerning working hours, workload, leave arrangements, staffing levels, remuneration, and flexibility than by the personal leadership style of their immediate supervisor. Where organizational procedures are highly standardized, the influence of an individual supervisor's autocratic tendencies may be relatively limited.

The second finding that democratic leadership style positively and significantly predicted work–life balance among non-teaching staff of the university suggests that employees who experience higher levels of democratic leadership are more likely to report better work–life balance. This finding aligns with Abdullahi et al. (2020), who noted that democratic leadership fosters positive organizational relationships and employee engagement. The significant prediction indicates that democratic leadership is an important organizational factor in helping non-teaching staff effectively manage the demands of their work alongside family, social, and personal responsibilities. One possible explanation for this finding is that democratic leadership emphasizes employee participation, consultation, shared decision-making, open communication, and consideration of employees' views. Under this leadership approach, employees are given opportunities to contribute to decisions that affect their work. This participation can increase employees' sense of autonomy and control over their work, thereby making it easier for them to coordinate work responsibilities with personal and family obligations. Democratic leaders are also more likely to listen to employees' concerns and consider individual circumstances before making decisions.

The finding can also be explained in terms of employee autonomy and control. When non-teaching staff are involved in decisions concerning schedules, workloads, procedures, and workplace activities, they may feel greater control over how they perform their responsibilities. Greater control can reduce the likelihood that work demands will interfere excessively with family and personal activities. Conversely, leadership approaches that exclude employees from decision-making may make employees feel powerless and may increase stress arising from work demands. The finding is consistent with the Conservation of Resources theory. Employees strive to acquire, retain, and protect valuable resources such as time, energy, autonomy, social support, and psychological well-being. Democratic leaders may help employees conserve these resources by involving them in decisions, providing support, reducing unnecessary conflict, and allowing them some control over work-related matters. Consequently, employees may have more psychological and physical resources available for family and personal activities, thereby improving their work–life balance. Importantly, democratic leadership may also reduce work–family conflict. When employees believe that their supervisors are approachable and willing to consider their personal circumstances, they may feel more comfortable communicating family-related needs

or requesting reasonable adjustments. Such an environment can prevent work responsibilities from becoming unnecessarily intrusive into employees' personal lives.

The third finding that transformational leadership style positively and significantly predicted work–life balance among non-teaching staff of the university indicates that higher levels of transformational leadership were associated with better work–life balance among the employees. This means that non-teaching staff who perceived their supervisors or managers as transformational leaders were more likely to experience a satisfactory balance between their work responsibilities and personal or family lives. The significant predictive effect suggests that transformational leadership is not merely associated with work–life balance but may constitute an important organizational factor that contributes to employees' ability to manage competing work and non-work demands. This result is consistent with Jyoti and Bhau (2015) and Ratinet et al. (2025), who found that transformational leaders motivate employees through inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. This finding can be explained by the major characteristics of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders motivate and inspire employees, communicate a compelling vision, provide individualized consideration, and encourage employees to develop their abilities. Such leaders are also more likely to recognize employees as individuals with needs extending beyond their formal work roles. Consequently, when leaders demonstrate understanding, flexibility, encouragement, and concern for employees' welfare, employees may experience less tension between work and personal responsibilities.

This can enhance their perception that the organization supports their overall well-being, thereby promoting work–life balance. The finding can also be understood from the Job Demands–Resources (Demerouti et al., 2001) perspective. Transformational leadership can function as a valuable job resource because it provides employees with social support, guidance, autonomy, recognition, and motivation. When employees have adequate job resources, the negative effects of demanding work conditions are less likely to spill over into their personal lives. Evidence from information-technology employees similarly showed that transformational leadership weakened the negative effects of time pressure on work–life balance and exhaustion. Thus, transformational leadership may help non-teaching staff cope more effectively with demanding work situations while preserving resources needed for family and personal activities.

The fourth finding that transactional leadership style negatively and significantly predicted work-life balance among non-teaching staff of the university suggests that greater reliance on transactional leadership practices was associated with poorer work-life balance among the staff. In other words, as transactional leadership increased, employees' ability to effectively balance their work responsibilities with family, personal, and social responsibilities tended to decrease. The result supports the findings of Jia et al. (2022) and Łukowski (2017), who observed that transactional leadership contributes to organizational efficiency and employee role performance. Transactional leadership is primarily based on exchange relationships between leaders and followers, where employees are motivated through rewards for meeting expectations and corrective actions or sanctions when performance falls below expectations. Although this leadership style can provide structure, clarity of roles, performance expectations, and accountability, excessive emphasis on performance targets, monitoring, compliance, and contingent rewards may increase employees' work pressure. For non-teaching staff, who may already have demanding administrative, technical, clerical, and support responsibilities, such pressure could extend into their personal lives and interfere with family and social activities. The negative finding may also be explained by the relatively task-oriented nature of transactional leadership. Leaders who rely heavily on this approach may focus more on whether employees meet predetermined targets than on employees' personal circumstances and wellbeing. Consequently, staff may perceive that organizational expectations take priority

over their personal and family needs. This can make it difficult for employees to psychologically detach from work, manage family responsibilities, or maintain adequate time for leisure and personal development, thereby reducing their perceived work-life balance.

Furthermore, transactional leadership often operates through close supervision and performance monitoring. When employees perceive that rewards and sanctions are strongly tied to performance, they may feel compelled to devote additional time and effort to their jobs. Such employees may work beyond normal hours, remain mentally preoccupied with work after working hours, or experience difficulty establishing boundaries between their work and non-work domains. This provides a plausible explanation for why transactional leadership could significantly predict lower work-life balance. The finding can be understood through the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001). The model proposes that job demands require sustained physical or psychological effort and may contribute to strain when adequate resources are unavailable. A highly transactional leadership environment may function as an additional job demand when employees experience strong performance expectations, monitoring, deadlines, and pressure to meet organizational targets. If these demands consume employees' time and psychological energy, fewer resources remain available for managing family and personal responsibilities, resulting in poorer work-life balance. The finding is also consistent with the argument that leadership is an important organizational factor influencing employees' experiences beyond the workplace. While transactional leadership can be useful for achieving clearly defined organizational objectives, its emphasis on rewards, corrective actions, compliance, and task accomplishment may be less effective in addressing employees' broader psychological and personal needs.

In contrast, leadership approaches that emphasize support, consideration, flexibility, empowerment, and employee wellbeing may be more conducive to maintaining work-life balance. However, the finding should not be interpreted to mean that all transactional leadership is inherently harmful to work-life balance. Transactional leadership can provide clarity concerning duties, expectations, working schedules, and rewards. These characteristics can potentially reduce ambiguity and facilitate effective work organization. The negative relationship observed in this study may therefore indicate that greater or excessive reliance on transactional leadership, within the particular organizational context of the non-teaching staff studied, was associated with conditions that made work-life balance more difficult.

The fifth finding that innovative work behavior did not significantly predict work-life balance among non-teaching staff of the university indicates that differences in employees' tendency to generate, promote, and implement new ideas at work were not strong enough to produce a statistically significant difference in their ability to balance work and personal-life responsibilities. In other words, being more innovative in one's work role did not necessarily translate into better or poorer work-life balance among the non-teaching staff. One possible explanation is that innovative work behavior and work-life balance represents relatively different domains of employee functioning. Innovative work behavior primarily concerns how employees generate, communicate, and implement new ideas, methods, or procedures to improve work processes, whereas work-life balance concerns how individuals manage the demands of their occupational and personal roles. An employee may therefore be highly innovative at work without necessarily having greater control over working hours, workload, family responsibilities, or personal time.

Consequently, innovation alone may not be sufficient to influence work-life balance. The finding may also be explained by the fact that innovation can have both positive and negative implications for employees. On the positive side, innovative employees may discover more efficient ways of completing tasks, solving problems, and reducing unnecessary workload. However, innovation can also require additional time, mental effort,

experimentation, risk-taking, and persistence. Employees who frequently develop and implement new ideas may therefore experience additional work demands. These opposing effects could cancel each other out, resulting in a non-significant overall prediction of work–life balance. Furthermore, innovative work behavior may not necessarily provide employees with the autonomy or flexibility required to achieve work–life balance. An employee may suggest a new administrative procedure, develop a more efficient system, or introduce a new way of performing a task, but decisions about working hours, staffing, workload, leave, and organizational flexibility may remain under the control of management.

Therefore, even when non-teaching staff demonstrate substantial innovative behavior, they may have little influence over the structural conditions that determine their work–life balance. The finding may also be understood from the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Innovation requires the investment of resources such as time, cognitive energy, attention, creativity, and emotional effort. Employees may gain resources when their innovations improve efficiency, but they may also lose resources when innovation requires additional effort without adequate organizational support or recognition. Thus, the ultimate effect of innovative behavior on work–life balance may depend on whether the organization provides sufficient resources to support employees' innovative efforts. Many non-teaching employees operate within established administrative procedures, rules, and hierarchical structures. Their opportunities to introduce and implement innovations may be limited by institutional policies. Consequently, even employees who are personally innovative may not be able to translate their innovative behavior into greater flexibility or reduced workload. Their work–life balance may instead depend more heavily on organizational factors such as workload, staffing levels, working hours, supervisory support, leave arrangements, remuneration, and organizational policies.

The finding may further indicate that innovation is not necessarily rewarded with greater work flexibility. In some organizations, employees who demonstrate innovative behavior may simply be expected to maintain their existing responsibilities while also contributing new ideas. If innovative employees receive additional assignments rather than reduced workloads, their innovative behavior may have little positive effect on work–life balance. In some circumstances, it could even increase work pressure. The absence of a significant relationship in the present study may therefore reflect the fact that innovation is not automatically accompanied by organizational resources or flexibility. The result is also important when considered alongside the findings on leadership styles. If transformational and democratic leadership significantly predicted work–life balance while innovative work behavior did not, this may suggest that the social and managerial environment surrounding employees is more important for work–life balance than employees' innovation-related behavior itself. Leadership styles can directly influence communication, support, participation, autonomy, workload allocation, and employee welfare, whereas innovative work behavior is primarily an employee-level behavioral characteristic.

The study has theoretical, empirical and practical implications. The findings from the study supported the theoretical foundation for understanding of work-life behavior among non-academics in Nigerians universities. In practical terms, the finding implies that university management should not focus exclusively on eliminating autocratic leadership in an attempt to improve work–life balance. Rather, greater attention should be given to direct organizational determinants of work–life balance, such as manageable workloads, reasonable working hours, supportive supervision, flexible work arrangements where feasible, adequate staffing, leave opportunities, and employee welfare programs. At the same time, encouraging democratic and transformational leadership practices may provide additional support for employees' ability to manage work and personal responsibilities.

Second, the finding implies that university management should encourage democratic leadership practices among heads of units, departments, and administrative divisions. Supervisors should involve non-teaching staff in decisions that directly affect their jobs, encourage open communication, distribute workloads equitably, listen to employees' concerns, and provide reasonable flexibility where organizational demands permit. Such practices could strengthen employees' sense of control and support and consequently promote work–life balance.

Third, university management may need to encourage leadership behaviors that emphasize individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Supervisors who understand employees' personal circumstances, provide reasonable flexibility, distribute workloads fairly, recognize good performance, and encourage employees to participate in decisions may create conditions that facilitate healthier work–life balance. Fourth, university management should understand that over dependence on transactional leadership may prioritize organizational performance and compliance at the expense of employees' personal and family domains, thereby contributing to reduced work-life balance.

Fifth, university management should not assume that encouraging employees to become more innovative will automatically improve their work–life balance. Innovation initiatives should be accompanied by adequate resources, manageable workloads, supportive supervision, recognition, and reasonable flexibility. Where employees are encouraged to innovate, management should ensure that innovation does not become an additional burden placed on employees without corresponding support.

The study has some limitations. The use of a single university and relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the cross-sectional design prevents causal interpretations. Despite these limitations, the study contributes to existing literature by highlighting the importance of leadership styles in promoting work-life balance among university staff in Nigeria.

Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that the management of Nnamdi Azikiwe University should first, promote democratic leadership practices by encouraging administrators and supervisors to involve non-teaching staff in decision-making processes. This participative approach can enhance employees' work-life balance by fostering trust, open communication, and a supportive work environment.

Second, they should strengthen transformational leadership among administrators through regular leadership development and capacity-building programs. Training should focus on developing leaders' ability to inspire, motivate, mentor, and provide individualized support to employees, thereby improving their ability to balance work and personal responsibilities. Third, they should maintain effective transactional leadership practices by establishing clear job expectations, providing regular performance feedback, and implementing fair reward and recognition systems. These practices can reinforce employee commitment while supporting a healthy work-life balance.

Fourth, supervisors should avoid overreliance on autocratic leadership practices, as the findings indicate that this leadership style does not significantly contribute to improving employees' work-life balance. Instead, they should adopt more participative and supportive leadership approaches that encourage employee engagement. The university should implement organizational policies that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements where operationally feasible, family-friendly policies, employee wellness programs, and manageable workloads, to complement effective leadership practices. Fifth, since innovative work behavior was not found to significantly predict work-life balance, management should recognize that promoting innovation alone is unlikely to improve employees' work-life balance. Efforts should instead prioritize supportive

leadership, effective human resource policies, and a positive organizational climate while continuing to encourage innovation for organizational improvement.

Future researchers should replicate this study in other universities and organizations using larger and more diverse samples. They should also examine additional variables, such as organizational culture, job demands, supervisor support, and employee resilience, that may influence work-life balance among university employees. This will help expand and enrich literature on work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nigerian universities.

In conclusion, this study examined the predictive influence of leadership styles and innovative work behavior on work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The findings revealed that democratic, transformational, and transactional leadership styles significantly predicted work-life balance, whereas autocratic leadership style did not. Furthermore, innovative work behavior was not found to significantly predict work-life balance among the respondents. It showed that leadership style is a more critical determinant of work-life balance than innovative work behavior. This means that improving work-life balance among non-teaching staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka depends more on the quality of leadership practices than on employees' innovative work behavior. Consequently, university management should prioritize the adoption of democratic, transformational, and transactional leadership practices while implementing supportive organizational policies that promote employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. These measures will not only improve employees' work-life balance but also contribute to the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the university.

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