

THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE TRUST IN LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE WELLBEING WITH THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK LIFE BALANCE: THROUGH THE LENSE OF SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how employee trust in leadership (ETiL) influences employee well-being (EWB) and tests the mediating role of work-life balance (WLB) through the lens of organizational sustainability. Using cross-sectional survey data from N = 310 employees, the study finds strong positive associations between ETiL and WLB ($r = .762$), and moderate positive associations between ETiL and EWB ($r = .573$) as well as between WLB and EWB ($r = .467$). A simple regression shows ETiL explains 32.8% of the variance in EWB ($B = 0.617$, $\beta = .573$). In the mediation model, ETiL significantly predicts WLB ($B = 0.79$, $p < .001$), and both ETiL ($B = 0.26$, $p = .002$) and WLB ($B = 0.45$, $p < .001$) predict EWB ($R^2 = .5745$). The estimated indirect effect of ETiL on EWB via WLB is $\approx 0.79 \times 0.45 = 0.3555$, indicating partial mediation (direct effect remains significant). Results suggest that trust-building leadership and sustainable WLB practices jointly enhance employees' well-being, strengthening human capital resilience.

Keywords: Employee trust in leadership; Work-life balance; Employee well-being Sustainability; HRM

INTRODUCTION

Organizations striving for sustainability increasingly regard employee well-being (EWB) as a strategic outcome that underpins long-term performance, talent retention, and social responsibility. In the sustainability discourse, well-being is not merely an HR metric but a multidimensional objective linked to internationally recognized benchmarks such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Good

Health and Well-being and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, which emphasize healthy lives, decent work, and safe working environments as prerequisites for resilient growth (Wojtczuk-Turek et al. 2025).

Within organizations, trust in leadership anchored in leaders perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity is a foundational climate condition that shapes how employees

experience fairness, support, and direction (Schoorman et al. 1996). Trust reduces uncertainty, elevates risk-taking in relationships, and facilitates cooperative behavior, thereby improving attitudes and performance outcomes (Li, & Deng, 2024). Building on relational dynamics, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory posits that high-quality leader-follower relationships characterized by mutual respect and trust confer socio-emotional resources that improve job attitudes and well-being (Willie, 2025).

A critical pathway linking leadership trust to well-being is work-life balance (WLB). Role theory suggests that employees occupy multiple roles (work, family, personal), and conflict emerges when demands clash. Seminal work on work-family conflict identifies time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based incompatibilities as key sources of strain that impair satisfaction and health (Hetrick et al. 2024). Meta-analytic evidence shows that higher work-family conflict is consistently associated with lower job and life satisfaction and elevated stress outcomes, underscoring WLB as a central determinant of well-being (Salazar, & Diego-Medrano, 2021).

Viewed through the lens of sustainability, trust-building leadership and WLB policies constitute elements of sustainable human resource management (sustainable HRM). Sustainable HRM extends strategic HRM by prioritizing long-term, regenerative people outcomes alongside economic and environmental goals, highlighting paradoxes (e.g., performance pressures versus human capacity preservation) and the need for value-based, stakeholder-oriented practices (Sagan, 2025; Cooke, 2025). Aligning leadership trust and WLB with SDG targets integrates health, safety, and decent work into organizational strategy, reinforcing that well-being is integral to resilient and inclusive growth.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines whether employee trust in leadership (ETiL) enhances employee well-being (EWB), and whether work-life balance (WLB) mediates this link. Using cross-sectional survey data from N = 310 employees, this study tests these relationships to address a key sustainability question: Do trust-based leadership climates improve well-being

directly and indirectly through work-life balance? Trust is expected to exert both direct effects on well-being via psychological safety and supportive exchange and indirect effects through its impact on WLB, as trustworthy leaders reduce role strain by enabling flexibility, resource access, and fair workload design (Mayer et al., 1995; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Consistent with theory, prior meta-analyses associate trust in leadership with favorable attitudes and performance, suggesting a robust link to well-being outcomes (Legood et al. 2021). Likewise, extensive evidence connects work-family conflict and poor WLB to diminished satisfaction and increased strain, reinforcing the plausibility of WLB as a mediating mechanism (Kamboj, & A, E. 2025). This research advances the sustainability-HRM literature in three ways. First, it integrates ETiL, WLB, and EWB within a sustainability lens, connecting micro-level leadership dynamics to macro-level sustainable development priorities. Second, it tests mediation, clarifying how trust translates into well-being via WLB, thereby addressing calls to identify mechanisms through which leadership climate influences employee outcomes. Third, it derives actionable implications for sustainable HR practices including humane workload design, flexibility, and the institutionalization of recovery and boundary-management norms consistent with sustainable HRM's emphasis on long-term people capacity and stakeholder value. By linking leadership trust and WLB to well-being as a sustainability KPI, we contribute evidence that human-centered leadership and balance-oriented policies are not only ethically salient but strategically indispensable for resilient, sustainable organizations.

Literature Review

Employee Well-being (EWB):

Employee well-being is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological, physical, and social health, with direct ties to job satisfaction, engagement, and burnout prevention (Adekoya, 2022). Contemporary guidance stresses a holistic approach that integrates mental health, physical safety, and supportive leadership and culture

(Shobana & Siddiq, 2024). In practice, healthier workplaces enable flourishing and higher performance, while poor well-being elevates stress and absenteeism.

Building on this view, effective well-being strategies typically address both individual needs and organizational conditions. At the individual level, interventions might include access to mental health resources, counselling or employee assistance programs, resilience training, and flexible work arrangements that help employees balance work and life (Marques, & Berry, 2021). At the physical level, ergonomics, safe work design, and proactive risk management reduce injury and fatigue (Gander et al. 2011). Social health is strengthened through inclusive cultures, positive team dynamics, and psychological safety where employees feel respected, heard, and able to speak up without fear (Edmondson, 2018). At the organizational level, supportive leadership behaviors such as fair workload allocation, autonomy, recognition, and timely feedback are critical mechanisms that translate well-being policies into daily practice.

Measurement and continuous improvement also matter. Regular pulse surveys, well-being indices, and engagement metrics can surface trends in stress, burnout risk, and sense of belonging, enabling targeted interventions. Aligning well-being with business processes such as job design, performance management, and change management ensures efforts are sustained rather than episodic. Finally, training managers to identify early signs of strain, facilitate reasonable accommodation, and model healthy work habits (e.g., boundaries on after-hours communications) helps normalize well-being across hybrid, onsite, and remote settings. When organizations treat well-being as a strategic priority, they not only reduce absenteeism and turnover but also cultivate energy, creativity, and durable performance.

Employee Trust in Leadership (ETiL):

Trust in leadership reflects employees' beliefs about a leader's ability, benevolence, and integrity the trustworthiness triad. When employees perceive leaders as competent, fair-minded, and ethical, the resulting trust reduces ambiguity about intentions and decisions, lowering uncertainty

costs in day-to-day work. Trust facilitates cooperative norms, knowledge sharing, and prudent risk-taking, making it easier to experiment, raise concerns, and learn from failure (Chen et al., 2021). Meta-analytic evidence indicates that trust in direct supervisors is reliably associated with favorable attitudes e.g., job satisfaction, commitment and performance-related outcomes for example citizenship behaviors, lower counterproductive work behavior, underscoring trust's central role in employee functioning and climate quality (Sarwar et al., 2023). Trust also scaffolds psychological safety a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk linking supportive leadership behaviors (credibility, care, consistency) to robust team learning, innovation, and well-being (Clarke et al., 2025).

Practically, organizations can strengthen trust through transparent communication, fair processes, competence signalling (e.g., skill development, sound decision-making), and values-based leadership that aligns words and deeds. Leaders should set clear expectations, follow through on commitments, and acknowledge mistakes, thereby modelling integrity. Regular check-ins, inclusive voice mechanisms, and equitable resource allocation further cultivate benevolence and credibility (Alang et al. 2022). Over time, these behaviors stabilize the social contract between leaders and followers, buffering stress during change and improving engagement, retention, and sustained performance. In contexts of hybrid or dynamic work, consistency in information flow, equitable flexibility, and visible support for learning become especially salient trust cues, reinforcing psychological safety and enabling teams to adapt while maintaining well-being.

Work-Life Balance (WLB):

Work-life balance (WLB) is the alignment between work demands and non-work roles that minimizes inter-role conflict and preserves resources for recovery. Scholarly reviews emphasize that balance entails engaged participation across roles with minimal interference between work and non-work spheres (Ahmad et al., 2021). Extensive meta-analytic work

demonstrates that both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict undermine satisfaction, strain well-being, and elevate burnout, whereas supportive practices such as flexible scheduling, family-friendly policies, and supervisor support buffer demands, strengthen balance, and improve outcomes.

From a resource perspective, WLB functions by protecting time and energy for recovery experiences (e.g., psychological detachment, rest, mastery, and autonomy) and by establishing clear boundaries that reduce chronic role overload. Practical levers include job redesigning to calibrate workloads, autonomy over scheduling, predictable time off, and norms that discourage after-hours communications. Clear, transparent mechanisms and equitable access to flexibility further reduce conflict by allowing employees to tailor integration or segmentation strategies to their preferences, caregiving responsibilities, and life stage (Kossek et al. 2023).

Trust-rich leadership climates accelerate these gains. When employees perceive leaders as able, benevolent, and acting with integrity, they are more willing to disclose constraints, negotiate boundaries, and seek accommodations without fear of negative career consequences—conditions consistent with high-quality leader-member exchange (LMX) and the trustworthiness model (James, 2024). Trust enables fair processes, consistent follow-through, and supportive micro-behaviors (e.g., workload shielding, recovery encouragement) that lower role strain and facilitate sustainable performance. Empirically, supervisor support and organizational family-friendly policies are associated with lower work-family conflict, higher job satisfaction, and improved health indicators, in hybrid and shift-based contexts. Organizations that embed WLB into leadership expectations, performance systems, and culture not only mitigate absenteeism and turnover but also cultivate engagement, resilience, and long-term capability.

Theoretical Underpinning

Role Theory:

Role theory posits that employees simultaneously occupy work, family, and personal roles; conflict arises when demands clash. The classic framework

identifies time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based incompatibilities that lead to stress and lower satisfaction (Andoh, 2023). Trust-based leadership reduces such conflict by enabling flexibility, resource access, and fair workload design, thereby improving WLB and, in turn, well-being. Findings that work factors more strongly predict work-to-family conflict and non-work factors predict family-to-work conflict reinforce the need for supportive leadership at the source of demands (Jin et al. 2022).

Trustworthiness Model (ability, benevolence, integrity):

Schoorman et al. (1996) define trust as willingness to be vulnerable based on expectations of a trustee's intent and competence; leaders perceived as able, benevolent, and acting with integrity elicit risk-taking in relationships, cooperation, and positive attitudes. Through this lens, trustworthy leaders facilitate WLB by cultivating predictable, fair norms (e.g., equitable workload allocation, boundary management) and supportive responses to family or personal needs, which collectively enhance employee wellbeing.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX):

LMX theory explains how high-quality dyadic relationships marked by trust, respect, and obligation provide socio-emotional resources that buffer stress and promote positive outcomes (Winkler, 2009). High LMX increases access to support and discretion, making it easier for employees to manage boundaries and achieve WLB, thereby improving well-being. Recent analyses continue to show that LMX quality relates to beneficial job attitudes across contexts, emphasizing trust's central role in these relationships (Willie, 2025).

The social exchange perspective proposes that supportive leadership engenders reciprocity for employees reciprocate with engagement and citizenship when they perceive fair, benevolent treatment. Parallel work on psychological safety shows that trusting, well-coached teams are more willing to voice concerns, learn, and adapt, which supports sustainable well-being (Piedade et al. 2025). Integrated, these mechanisms explain how ETiL shapes WLB (via fair and supportive

exchanges) and EWB (via safe climates conducive to recovery and learning).

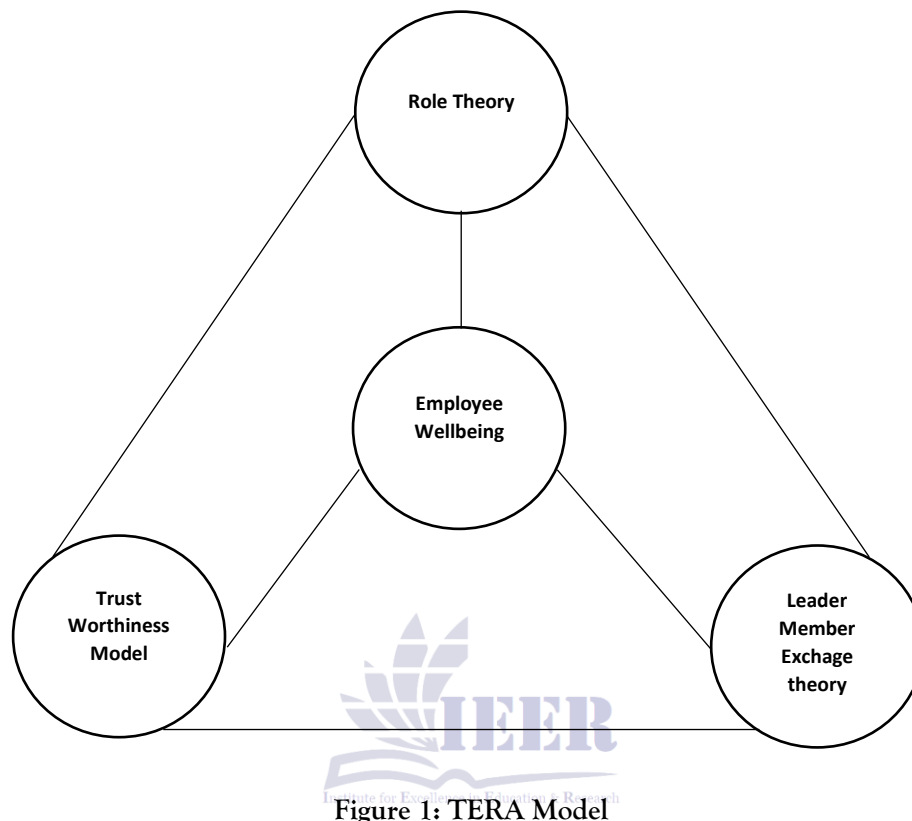


Figure 1: TERA Model

Figure 1. The TERA Model: Role Theory, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), and Leader Trustworthiness form a triadic alignment that enhances Employee Wellbeing via reduced role strain, supportive exchanges, and psychological safety. This framework integrates Role Theory, LMX, and leader Trustworthiness to explain how aligned roles, supportive exchanges, and credible leadership jointly improve employee wellbeing. Role clarity and balanced role demand minimize inter-role conflict and conserve resources for recovery. High-quality LMX provides instrumental and socioemotional support, fairness, and flexibility that buffer demands. Leader trustworthiness reduces uncertainty and enables voice, boundary negotiation, and equitable accommodations. Together, these mechanisms form a mutually reinforcing triad that lowers role strain, builds psychological safety, and sustains recovery, ultimately enhancing wellbeing.

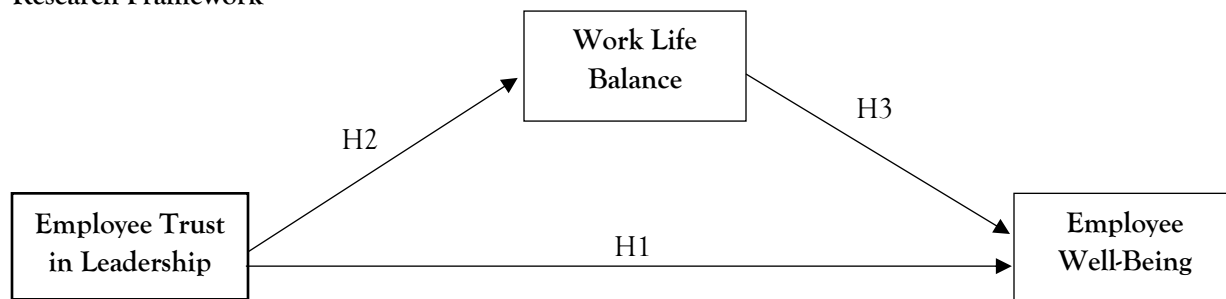
Research Methodology

We employed non-probability convenience sampling to recruit N = 310 KL-based employees working within the administrative boundary of Kuala Lumpur. Convenience sampling is appropriate when the goal is rapid access to participants who are readily available and willing to participate, recognizing that selection is driven by practicality rather than representativeness (Abdullah et al. 2025). Recruitment prioritized tech-intensive precincts KL Sentral, Bangsar South, Mid Valley City, and KLCC via organizational gatekeepers, Email and WhatsApp Inclusion required full-time employment (≥ 6 months) in software/IT-related functions (software engineering, product, QA/DevOps, data/analytics, IT operations, or HR embedded in tech teams) within KL's boundary; interns/contractors and respondents outside KL were excluded. ETiL, WLB, and EWB were

measured using validated Likert-type scales; item wording, anchors, and any reverse-coded items appear in Appendix A. To mitigate common-method bias, we used procedural remedies (section separation, varied anchors, anonymity assurances) and report post-hoc diagnostics and reliability/validity (e.g., Cronbach's α) in the Results. This operationalization aligns with established guidance on work-life balance and holistic

well-being in organizational settings. Given the convenience sampling design, findings should be interpreted with caution regarding statistical generalizability; non-probability samples can introduce selection bias and limit population inferences, although they are widely used when time, access, or resource constraints make probability sampling impractical (item wording in Appendix A).

Research Framework



H1: Employee Trust in Leadership positively impacts Employee Well-being.

H2: Employee Trust in Leadership positively impacts Work-Life Balance.

H3: Work-Life Balance mediates the relationship between Employee Trust in Leadership and Employee Well-being.

Data Analysis:

Table 1: Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) and Number of Items for Study Constructs

Construct	Items (N)	Cronbach's α
Employee Trust in Leadership (ETiL)	9	0.826
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	9	0.841
Employee Wellbeing (EWB)	10	0.830

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employee Trust in Leadership	310	11.00	43.00	35.9194	5.45383
Work Life Balance	310	12.00	45.00	35.4516	5.67877
Employee Wellbeing	310	12.00	50.00	39.6968	5.87229
Valid N (listwise)	310				

Descriptive statistics were computed for Employee Trust in Leadership, Work-Life Balance, and Employee Well-Being (see Table 2). The participants (N=310) reported moderate to high levels of Employee Well-Being (M=39.70, SD=5.87). Similarly, the average scores for Employee Trust in Leadership (M=35.92, SD=5.45) and Work-Life Balance (M=35.45, SD=5.68) indicated positive perceptions among the sample. The data showed sufficient variability, as indicated by the standard deviations and the range of minimum and maximum scores.

Table 3: Correlations

		Employee Trust in Leadership	Work Life Balance	Employee Wellbeing
ETiL	Pearson Correlation	1		
WLB	Pearson Correlation	.762**	1	
EWB	Pearson Correlation	.573**	.467**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to examine the relationships between Employee Trust in Leadership, Work-Life Balance, and Employee Well-Being (see Table 3). The results indicated significant positive associations among all variables. Employee Trust in Leadership showed a strong positive correlation with Work-Life Balance ($r=.76$, $p<.01$) and a moderate-to-strong positive correlation with Employee Well-Being ($r=.57$, $p<.01$). Additionally, a moderate positive correlation was found between Work-Life Balance and Employee Well-Being ($r=.47$, $p<.01$). These findings suggest that higher levels of trust in leadership are associated with better work-life balance and improved well-being.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Change Statistics				Sig. Change	F
			Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2
1	.573 ^a	.328	.326	4.82218	.328	150.234	1	308

a. Predictors: (Constant), ETiL

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict Employee Well-Being based on Employee Trust in Leadership. A significant regression equation was found, $F(1,308) = 150.23$, $p<.001$, with an R^2 of .328. The results indicate that Employee Trust in Leadership explains approximately 32.8% of the variance in Employee Well-Being. The correlation between the two variables is strong and positive ($R=.57$).

Table 5: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3493.457	1	3493.457	150.234	.000 ^b
	Residual	7162.040	308	23.253		
	Total	10655.497	309			

a. Dependent Variable: EWB

b. Predictors: (Constant), ETiL

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to test the significance of the regression model. The results indicated that the regression model was statistically significant. This confirms that Employee Trust in Leadership is a significant predictor of Employee Well-Being, and the model explains a significant amount of the variance in the outcome variable.

Table 6: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	17.552	1.827		9.605	.000
	ETiL	.617	.050	.573	12.257	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EWB

The regression coefficients are displayed in Table 6. The results indicated that Employee Trust in Leadership significantly predicted Employee Well-Being, $b=0.62$, $SE=0.05$, $t(308)=12.26$, $p<.001$. The unstandardized coefficient ($B=0.62$) suggests that for every one-unit increase in Employee Trust in Leadership, Employee Well-Being increases by 0.62 units. The standardized coefficient ($\beta=.57$) indicates a strong positive relationship between the two variables.

Table 7: Mediation Analysis

Model / Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
Model 1: Work Life Balance (Mediator)					
Constant	6.96	1.40	4.98	< .001	[4.21, 9.71]
Employee Trust in Leadership	0.79	0.04	20.64	< .001	[0.72, 0.87]
Model Summary: $R^2 = .5803$					
Model 2: Employee Wellbeing (Outcome)					
Constant	14.20	1.65	8.61	< .001	[10.95, 17.45]
Employee Trust in Leadership (Direct Effect)	0.26	0.09	3.06	.002	[0.09, 0.43]
Work Life Balance	0.45	0.07	6.92	< .001	[0.32, 0.58]

Model Summary: $R^2 = .5745$

a) The Mediator

The first stage of the analysis examined whether the independent variable, Employee Trust in Leadership, significantly predicted the proposed mediator, Work-Life Balance (Model 1). The results indicated a strong, positive relationship ($B=0.79$, $p<.001$). This means that for every single unit increase in the trust an employee has in their leader, their perceived Work-Life Balance increases by 0.79 units. This model was highly effective, explaining approximately 58% of the total variance in Work-Life Balance ($R^2=.58$). This confirms the first condition of mediation: the independent variable is a significant predictor of the mediator.

b) The Outcome

In the second stage (Model 2), the analysis tested whether the mediator, Work-Life Balance, successfully predicted the final outcome, Employee Well-Being, while controlling for the influence of leadership. The results showed that Work-Life Balance is a significant positive predictor of Employee Well-Being ($B=0.45$, $p<.001$). This establishes the second critical link in the mediation chain. It implies that regardless of how much an employee trusts their leader, having

a better balance between work and life directly contributes to higher well-being scores.

c) The Direct Effect

The final component of the table reports the Direct Effect of Employee Trust in Leadership on

Employee Well-Being after the mediator was included in the model. The results show that Trust in Leadership remains a statistically significant predictor of Well-Being ($B=0.26$, $p=.002$), but the magnitude of this effect is noticeably smaller compared to the total effect seen in previous models. Because the confidence interval [0.09,0.43] does not cross zero, we know that leadership still exerts a unique influence on well-being that is independent of work-life balance.

d) Mediation's Conclusion

Based on these findings, the analysis supports a hypothesis of Partial Mediation. Because both the indirect path (through Work-Life Balance) and the direct path (from Leadership to Well-Being) are statistically significant, we conclude that Employee Trust in Leadership improves Employee Well-Being in two ways: partly by fostering better Work-Life Balance, and partly through other direct

mechanisms not captured in this specific model. The overall model (Model 2) explains roughly 57% of the variance in Employee Well-Being, suggesting this framework is a strong predictor of the outcome.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The Kuala Lumpur sample shows that Employee Trust in Leadership (ETiL) is strongly associated with Work-Life Balance (WLB) ($r = .762$) and positively linked to Employee Well-being (EWB) ($r = .573$). In the simple regression ETiL explains 32.8% of the variance in EWB ($R^2 = .328$), indicating a practically meaningful effect of trust on well-being. In the two-step mediation, ETiL robustly predicts WLB ($B = 0.79$; $R^2 = .5803$), and, when both ETiL and WLB enter the EWB equation, both are significant (ETiL $B = 0.26$, $p = .002$; WLB $B = 0.45$, $p < .001$; model $R^2 = .5745$). The indirect effect ($a \times b$) is 0.3555 (0.79×0.45), and the proportion mediated is $\approx 58\%$, which supports partial mediation: WLB is a major pathway through which leadership trust enhances well-being, while trust retains a unique direct influence on EWB. These patterns align closely with the trustworthiness model leaders perceived as able, benevolent, and acting with integrity cultivate willingness to be vulnerable and cooperative behaviors that underpin positive employee outcomes (Schoorman et al. 1996). Trust in direct leaders has meta-analytic links to favorable attitudes and performance, emphasizing supervisors as a salient referent. In parallel, LMX theory conceptualizes high-quality leader-member relationships (with trust at their core) as conduits of socio-emotional resources that buffer strain and support positive states (Dixon, 2021). The research mediation result is also consistent with role theory and the work-family conflict literature: leadership support reduces time-, strain-, and behavior-based incompatibilities across roles, thereby improving WLB and downstream well-being (Kamboj, & A, E. 2025). Trust-rich climates likely lower uncertainty and increase psychological safety, making it easier for employees to voice boundary needs, negotiate workloads, and use flexibility without fear of negative repercussions (Edmondson, 1999). Such climates reduce work-to-family/family-to-work conflict,

which meta-analyses show is consistently linked to lower satisfaction and higher strain. In short, trustworthy leaders create conditions under which balance is achievable, and balanced role engagement supports holistic well-being. Embedding trust-building behaviors (integrity, fairness, benevolence) and institutional WLB practices (e.g., flexibility, realistic workload design, right-to-disconnect, recovery norms) is consistent with Sustainable HRM: a values-based, stakeholder-oriented approach that aims to regenerate human capacity over the long term, not merely optimize short-term outputs. Framed against SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), research findings suggest that trust-centered leadership plus WLB policy architecture can advance health and decent work goals while improving retention and productivity key to resilient talent ecosystems. Because the design is cross-sectional, causal claims should be made cautiously; however, the pattern of coefficients, sizeable R^2 , and theoretically grounded indirect effect provide convergent evidence for the proposed pathway. Common-method risks were mitigated procedurally (e.g., anonymity, section separation), and reliability/validity checks (α , factor structure) support construct integrity. Still, convenience sampling within Kuala Lumpur may limit generalizability; future research should employ probability sampling and longitudinal or multilevel designs to estimate causal effects, boundary conditions (e.g., job demands, remote intensity), and cross-firm heterogeneity. Trust in leadership enhances well-being both directly and via improved balance. Institutionalizing trust-consistent WLB systems represents a sustainable HRM strategy that strengthens well-being and performance without relying on short-term, high-strain fixes advancing organizational resilience and broader sustainability objectives.

Implementation:

Theoretical implementation:

Together, the results align with three complementary theories. Role theory explains how trust-based leadership lowers time-, strain-, and behavior-based inter-role conflict, enabling

boundary control and recover. The trustworthiness model clarifies why leaders perceived as able, benevolent, and acting with integrity create psychological safety and fair exchanges that directly enhance well-being (Schoorman et al. 1996). Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) shows how high-quality dyads supply socio-emotional resources (support, discretion, voice) that reduce role strain and sustain balance. Accordingly, trust exerts both direct effects on well-being and indirect effects via improved work-life balance a robust, sustainable HR pathway.

Industrial/Practical Implementation

Implement humane workloads by calibrating effort to capacity, capping meeting load, and building recovery buffers (no-meeting windows, planned slack). Adopt a right-to-disconnect policy with clear after-hours norms, escalation exceptions, and manager accountability; offer flexible scheduling (flextime, compressed weeks, hybrid) tied to outcomes, not presenteeism. Train leaders on the trustworthiness triad ability, benevolence, integrity and supportive communication (expectation clarity, empathy, fair workload negotiation, feedback). Monitor WLB as a sustainability KPI alongside well-being track balance scores, burnout risk, overtime, schedule autonomy, utilization, and recovery time; segment by unit, role, and gender; review quarterly; link targets to leader incentives and continuous improvement and transparency.

Limitation and Future Research

As this study is cross-sectional in nature, it cannot show cause and effect. Future research should use longitudinal or experimental designs to test timing and effects, and collect multi-source data (self, leader, peer, plus objective metrics) to reduce common-method bias. Also examine boundary conditions industry, remote work intensity, and national or organizational culture to determine when trust in leadership leads to better work-life balance and, in turn, improved employee wellbeing.

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Appendix A

Survey Items

Section	Content
Administration window	Past 4 weeks
Stem	Thinking about the past four weeks, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.
Response options (5-point Likert)	1 = Strongly disagree • 2 = Disagree • 3 = Neither • 4 = Agree • 5 = Strongly agree

Work-Life Balance (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.841$)

Var	Item text
WLB1	I can manage my work and personal responsibilities without them clashing.
WLB2	My work schedule allows me enough time for family and personal activities.
WLB3	I have sufficient control over when/where I work to meet non-work commitments.
WLB4	I feel recovered and rested most days after work.
WLB5	Work demands often spill over and make it hard to attend to personal matters. (R)
WLB6	Personal responsibilities frequently interfere with my work performance. (R)
WLB7	My manager and team respect my non-working hours.
WLB8	I can switch off from work when I am off-duty.
WLB9	Overall, my work and life are in good balance.

Trust in Leadership (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.826$)

Var	Item text
TL1	My leader is competent at directing our team's work.
TL2	My leader keeps their promises.
TL3	My leader acts with my best interests in mind.
TL4	I can speak-up to my leader without fear of negative consequences.
TL5	My leader makes fair decisions about workload and opportunities.

Var	Item text
TL6	My leader tells the truth, even when it is difficult.
TL7	I trust my leader to support me when challenges arise.
TL8	My leader explains expectations clearly and consistently.
TL9	I would rely on my leader to act ethically in tough situations.

Employee Well-being (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.830$)

Var	Item text
EWB1	I feel energized and engaged in my work.
EWB2	I have felt calm and relaxed most days.
EWB3	I am satisfied with my overall health.
EWB4	I have been sleeping well enough to feel rested.
EWB5	I feel emotionally exhausted because of my work. (R)
EWB6	I feel positive about my future with this organization.
EWB7	I can concentrate well on my tasks at work.
EWB8	I have supportive relationships at work.
EWB9	I experience frequent physical symptoms (e.g., headaches) related to work stress. (R)
EWB10	Overall, my well-being at work is high.