Understanding Antecedents and Outcomes of Family-Supportive Supervisor Behaviors: A Literature Review

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Abstract: There has been increasing academic interest in the effects of family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) on subordinates' work and personal lives over the past decade. Numerous research studies have indicated that supervisors' family-supportive behaviors help subordinates to fulfill their work and family responsibilities by reducing work-family conflict while promoting positive emotions and well-being. While the benefits of FSSB have been extensively studied, there is still limited understanding as to how these behaviors emerge from those who enact them. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive discussion regarding the evaluation of FSSB effectiveness from both supervisors' and subordinates' perspectives. Moreover, the association between FSSB engagement and work-family outcomes varies depending on how various factors moderate the relationship, and this makes it more challenging to identify supervisors who may benefit from engaging in FSSB. Therefore, this study aims to discuss the factors that contribute to the emergence of FSSB and the mechanisms underlying the process. Additionally, it seeks to evaluate its effectiveness for supervisors and their subordinates, while paying attention to Asian contexts.

1. Introduction

With the changes in societal demographic composition and the nature of work in the past several decades, single parents, employed mothers, and dual-earner families with caregiving responsibilities for the elderly and children are becoming more common (Crain and Stevens 2018; Gareis, Barnett, Ertel, and Berkman 2009). Work-family conflict has become a top concern for working individuals due to the permeable boundaries between work and family life domains and the necessity for juggling multiple roles (Hammer, Kossek, Zimmerman, and Daniels 2007; Jiang 2020). Research has revealed that work-family conflict harms marriages as well as young children's lives (Liu, Wang, Li, and Zhou 2019; Strazdins, Obrien, Lucas, and Rodgers 2013). To address this issue, organizations have implemented various family-friendly policies, including flexible work arrangements, on-site childcare, and paid family leave (Butts, Casper, and Yang 2013; Goodstein 1995; Kossek and Nichol 1992). However, it is still challenging for individuals to benefit from such policies if supervisors disapprove of their utilization or ignore their family responsibilities (Hammer et al. 2007).

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Supervisors who support their subordinates in fulfilling their family responsibilities are likely to facilitate a healthy integration of work and personal lives (Thomas and Ganster 1995). As previously indicated, family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) can help subordinates overcome problems including work-family conflict, job dissatisfaction, and turnover intentions (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, and Hanson 2009; Straub 2012). Additionally, FSSB has been considered a cost-effective means of promoting employee performance and establishing a family-friendly climate within the organization (Crain and Stevens 2018). As a result, FSSB research has caught the attention of researchers in the work-family field.

During the last 30 years, studies on FSSB have evolved and expanded in various disciplines, including management, applied psychology, business, occupational health, industrial relations labor, family studies, and nursing. Recent literature has shown that FSSB can benefit individuals' work, family lives, and well-being. However, the existing research has mainly focused on how FSSB benefits organizations and employees, with limited exploration of its potential to benefit supervisors who display FSSB, especially in the Asian context. Moreover, FSSB has been generally considered an extra-role behavior that requires supervisors to invest additional time and effort without any direct financial incentives, yet little is known about what motivates supervisors to engage in FSSB. Although the outcomes of FSSB have been widely studied, there has been relatively little research on its antecedents. A recent systematic review by Crain and Stevens (2018) highlighted the calls for further research on FSSB, including clarification of construct, theoretical development, identifications of diverse antecedents and outcomes, and methodological advances. This paper aims to address some of these research gaps by discussing the antecedents of FSSB and its underlying mechanisms, with a particular focus on supervisory and work-home contexts. Additionally, it provides a comprehensive summary of the outcomes associated with FSSB, including its impact on work-family integration, work-related outcomes, and overall well-being in various cultural contexts.

2. Literature Review

(1) Definitions and Dimensions of FSSB

Research on family-specific supervisory support can be traced back to as early as the 1990s. The family-supportive supervisor was defined by Thomas and Ganster (1995) as "one who empathizes with the employee's desire to seek a balance between work and family responsibilities" (p. 7). In contrast to general supervisory support aimed at improving work-related outcomes, including subordinates' job performance, the term family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) has been developed by Hammer et al. (2007) to refer to "those enacted behaviors exhibited by supervisors that are supportive of families" (p. 182).

A superordinate FSSB multi-dimensional construct has been proposed by Hammer et al. (2009), which consists of four subordinate dimensions: emotional support, instrumental support, creative work-family management, and role modeling. According to Hammer et al. (2009), emotional support is characterized by the perception that employees' emotions are considered, such as being comfortable discussing family-related issues and feeling respected, understood, and sympathized with. Instrumental support is generally understood to be the specific actions taken by supervisors, such as offering flexible scheduling, utilizing policies, providing work assistance, and coordinating the timing, location, and how the job is done to enable employees to achieve work-family balance (WFB). Creative work-family management involves the redesigning of time, place, and work practices to align with the common interests of employees and stakeholders, including cross-training within and between work departments, as well as the application of strategic and innovative

approaches for minimizing employees' work-family conflict while still achieving organizational goals. Finally, role modeling involves supervisors demonstrating effective ways of fulfilling their work and family roles, which may include utilizing family-friendly policies. This provides a model for subordinates who may find themselves in similar situations in their personal lives.

(2) Antecedents of FSSB

1) Contextual Factors

According to the principle of reciprocity, which is emphasized in social support theory, support recipients are expected to reciprocate (Blau 1964). This may help maintain and further strengthen a relationship of mutual trust and benefit. In this regard, individuals are more likely to reciprocate favorable treatment received from their organization, such as valuing their contributions, self-growth, and well-being (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Generally, individuals prioritize their in-role behaviors (e.g., acquiring job-specific information) over extra-role behaviors (e.g., FSSB) (Pan Chuang, and Yeh 2020; Straub 2012). Studies have shown that organizational support can foster supervisors' willingness to engage in FSSB, ensuring that they feel safer displaying such extra-role behaviors, for instance, having sufficient time available (Rofcanin, Las Heras, Escribano, and Stanko 2020). Specifically, supervisors who prioritize their family responsibilities tend to be more likely to exhibit FSSB when they benefit from family-supportive policies in their organizations (Las Heras, Bosch, and Raes 2015; Mills, Matthews, Henning, and Woo 2014). A theoretical framework of FSSB conducted by Straub (2012) pointed out that family-supportive organizational culture could affect supervisors' FSSB engagement through psychological empowerment (See Figure 1).
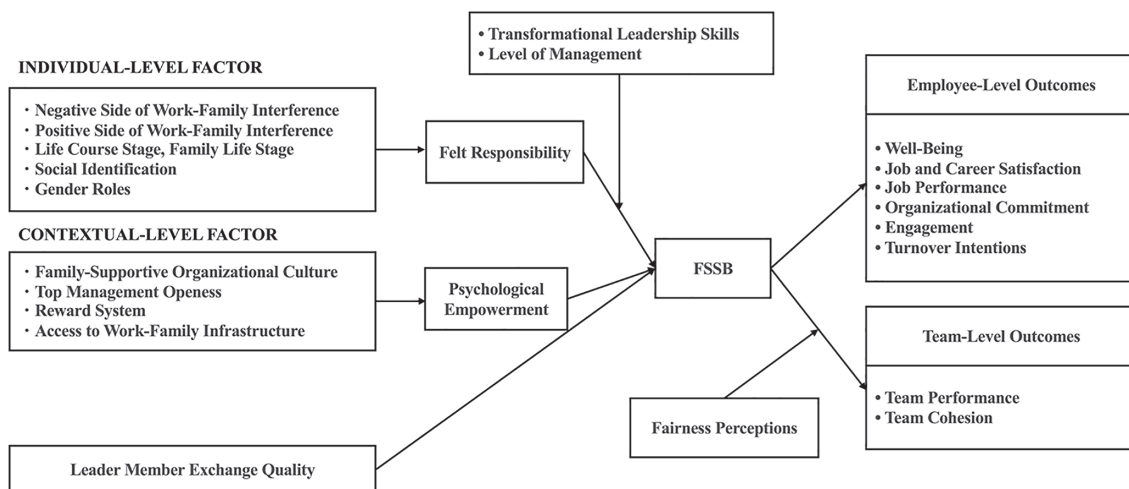

Figure 1. Antecedents and Outcomes of FSSB in Organizations
Note. This figure is largely based on Figure 1 provided by Straub (2012);
FSSB=Family-supportive Supervisor Behaviors

Therefore, family-supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) have been considered a predictor of FSSB using a diverse sample comprising individuals from Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, and Asian backgrounds (Mills et al. 2014). Moreover, Figure 2 shows that a family-friendly atmosphere as well as organizational work-family policies and practices, have been found to trigger FSSB (Hammer et al. 2007). Furthermore, family-supportive benefits provided by organizations, including flexible work arrangements, are positively related to FSSB (Allen 2001; Matthews, Mills, Trout, and English 2014). This positive association is observed across diverse contexts, encompassing Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, and Asian backgrounds (Matthews et al. 2014).
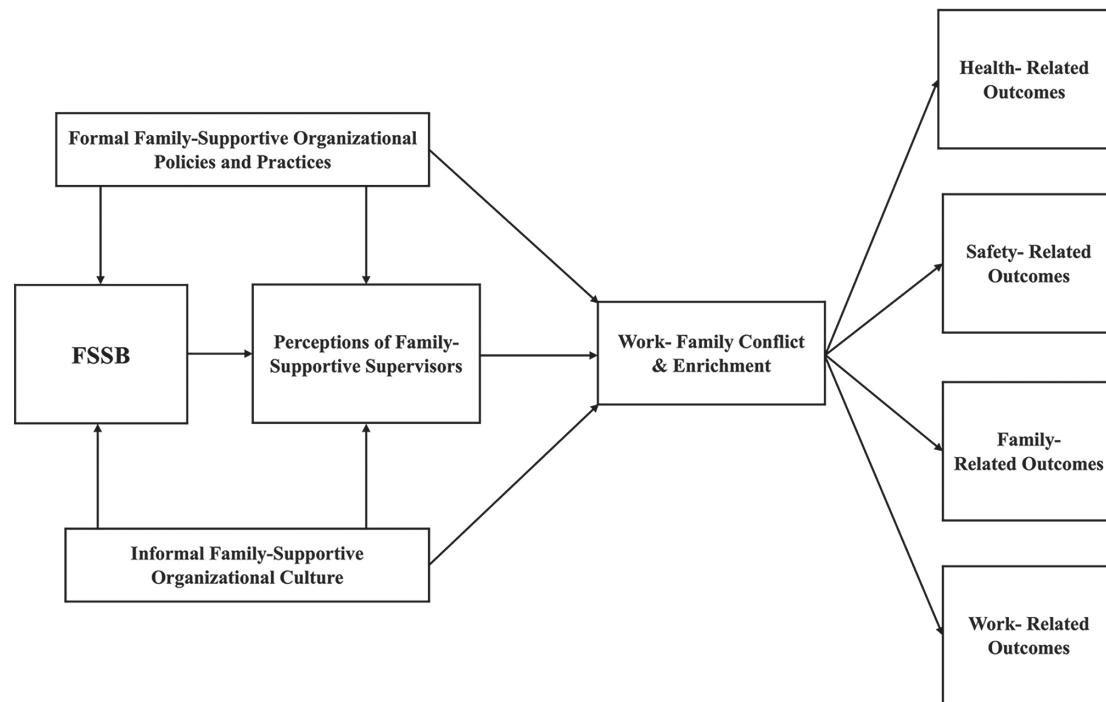
Figure 2. Conceptual Model of FSSB, Perceptions of Supervisory Support, and Health, Safety, Family and Work
Note. This figure is largely based on Figure 1 provided by Hammer et al. (2007);
FSSB=Family-supportive Supervisor Behaviors

2) LMX

It has been understood that leader-member exchange (LMX) plays an important role in predicting FSSB (Blau 1964; Morganson, Major, and Litano 2017). Jha and Jha (2013) demonstrated that the quality of LMX is "characterized by trust, loyalty, respect, and obligation, which generate mutual influence between the subordinate and the leader" (p. 44). As a result, high-performing subordinates are more likely to be supported and guided by their supervisors (Graen and Scandura 1987; Wayne, Shore, and Liden 1997). In other words, the quality of such relationships tends to influence the willingness of supervisors to display FSSB (Straub 2012).

3) Supervisory Factors

Individual characteristics of supervisors, such as their work habits, demographic similarity with subordinates, and family-related factors (e.g., spousal support and burden), have also been investigated as potential antecedents of FSSB. For example, in a study conducted in Macau within the hospitality industry, using paired supervisor-subordinate data, supervisors' workaholism has been found to have a positive impact on FSSB, as workaholic supervisors tend to strongly identify with their work and reinforce this identification by meeting the demands of their subordinates (Pan 2018). Pan (2018) also has shown that supervisors' perceptions of subordinates' family-to-work conflict enhance this positive association.

It has been found that dyadic similarities between supervisors and subordinates in terms of gender, race, parental status, and work-family experience also predict FSSB (Basuil, Manegold, and Casper 2016; Straub 2012). It is argued in self-categorization theory and social identity theory that there is a tendency for people to place themselves in groups with similar characteristics, which drives group members to engage in mutually beneficial activities (Krishna 1999; Tajfel and Turner,

1985; Turner 1982). According to Straub (2012), supervisors with a better understanding of their subordinates' family responsibilities are more likely to exhibit FSSB. Therefore, FSSB could be facilitated by a higher degree of similarity between subordinates and superiors in terms of work-family situations and experiences (Straub 2012). However, supervisors with limited emotional intelligence or who fail to fulfill their supervisory responsibilities are less likely to display FSSB (Crain and Stevens 2018).
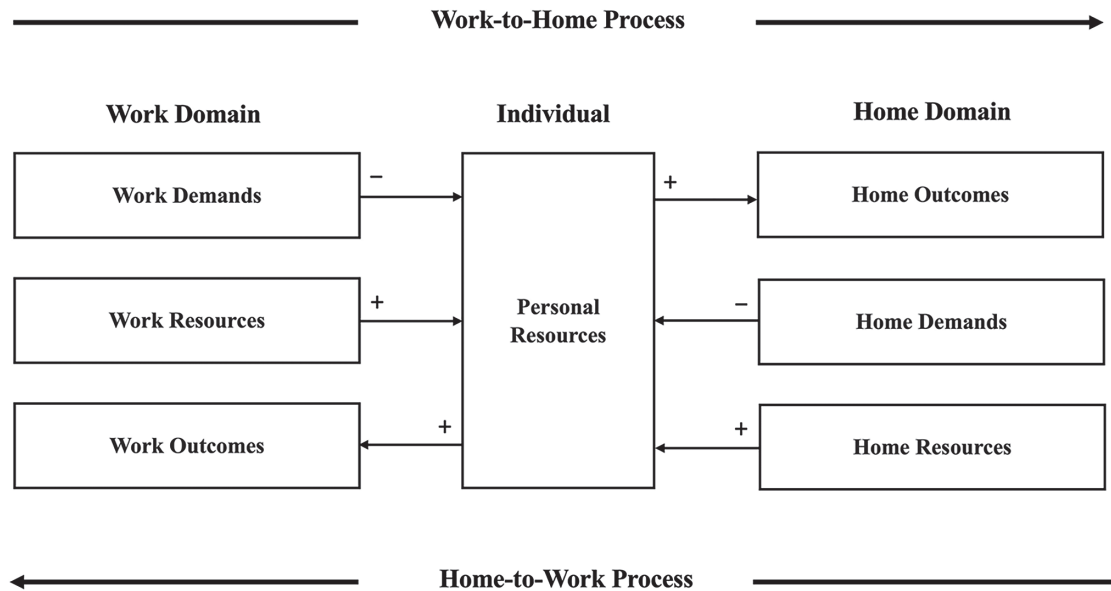

Figure 3. The Work–Home Resources Model
Note. This figure is largely based on Figure 2 provided by Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012)

Supervisors' and their spouses' work-family experiences have been identified as antecedents of FSSB. The work-home resources (WHR) model contends that higher demands, as well as fewer resources in the family domain, can result in adverse outcomes in the work domain (Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker 2012; see Figure 3). Therefore, in Taiwan, supervisors who experience high levels of family demands may prioritize their core job tasks (e.g., setting goals and objectives for team members) to protect their work resources and consequently exhibit lower levels of FSSB, particularly in organizations with a limited family-friendly atmosphere (Pan et al. 2020). Additionally, the terms "spousal support" and "spousal burden" have been used to describe a home-based resource and a home-based demand, respectively. In the United States context, spousal support is a significant factor in predicting exhibited FSSB, whereas spousal burden is negatively related to the display of FSSB (Germeys, Bosch, Rofcanin, Heras, and Ererdi 2019; Sherwood 2021).

(3) Outcomes of FSSB

1) Work-Family Outcomes

In the literature, based on paired data from married employees and their direct supervisors in Chinese enterprises, FSSB has been shown to be particularly beneficial for male subordinates, as it helps buffer against work-to-family conflict (WTFC) (Li, Jia, and Sun 2022). Additionally, FSSB has a positive correlation with WFB satisfaction and work-to-family enrichment (WTFE), particularly among female subordinates (Li et al. 2022; Rofcanin et al. 2020). There is some evidence that FSSB may be indirectly and positively associated with subordinates' WFB by affecting their self-care (e.g., "getting a good night's sleep, exercising regularly, and spending quality time at home with

one's family") (Rofcanin, Heras, Bosch, Berber, Mughal, and Ozturk 2021, 13). Finally, in a study conducted by Cheng, Zhu, and Lin (2021) using a sample of supervisors and their subordinates from an internet service company in China, it was found that FSSB has an indirect and negative relationship with subordinates' unethical pro-family behavior (i.e., individuals showed preference for their families while violating organizational and societal moral rules). This relationship was particularly strong for subordinates who held strong reciprocity beliefs (Cheng et al. 2021).

2) Work-Related Outcomes

The outcomes of FSSB in the workplace can be divided into three main areas: job attitudes, job behaviors, and job state (Crain and Stevens 2018). As to job attitudes, research has shown that FSSB is a contributory factor to subordinates' decreased turnover intentions and their increased career calling among public hospital nurses in China (Zhang, Jin, and Jiang 2020). In addition, FSSB has an indirect and negative association with subordinates' turnover intentions through organizational trust and job satisfaction (Nguyen, Haar, and Smollan 2020). Moreover, employees' turnover intentions are at the lowest level when they share the same view of displaying FSSB with their supervisors, which is more commonly found in organizations that prioritize family-friendliness (Marescaux, Rofcanin, Las Heras, Ilies, and Bosch 2020).

Regarding job behavioral outcomes, FSSB is known to be indirectly and positively associated with subordinates' voice behavior via LMX in a sample of paired supervisors and subordinates in China (Yin, Liao, Ouyang, Akhtar, and Zhou 2021). Similarly, FSSB has been found to have an indirect and positive effect on subordinates' promotive voice by enhancing WTFE and alleviating WTFC (Li et al. 2022). Moreover, the association between FSSB and work performance has been investigated in the literature. Germeys et al. (2019) suggested that FSSB has a negative relationship with subordinates' deviant work behaviors. FSSB was indirectly associated with overall performance via the effectiveness of WFB and sleep quality (Aryee, Seidu, Hsiung, and Otaye-Ebede 2021). An indirect relationship between FSSB and subordinates' work performance through work engagement was reported by Rofcanin et al. (2021). This finding was observed in a sample of paired supervisors and subordinates within Chile's financial, tourism, and real estate sectors. Additionally, FSSB is an important driving factor of safety compliance and organizational citizenship behavior (DePasquale 2020). As with supervisors' job behaviors, engagement in FSSB predicted supervisors' perception of prosocial impact (i.e., an individual's belief that her or his actions are positively influencing others), prosocial motivation, and servant leadership behaviors (Grant, Campbell, Chen, Cottone, Lapedis, Lee 2007; Pan et al. 2021). Furthermore, supervisors' FSSB engagement has an indirect relationship with their subsequent laissez-faire behaviors via emotional exhaustion (Pan et al. 2021).
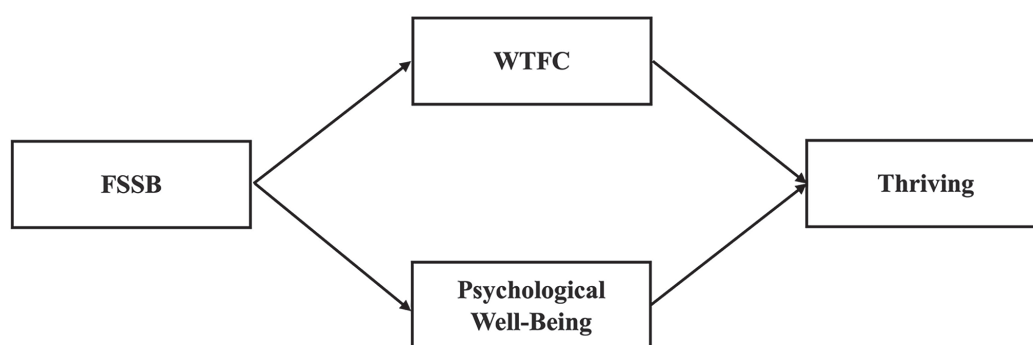

Figure 4. Conceptual Model of FSSB, WTFC, Psychological Well-Being and Thriving
Note. This figure is adapted and largely based on Figure 2 provided by Şahin et al. (2021); FSSB= Family-supportive Supervisor Behaviors; WTFC=Work-to Family Conflict

In addition, scholars have examined the job state outcomes of FSSB. Crain and Stevens (2018) define job states as the psychological state or conditions individuals experience at work, which encompasses work engagement, disengagement, and motivation. For example, according to a study conducted among nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic, FSSB increased subordinates' thriving by reducing WTFC and enhancing psychological well-being (Şahin, Adegbite, and Tiryaki Şen 2021; see Figure 4). Liu, Wang, Wang, and Xu (2021) found that FSSB lowers job stress by facilitating subordinates' positive emotions. Furthermore, when supervisors and subordinates strongly share similar views on FSSB, it predicts a high degree of intrinsic motivation, particularly among workers who desire a work-home segmentation (Marescaux et al. 2020). The desire for a clear segmentation of work and home life suggests a preference for creating boundaries between work and family domains. However, this preference also implies potential difficulties in effectively managing work-family problems, including work-family conflict (Paustian-Underdahl, Halbesleben, Carlson, and Kacmar 2016). Consequently, individuals who desire segmentation are considered to be most likely to benefit from FSSB and a healthy exchange relationship with their supervisors, which is generated from a shared perception of FSSB between employees and their supervisors (Marescaux et al. 2020).

3) Outcomes of Well-being in Nonwork Domain

Regarding the physical health outcomes of FSSB, within a sample of financial services and retail companies in El Salvador and Peru, FSSB has been known to play a role in determining subordinates' overall health, especially for those who have elderly care responsibilities (Rofcanin et al. 2020). Sleep was identified as the most prevalent physical health outcome. While in general, subordinates' perception of FSSB is negatively related to their objective sleep time, supervisors' higher self-ratings of FSSB have a positive effect on improved sleep hygiene and lower sleep-related impairment of subordinates (Sianoja, Crain, Hammer, Bodner, Brockwood, LoPresti, and Shea 2020). In a sample of men working in nursing occupations in the United States, FSSB is seen as a factor in predicting subordinates' hours of sleep and sleep quality, particularly for healthcare workers who are responsible for taking care of children or elderly relatives (DePasquale 2020). In terms of psychological well-being, Şahin et al. (2021) found that nurses needed more FSSB to improve their well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerning other nonwork well-being outcomes, a positive relationship between FSSB and subordinates' family time adequacy was found by DePasquale (2020). In addition to the above subordinate-level outcomes, a handful of studies have investigated supervisor-level outcomes of FSSB. While Pan et al. (2021) found that engaging in FSSB could lead to supervisors' emotional exhaustion, for those in a higher family harmony climate FSSB engagement was negatively related to emotional exhaustion.

(4) A Critical Overview of the Current FSSB Literature

Since Hammer et al. (2007) and Straub (2012) proposed the initial conceptual framework and theoretical model of FSSB, numerous studies have investigated the benefits of FSSB, demonstrating its significant implications for both organizations and individuals. This paper provides a critical overview of the antecedents and outcomes of FSSB.

In line with the argument that FSSB has positive outcomes for employees, a growing body of research supports their association with various favorable outcomes. These include decreased WTFC, increased WTFE and promotive voice (Li et al. 2022), improved WFB (Rofcanin et al. 2020), reduced deviant work behaviors (Germeys et al. 2019), enhanced career calling (Zhang et al. 2020), decreased unethical pro-family behavior (Cheng et al. 2021), greater voice behavior (Yin

et al. 2021), higher work engagement and work performance (Rofcanin et al. 2021), and increased intrinsic motivation at work (Marescaux et al. 2020). Other outcomes associated with FSSB include enhanced safety compliance and organizational citizenship behavior (DePasquale 2020), improved psychological well-being and thriving (Şahin et al. 2021), positive emotions (Liu et al. 2021), better sleep quality and family time adequacy (DePasquale 2020).

However, only a limited number of studies have explored FSSB from the perspective of supervisors, who are the enactors of such behaviors. It has been found that the display of FSSB predicts emotional exhaustion and subsequent laissez-faire behaviors, particularly in families that lack a harmonious atmosphere (Pan et al. 2021). On the other hand, engaging in FSSB has been shown to bring about positive outcomes, such as the perception of prosocial impact, prosocial motivation, and servant leadership behaviors (Grant et al. 2007; Pan et al. 2021).

While the benefits of FSSB on individuals' work, nonwork well-being, and work-family management have been well studied, only a limited amount of attention has been paid to the factors that influence supervisors' propensity to display FSSB. Several factors, such as FSOP and servant leadership, have been identified as both antecedents and outcomes of FSSB. This finding was attributed to the inability of the cross-sectional study design to clarify the causal relationship between these factors and FSSB (Crain and Stevens 2018).

To date, the vast majority of studies that assessed the effectiveness of FSSB have relied on employees' self-enumerated data. Due to this limitation, the effect of engagement in FSSB on supervisors' work and personal lives remains unclear. The only exception is Jiang's study (2020), which employed a time-lag design. Jiang found that FSSB could reduce supervisors' WTFC by promoting personal skill development. As this paper suggests, future research should examine the effectiveness of FSSB from the supervisory perspective for a more objective assessment of FSSB research.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Studies

(1) The Emergence of FSSB

Given the substantial benefits of FSSB for both organizations and individuals, this study aims to explore the generation of FSSB by reviewing its contextual and supervisor-level antecedents, as well as the mechanisms underlying these processes. Current research suggests that in organizational contexts, the display of FSSB by supervisors is generally attributed to reciprocity. Additionally, the support from supervisors' spouses helps reduce the negative outcomes of job demands (i.e., job stress) and enhances personal resources (i.e., motivation, positive experience, and energy) to display FSSB. Thus, it is time for FSSB scholars to explore more family-level factors influencing displayed FSSB. While previous studies provide evidence for supervisory engagement in FSSB, their intrinsic motivation remains unclear, and the outcomes experienced by supervisors for exhibiting FSSB have not been comprehensively investigated. Therefore, future research should focus on how supervisors' intrinsic motivation affects their engagement in FSSB and the mechanisms underlying the process through which the quality of FSSB is improved.

(2) Evaluation of FSSB from Both Supervisors' and Subordinates' Perspectives

To gain a comprehensive understanding of FSSB, it is essential to consider both the perspectives of supervisors and their subordinates. This paper highlights the need for more research not only in examining the benefits employees derive from FSSB but also in studying the situations

and factors that enable supervisors to effectively mitigate any potential negative effects associated with engaging in FSSB. This multifaceted approach holds significance for two reasons.

First, as primary recipients of FSSB, the perspective of subordinates is critical for understanding its impacts on the way they manage work and family lives, as well as its effects on their job and health outcomes. The value subordinates place on FSSB becomes evident through their experiences and the benefits they derive. Additionally, this perspective may reveal any gaps between the actual implementation and the perceived value of FSSB. Second, with supervisors being the ones who enact FSSB, their perspective provides valuable insights into the motivations for exhibiting FSSB, as well as the challenges and difficulties they face in its implementation. It is particularly important to note any unexpected negative effects that might arise when supervisors display FSSB, especially within certain contexts that could adversely impact their psychological health. For instance, supervisors might encounter tension when trying to address subordinates' family and personal needs while simultaneously achieving the objectives established by the organization. That is, there is a fine balance between being a supportive supervisor and ensuring organizational objectives are fulfilled. Therefore, the organizational culture can either facilitate or hinder supervisors in demonstrating FSSB. By examining contextual factors, researchers can identify specific situations where supervisors are able to engage in FSSB without facing significant problems or adverse outcomes. Hence, it is crucial for future studies on FSSB to expand the focus beyond employees, while including their supervisors who play a crucial role as enactors of FSSB.

(3) FSSB in Various Cultural Contexts

When exploring factors that influence FSSB, it is evident that support from organizations plays a significant role across diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. This observation aligns with the globally recognized value of mutual support and social connections. In Asian societies with a high degree of collectivism, supervisors perceive FSSB as more of an expression of the collective self rather than going beyond their job description. They view it as a way to help their team members in balancing work and family responsibilities. Regarding outcomes of FSSB, in collectivist societies, where group interests are prioritized, factors affecting a group's welfare are given significant attention. Conversely, in individualistic cultures, factors related to individuals' self-interests are commonly considered. In societies that prioritize family-centered values, there is an expectation for working individuals to fulfill their family responsibilities.

In summary, this study provides a distinct viewpoint on FSSB within the Asian context. FSSB might also be considered as part of supervisors' formal job responsibilities in response to organizational support. Furthermore, the willingness of supervisors to exhibit FSSB is crucial for the success of organizational initiatives aimed at promoting WFB. By emphasizing the critical role of supervisors' willingness to exhibit such behaviors, this study fills a gap in the existing literature on FSSB. The implications of these findings are essential for researchers and practitioners interested in promoting employee well-being and organizational effectiveness, particularly with regard to work-nonwork integration issues that are increasingly prevalent in contemporary work environments.

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