

Maximizing Innovative Work Behavior Through Family-Friendly Work Environment: Insights Beyond Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

This study explores the direct and indirect effects of family-friendly work environment (FFWE) on innovative work behavior (IWB), with work-life balance (WLB) as a potential mediator. Sample was 92 creative workers. This research uses Baron and Kenny's Causal-Step Method to evaluate the proposed relationships. The findings reveal that FFWE has a significant direct impact on IWB ($\beta = 0.289$, $p = 0.005$), emphasizing the critical role of supportive organizational policies in fostering employee innovation. FFWE also significantly influences WLB ($\beta = 0.214$, $p = 0.040$), demonstrating its contribution to improving employees' work-life balance. However, the mediation analysis indicates that WLB does not significantly mediate the relationship between FFWE and IWB ($\beta = 0.156$, $p = 0.131$). These results suggest that FFWE drives innovative behavior more effectively through direct mechanisms rather than through improvements in work-life balance. This study highlights the importance of designing family-friendly policies that directly encourage employee innovation, especially for creative workers. Future research should explore alternative pathways or contextual factors that further explain how FFWE enhances innovative work behavior...

Keywords: creative worker, family-friendly work environment, innovative work behavior, work-life balance.

Introduction

In today's competitive environment, innovation is critical for organizational survival and growth. The ability to innovate largely depends on employees' contributions, particularly their innovative work behavior (IWB). IWB involves the generation, promotion, and implementation of novel ideas that benefit organizations. Among various factors influencing IWB, a supportive work environment plays a pivotal role, particularly for creative workers whose roles demand continuous ideation and experimentation.

Family-friendly work environments (FFWE) are increasingly recognized as key organizational resources that can enhance employee well-being and performance. Policies such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and on-site childcare services are designed to help employees balance work and family responsibilities. According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), when employees perceive strong support from their organizations, they are more likely to reciprocate with positive behaviors, including increased creativity and innovation.

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Work-life balance (WLB) is often viewed as a bridge connecting supportive work environments with employee outcomes. A good balance between work and personal life allows employees to reduce stress, increase focus, and engage in innovative behaviors. Previous studies suggest that FFWE positively influences WLB (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Talukder, 2019), which in turn enhances employees' IWB (Ali et al., 2022). However, empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of WLB in this relationship remains inconclusive, particularly among creative workers who face unique challenges such as irregular working hours and high demands for creativity.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the relationship between FFWE, WLB, and IWB among creative workers. Specifically, it investigates whether WLB mediates the effect of FFWE on IWB. By focusing on creative workers, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how organizational policies directly or indirectly foster innovation. The findings provide insights for organizations aiming to maximize employee innovation through well-designed family-friendly policies.

Literature Review

Family-Friendly Work Environment (FFWE)

A family-friendly work environment (FFWE) refers to organizational policies and practices designed to support employees in managing their work and family responsibilities effectively. Such policies include flexible working hours, paid parental leave, on-site childcare, and telecommuting opportunities (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Talukder, 2019). FFWE is rooted in the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964), which posits that when employees perceive support from their organization, they reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors, including increased commitment and performance. Research suggests that FFWE can enhance employee satisfaction, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being (Zahra & Syahlani, 2023). These benefits are particularly important for creative workers who often face high cognitive demands and irregular working hours. FFWE provides the structural support needed for such employees to thrive in both personal and professional domains, potentially fostering innovation and creativity in their work.

Work-Life Balance (WLB)

Work-life balance (WLB) is the extent to which employees perceive an equilibrium between their work and personal lives (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). High WLB indicates that employees can manage their professional and personal responsibilities without conflict, leading to greater job satisfaction and psychological well-being. In the context of creative workers, achieving WLB is particularly challenging due to irregular working hours and high creative demands, which often blur the boundaries between work and personal life. Prior research has identified WLB as a significant predictor of various positive outcomes, such as improved job performance, reduced burnout, and increased creativity (Ali et al., 2022). Moreover, WLB is often influenced by organizational practices like FFWE. Supportive work environments that facilitate WLB allow employees to allocate their time and energy more effectively, fostering an environment conducive to innovative thinking and behavior.

Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

Innovative work behavior (IWB) refers to the intentional generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas within a work context (West & Farr, 1990). IWB is widely regarded as a critical driver of organizational success, especially in industries that rely heavily on creativity and innovation. The three stages of IWB—idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation—require employees to possess not only creativity but also the motivation and resources to carry their ideas through to completion (Amabile et al., 2005; Eisenberger et al., 2005). Research indicates that IWB is influenced by both individual and organizational factors, including psychological safety, intrinsic motivation, and supportive leadership. In particular, FFWE has been identified as a key driver of IWB, as it provides employees with the flexibility and support needed to focus on creative problem-solving. Furthermore, WLB may act as a facilitator, enabling employees to dedicate their cognitive and emotional resources to innovation without being hindered by work-life conflict.

Interrelationships Among FFWE, WLB, and IWB

The relationships between FFWE, WLB, and IWB have been explored in various studies, but the mechanisms linking these variables remain underexplored. FFWE is often seen as a precursor to WLB, as it provides the structural support necessary for employees to balance their professional and personal lives effectively (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In turn, high WLB enables employees to allocate their time, energy, and focus toward creative tasks, fostering IWB (Ali et al., 2022). However, the mediating role of WLB in the FFWE-IWB relationship is not consistently supported in the literature. Some studies suggest that FFWE may directly influence IWB by reducing stress and providing resources that encourage creativity and innovation (Talukder, 2019). In the context of creative workers, the unique demands of their roles may further complicate these relationships, as their ability to innovate may rely more on direct organizational support than on work-life balance.

Hypothesis

H1: Family-friendly work environment (FFWE) positively influences work-life balance (WLB).

H2: Family-friendly work environment (FFWE) positively influences innovative work behavior (IWB).

H3: Work-life balance (WLB) mediates the relationship between family-friendly work environment (FFWE) and innovative work behavior (IWB).

Methods

Sampling and Procedures

The sample in this study is creative worker. Sampling was carried out using purposive sampling technique. Digital questionnaires created using the Google Form were distributed via social media, including through several WhatsApp groups. A total of 104 questionnaires were collected, out of which 92 were deemed valid for analysis. The remaining 12 questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete answers or not meeting the eligibility criteria of the study.

Measures

Innovative work behavior is measured using an instrument developed by Kleysen & Street (2001). Responses were measured using a 5-point itemized rating scale from Never (1) to Often (5). The instrument consists of 14 items.

Work-life balance is measured using an instrument developed by Hayman (2005) then modified by Smeltzer *et al.* (2016)). Responses were measured using a 5-point itemized rating scale from Never (1) to Often (5). The instrument consists of 13 items.

Family-friendly work environment is measured using an instrument developed by Allen (2001). Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale from very disagree (1) to very agree (5). The instrument consists of 14 items.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using regression analysis for mediating variables with the causal step method developed by Baron and Kenny (Munawaroh, 2015).

Steps in Causal-Step Method:

Step 1: Regress the mediating variable on the independent variable, to get the a value and its significance.

$$Z = a_1 + aX + e_1$$

Step 2: Regress the dependent variable on the independent variable. To get the c value and its significance.

$$Y = a_2 + cX + e_2$$

Step 3: Regress the dependent variable on the independent variable and the mediating variable, to get the c' value and its significance.

$$Y = a_3 + c'X + bZ + e_3$$

To ensure the mediation, there are 3 conditions that must be met: the independent variable must affect the mediating variable in the first step, the independent variable must affect the dependent variable in the second step, and the mediating variable must affect the dependent variable in the third step.

The way to make the decision is as follows:

- ☑ The mediating variable is declared to mediate perfectly if:
 - $Y = a_2 + cX + e_2 \rightarrow$ the c value is significant (step 2)
The value of c in the second step shows a significant value, thus the X variable has a significant effect on the Y variable.
 - $Y = a_3 + c'X + bZ + e_3 \rightarrow$ the c' value is not significant (step 3)
The value of c' in the third step shows an insignificant value. So, when variable Z is entered in the equation, variable X has no effect on variable Y .

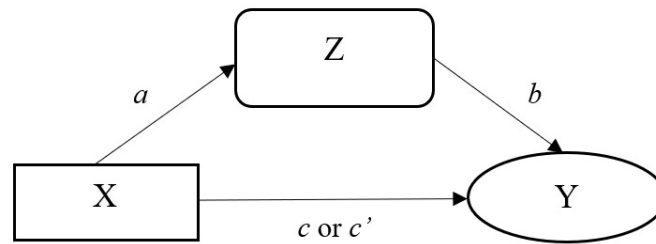


Figure 2. Regression Model with Mediating Variable

Result and Discussion

Result

FFWE to IWB

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	42.878	3.542		12.106	.000
	FFWE_Tot	.347	.121	.289	2.869	.005

a. Dependent Variable: PI_Tot

Findings showed that Beta (β) score is 0.289 with significance level of 0.005. This indicates a significant positive relationship between FFWE and IWB. A supportive family-friendly work environment directly fosters innovative work behavior. Employees who perceive strong organizational support through flexible policies or work-life initiatives are more likely to engage in creative and innovative behaviors.

FFWE to WLB

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	27.770	4.198		6.615	.000
	FFWE_Tot	.299	.144	.214	2.083	.040

a. Dependent Variable: WLB_Tot

Findings showed that Beta (β) score is 0.214 with significant level of 0.040. This indicates a significant positive relationship between FFWE and WLB. Family-friendly policies significantly enhance employees' work-life balance. Supportive environments enable employees to manage their work and personal life demands, reducing stress and improving overall balance.

FFWE and WLB to IWB

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients			
1	(Constant)	39.142	4.287		9.131	.000	
	FFWE_Tot	.307	.123	.256	2.496	.014	
	WLB_Tot	.135	.088	.156	1.524	.131	
	R ²	0.045					
	F	5.337					0.006

a. Dependent Variable: PI_Tot

Findings showed that the Beta (β) score of FFWE \rightarrow IWB was 0.256 with significance level of 0.014. While the Beta (β) score of WLB \rightarrow IWB was 0.156 with significance level of 0.131 (not significant). While FFWE continues to have a significant direct effect on IWB, WLB does not significantly predict IWB when FFWE is included in the model. This indicates that WLB does not mediate the relationship between FFWE and IWB.

Summary of Mediation Test

Based on Baron and Kenny's steps:

- FFWE significantly affects IWB.
- FFWE significantly affects WLB.
- When both FFWE and WLB are included in the model, FFWE remains significant, but WLB does not.

There is no evidence of mediation by WLB in the relationship between FFWE and IWB. FFWE directly drives innovative behavior, bypassing WLB.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between family-friendly work environment (FFWE), work-life balance (WLB), and innovative work behavior (IWB) among creative workers, and to test the mediating role of WLB. Using Baron and Kenny's causal-step method, the findings revealed significant relationships between FFWE and IWB, and between FFWE and WLB. However, WLB did not mediate the relationship between FFWE and IWB, as the direct effect of FFWE on IWB remained significant even after accounting for WLB.

Direct Impact of FFWE on IWB

The results highlight the critical role of FFWE in fostering innovative work behavior among creative workers. The direct effect ($\beta = 0.289$, $p = 0.005$) suggests that organizational policies and practices aimed at supporting employees' family

responsibilities have a tangible impact on their innovative output. This finding aligns with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that employees reciprocate organizational support with positive behaviors, including creativity and innovation. In the context of creative workers, family-friendly policies may provide the psychological resources and flexibility needed to engage in innovation, bypassing the need for improved work-life balance as a mechanism.

Relationship Between FFWE and WLB

The positive relationship between FFWE and WLB ($\beta = 0.214$, $p = 0.040$) confirms that family-friendly policies contribute to employees' ability to balance their work and personal lives. This aligns with prior research (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Talukder, 2019), which suggests that flexible work arrangements, childcare support, and other family-friendly initiatives reduce role conflict and enhance work-life integration. For creative workers, who often face irregular schedules and high work demands, such policies provide much-needed structure and relief.

Lack of Mediation by WLB

Contrary to expectations, WLB did not mediate the relationship between FFWE and IWB. While WLB was significantly influenced by FFWE, its effect on IWB was not statistically significant in the combined model ($\beta = 0.156$, $p = 0.131$). This finding suggests that WLB, while important for overall well-being, may not be the primary pathway through which family-friendly policies drive innovation.

Several explanations are possible:

- ☑ Direct Mechanisms of FFWE on IWB: FFWE may directly enable innovation by providing employees with the time, flexibility, and mental resources needed for creative processes. For example, flexible work hours may directly facilitate brainstorming or experimentation, bypassing the need for improved WLB.
- ☑ Contextual Factors: In the creative industry, the focus on output and ideation may reduce the reliance on work-life balance as a factor for innovation. Creative workers often prioritize professional demands over personal life balance, making organizational support (FFWE) a more critical enabler of innovation.
- ☑ Alternative Mediators: Other factors, such as intrinsic motivation, organizational climate, or psychological safety, may better explain the relationship between FFWE and IWB. These variables should be explored in future studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Conclusion

This study underscores the importance of family-friendly work environments in driving innovative work behavior directly. While work-life balance plays a significant role in employee well-being, its mediating role in the FFWE-IWB relationship remains

limited in this context. These findings provide valuable insights for organizations aiming to maximize employee innovation through supportive workplace policies.

Limitation

Limitation

The study is not without limitations. First, the sample size ($n = 93$) may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focused exclusively on creative workers, which may introduce contextual bias. Finally, the reliance on self-reported data may lead to common method bias. Future research should explore:

- ☑ Alternative mediators (e.g., intrinsic motivation, psychological safety) in the FFWE-IWB relationship.
- ☑ Moderating variables such as job complexity or organizational culture.
- ☑ Longitudinal designs to capture the dynamic interplay between FFWE, WLB, and IWB over time.

Implication

Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to the literature on work-life balance and innovative work behavior by challenging the assumption that WLB always mediates the relationship between supportive work environments and innovation. The findings highlight the importance of direct mechanisms and suggest the need for a broader exploration of mediators in this context.

Practical Implications

For organizations, especially those employing creative workers, the results emphasize the value of implementing family-friendly policies to directly foster innovation. While work-life balance remains important for employee well-being, its indirect role in promoting innovation appears limited. Organizations should therefore focus on directly enabling creative work through flexible schedules, supportive leadership, and adequate resources.

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