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# Family Supportive Supervision Around the Globe

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# Family Supportive Supervision Around the Globe

## **Abstract**

Family-supportive supervision (FSS) refers to the degree to which employees perceive their immediate supervisors as exhibiting attitudes and behaviors that are supportive of their family role demands (Hammer, Kossek, Zimmerman, & Daniels, 2007; Kossek, Pichler, Bodner & Hammer, 2011; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). A growing body of research suggests that leaders' and supervisors' social support of employees' needs to jointly carry out work and family demands is important for general health and job attitudes, such as satisfaction, work-family conflict, commitment, and intention to turn over (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, & Zimmerman, 2009; Kossek et al., 2011). Thus, employee perceptions of FSS are critical to individual well-being and productivity (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hansen, 2009). [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Family-supportive supervisor behaviors, cross-cultural/global perspective, leadership training and development

## **Disciplines**

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# **The Cambridge Handbook of the Global Work–Family Interface**

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# 31 Family-Supportive Supervision around the Globe

Ellen Ernst Kossek, Heather N. Odle-Dusseau,  
and Leslie B. Hammer

Family-supportive supervision (FSS) refers to the degree to which employees perceive their immediate supervisors as exhibiting attitudes and behaviors that are supportive of their family role demands (Hammer, Kossek, Zimmerman, & Daniels, 2007; Kossek, Pichler, Bodner & Hammer, 2011; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). A growing body of research suggests that leaders' and supervisors' social support of employees' needs to jointly carry out work and family demands is important for general health and job attitudes, such as satisfaction, work–family conflict, commitment, and intention to turn over (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, & Zimmerman, 2009; Kossek et al., 2011). Thus, employee perceptions of FSS are critical to individual well-being and productivity (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hansen, 2009).

Given the mounting theoretical and empirical importance of FSS in work–family research across many disciplines (e.g., psychology, management, occupational health, social work, and family development), the goal of this chapter is to provide an overview and updated examination of this construct and discuss future trends, including consideration of its emerging cross-cultural development. Family-supportive supervision has its origins in industrialized Western countries, but as our review will show, this construct is increasingly being studied in many other cultural contexts. We begin with a brief overview of the concept of FSS *perceptions*, and its evolution to more recent work that has evolved to assess *behaviors*, or FSSB (family-supportive supervisory behaviors; Hammer et al., 2009), the latter of which is increasingly being used in organizational intervention research. We then move to international research, and conclude with an agenda for future research.

## What is Family-Supportive Supervision?

The concept of family-supportive supervision originated from the general psychological social support literature (Cohen & Willis, 1985). Social support is generally defined as interpersonal interactions related to communication of emotional caring, tangible or instrumental help with problems, and sharing of information to help others make decisions to solve problems (House, 1981). All of these forms of social support are resources employees can use to manage work–family conflicts and reduce or buffer work–life stressors. Explanations for why FSS might

help reduce work–family conflict often draw on conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). The theory suggests that employees strive to seek a world in which they minimize stress, and resources, such as support from supervisors, are used to buffer role demands from the family that interfere with work roles and vice versa.

Much of the seminal work on FSS emanated from the United States and focused on construct development, measurement, and validation. Taking a cross-national view, having FSS origins in the United States is not surprising, given that supervisors reflect the daily frontline delivery of work–family support to workers in the country's employment settings. The United States takes a market-minimalist approach to intervening in employers' support of work–family management (Kossek, 2006), and there are relatively few national or state government policies regarding workplace support of employees' needs to manage work–family roles. This is in stark comparison to other industrialized nations where, for example, the right to request a flexible schedule or take a paid leave of absence for family care (e.g., after the birth or adoption of a child, or self or eldercare needs) may be facilitated by public laws (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). In fact, the United States is one of only a handful of industrialized nations that does not federally mandate paid family leave after the birth of a child (*ibid.*). Instead, employees' access to work–family supportive practices in the United States is organizationally driven, with supervisors often serving as gatekeepers to work–family support policies (Kossek, 2005). The ability to use formal policies, which can often go under-utilized due to organizational cultural stigma (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999), unsupportive climates and cross-domain relationships (Kossek, Noe & Colquitt, 2001), and is supervisor-driven and influenced by supervisors' interpretation of norms regarding flexibility and work hours (Kossek, Barber, & Winters, 1999).

Supervisors make many decisions that informally affect employees' abilities to manage family demands. For example, they establish work deadlines and help implement staffing and cross-training policies that may facilitate or deter employees' abilities to have flexibility in when, where, or how long they work. They also conduct assessments regarding the quality and quantity of employees' productivity. Such attitudes and behaviors shape the degree to which supervisors are seen as demonstrating attitudes or behaviors that are seen by employees as socially helpful for managing their family role demands. When work–family policies are involved, direct supervisors often enable access, as well as make attributions about work–family impacts on employee behaviors (e.g., job performance) that have linkages to other employment decisions influencing pay, performance evaluation, and promotion, and even possible stigma following their use (Kossek, 2005).

### **Early Construct Development and Measurement**

The early perceptions of supervisor support scales, such as that used by Thomas and Ganster (1995), were adapted from a scale published in a community psychology journal by Shin, Wong, Simko, and Ortiz-Torres (1989) assessing the importance of supervisor support for flexibility for working parents. This perceptual measure of family-supportive supervision (Thomas & Ganster, 1995) is still widely used and

helps signify early work that identified supervisors as being especially important workplace sources of support for work–family roles. Thomas and Ganster (1995) identified four resource-related aspects of a family-supportive workplace of which supervisor support was one facet (the others being family information and referral services, dependent care service, and flexible schedules). Given these are resources that might be available as part of either the workplace or the local community, it is not surprising that some of the early measures and studies of family-supportive supervision appeared in community psychology journals as opposed to management journals (cf. Shin, Wong, Simko, & Ortiz-Torres, 1989).

That same decade, John Fernandez (1986), a renowned corporate consultant on supervisor support for family roles, published a book based on his work conducting needs assessments with major US employers to help them adapt workplaces to meet employees' increased work–family demands. Kossek (1990) brought this work into the academic personnel psychology journals by validating Fernandez's measure of FSS, and publishing some of the earliest papers linking supervisor support of family to important outcomes, such as employee work–family conflict. Kossek and Nichol (1992) and Goff, Mount, and Jamison (1990) extended this work and found that informal FSS was even more strongly related to work–family conflict than was the use of an employer-sponsored childcare center.

Later that the same decade, other important work developed in the area. Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness (1999) introduced the idea of a supportive work–family organizational culture, defined as the “shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives” (p. 394). A challenge in using many of the measures that stemmed from the aforementioned studies was that supervisor support was often combined with other forms of support (e.g., flexibility, overall supportive organization, general supervisor support), making it difficult to disentangle the precise effects of the supervisor. Allen's (2001) conceptual and empirical work attempted to address this issue, arguing that it was important to measure perceptions of organizational-level support for family and general supervisor support separately as these are related but distinct constructs. Allen's (2001) work viewed general supervisor support and family-supportive organizational perceptions as being critical for positive employee attitudes and organizational effectiveness, beyond the number of formal work–family benefits offered. Recent reviews clearly suggest that FSS is a unique construct, which should be theoretically construed and measured separately from general supervisor support or organizational support (Kossek et al., 2011). As a body of work began to accumulate highlighting the importance of family-specific supervisor actions, the construct of family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) emerged (Hammer et al., 2009).

### **FSS Perceptions and Behaviors: Development of FSSB Training Intervention and Initial Empirical Findings**

Arguing that work–family researchers needed to improve upon clarifying and measuring actual FSS *behaviors*, rather than simply assessing perceptions of the

support, seminal work by Hammer, Kossek, and colleagues identified and subsequently developed the measure for FSSB (Hammer et al., 2009). This initial work was expanded into experimental field intervention studies wherein supervisor training for FSSB was developed as part of the NIH-funded Work, Family, and Health Network (WFHN, 2016) ([www.WorkFamilyHealthNetwork.org](http://www.WorkFamilyHealthNetwork.org)). The WFHN studies are unique in that they used a national interdisciplinary research team to develop highly rigorous randomized control methods to measure, develop, and implement interventions designed to reduce work–family conflict and improve employee health by altering the way work is culturally and practically enacted. The researchers sought to change supervisors' attitudes and behaviors regarding their role and how work should be carried out in ways that support employees' work and family demands while meeting business needs. Most previous supervisor family-specific support research focused on assessing support, rather than developing customizable interventions to increase support and assess proximal and distal changes across diverse organizational contexts to better understand the role support plays in relationships between work and family life (Kossek, Wipfli, Thompson, & Brockwood, 2017). Previous studies tended to use researchers from only one or two disciplines which likely provides an incomplete narrow view on work–family change, as work family issues are a problem drawing on many content areas (Kossek, Hammer, Kelly & Moen, 2014)

The first of two phases in the WFHN conceptually identified (Hammer, Kossek, Zimmerman, & Daniels, 2007) and validated (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hansen, 2009) a measure assessing four types of family-supportive supervisory behaviors (i.e., FSSB): emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling, and creative work–family management. Emotional support refers to the degree to which a supervisor provides caring attitudes and behaviors related to challenges in managing work and family roles. An example would be providing sympathetic listening for employees' challenges in managing caregiving demands. Instrumental support refers to providing employees with tangible resources to solve work–family conflicts, such as informally allowing an individual to leave work early or attend to a sick child or parent, or helping them get access to work–family policies, such as the ability to work a flexible schedule. Role modeling refers to supervisor actions that exhibit attitudes and behaviors that suggest identification with devoting time and energy to the family role. Finally, creative work–family management refers to win-win behaviors that jointly facilitate employees' family role involvement yet also ensure the work gets done. For example, by allowing an employee to telework one day per week, the time saved from reduced commuting can facilitate increased productivity. During this early validation work, Hammer and Kossek identified a *perceptual gap* where nearly 100% of supervisors rated themselves as family supportive, yet only half of employees rated their supervisors as family supportive). This was an important advancement for the field as up until this time, much of the work–family literature assessed support from the employees' views but rarely was data collected from supervisors on their supportive behaviors. Later research validated a four-item short-form version of the scale (Hammer Kossek, Bodner, & Crain,



2013), ensuring that FSSB can be easily assessed by researchers as a specific form of supervisor support.

Following this early construct development work in Phase 1 of the WFHN (2005–2008), the Hammer and Kossek team developed a web-based training intervention specifically designed to increase supervisors' FSSB. This intervention was administered to grocery store supervisors and included an online training component, face-to-face role playing, and utilized cognitive self-monitoring to track supportive behaviors and increase transfer of training (see Hammer et al., 2011, and Kossek et al., 2014; Kossek, Wipfli, Thompson & Brickwood, 2017 for a full description). The previously validated measure of FSSB was used to assess the effectiveness of the training intervention. Not only did the intervention increase supervisors' quantity of work–family supportive behaviors, it also reduced work–family conflict and turnover for employees who reported higher work–family conflict prior to the training (Kossek & Hammer, 2008; Hammer et al., 2011).

A second phase of studies (2008–2013) by the WFHN focused on customizing FSSB training intervention materials for different work contexts, moving from retail grocery workers to healthcare workers and information technology professionals juggling global work (Kossek et al., 2014; Kossek, 2016; Kossek, Thompson, Wipfli, & Brockwood, 2017). In addition to FSSB, these studies also examined performance-supportive supervision, defined as supervisors' supportive behaviors which facilitate performance in the work role, including providing measurement and direction, giving feedback and coaching, providing resources for the work role, and supporting organizational and job change. Focusing on broader support for not only family but also work role performance, the next wave of supervisor support research is linked to what has been referred to as a “dual agenda.” Fletcher and Bailyn (2005) developed the term “dual agenda” to refer to the idea that family responsiveness is not adversarial to organizational functioning and certain initiatives can accomplish both work and family effectiveness. Dual-agenda organizational change also can be proactive by challenging basic assumptions of how work is designed, and supporting employees as whole people with responsibilities at both work and home, thus enhancing gender equity and family well-being. The rationale for teaching managers to increase work role-supportive behaviors is based on the assumption that support at work for the work role can have positive spillover to support for the family role and vice versa. Although much of the work focused on the dual agenda has been conducted via qualitative field studies, ongoing empirical work and replication are needed to further support these assumptions. We now turn to a review of the empirical literature linking FSS and outcomes at the work–family interface.

### **Empirical Linkages between FSS and Key Work and Family Outcomes**

As the studies on FSS perceptions began to accumulate, a meta-analytic review was conducted which compared general social support at the supervisor level (i.e., supervisor support) and perceived organizational support with employee perceptions of supervisor support specifically targeting the family role (FSS) and employee perceptions of organizational support specifically targeting the family role (Kossek

et al., 2011). Such analyses, along with Allen's (2001) earlier work, helped link FSS to the body of work on general and family-specific organizational support. Kossek et al.'s comprehensive study found that family-supportive supervisor perceptions are more strongly related to work–family conflict than is general supervisor support (Kossek et al., 2011). Results also showed that if employees perceive their supervisors as supportive of the family role, then they are also more likely to view their organizations as family supportive. Thus, supervisors' attitudes and actions may be viewed by employees as symbolic of the degree to which the workplace in general is supportive of family demands. Construct validation work suggests that FSS has multi-level implications, and that interventions should focus on supervisors as one aspect of workplace change (Allen, 2001; Kossek et al., 2011).

Beyond work–family conflict, other studies have found that FSS relates positively to job satisfaction (Hammer et al., 2009, 2011), work–family positive spillover (Hammer et al., 2009), organizational citizenship behavior (Hammer et al., 2016), and supervisor-rated subordinate performance (Odle-Dusseau, Britt, & Greene-Shortridge, 2012). It was also positively related to actual performance ratings collected by the organization's human resources department (Kossek et al., under review), sleep quality and safety performance (Kossek, Petty, Michel, Bodner, Yragui, Perrigino, & Hammer, 2017), health outcomes (Hammer & Sauter, 2013; Yragui, Demsky, Hammer, Van Dyck, & Neradilek, 2016) and mental health such as stress and psychological distress (Kossek, Thompson, Lawson, Perrigino, . . . Bray, 2017).

### **Global Family-Supportive Supervision Research**

In line with the goal of assessing the literature on FSS across cultures, we turn now to a qualitative review of the research *conducted* outside of the United States. We present the literature with a focus first on relationships of FSS with work–family outcomes, followed by the work on organizational outcomes. Finally, we consider contextual models and conclude with some ideas for moving forward with global research.

***Relationships between FSS and key work–family constructs.*** The majority of cross-national studies on FSS outside of the United States have been conducted in Europe, with studies in Asia and South America also being prevalent. Only one study was found in the Middle East and no known studies have been conducted in Africa. Similar to many studies in the United States, research from other countries (see Table 31.1 for a summary) has further substantiated the relationship between FSS and key work–family variables, including work–family conflict, enrichment, and balance. For instance, consistent negative correlations of FSS with work–family conflict have been found in European countries, including Spain (Agarwala, Arizkuren-Eleta, Del Castillo, Muñoz-Ferrer, & Gartzia, 2014), Sweden (Allard, Haas, & Hwang, 2011), and the United Kingdom (Beauregard, 2011). One study on five western European countries (i.e., Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, and Portugal) found that family-supportive

Table 31.1 Summary of non-US studies using family supportive supervision measures across country and organization

Author(s)	Country/ Countries Included in Analysis	Description of Sample Type of Employees	Measure of Family- Supportive Supervision	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Results
Agarwala, Arizkuren- Eleta, Del Castillo, Muñiz-Ferrer, & Gartzia (2014)	India Peru Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers and executives</li> <li>Recruited from multiple business organizations from manufacturing and service sectors</li> </ul>	Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness (1999) "managerial support" dimension	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work-life conflict (WLC)</li> <li>Managerial support of family responsibilities</li> <li>Gender</li> <li>Care responsibilities</li> </ol>	1. Affective organizational commitment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managerial support correlated with lower WLC in Peru and Spain (but not India)</li> <li>Managerial support correlated with affective commitment in all three countries</li> <li>Effects of country went away when controlling for gender and care responsibilities</li> </ol>
Allard, Haas, & Hwang (2011)	Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Married/cohabiting fathers; from multiple levels in the organization</li> <li>Recruited from a male-dominated</li> </ul>	Developed for the study	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family-supportive culture</li> <li>Top managers' work-family support</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work-family conflict (WFC)</li> <li>Family-work conflict (FWC)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFC and FWC were significantly related to perceived work-family support from top managers, but not direct supervisors</li> </ol>

private sector: manufacturing and service industries	3. Supervisor work-family support	4. Coworkers/work group work-family support	5. Work group flexibility	6. Time norms for advancement	7. Time norms for productivity	2. Both top manager support and direct supervisor support were significantly related to work- group support
Allen et al. (2014)	Australia Canada Finland Greece Japan Netherlands New Zealand Slovenia South Korea Spain United Kingdom United States	Managers in developed, industrialized countries who were married with children ages four and under, working 20+ hours/week, from various organizations and industries	Clark (2001) measure of family-supportive supervision	1. Paid leave policies 2. Family-supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) tested as moderator 3. Family-supportive supervision (FSS) tested as moderator	1. Time-based work-family conflict (WFC) 2. Strain-based work-family conflict 3. Time-based family-work conflict (FWC) 4. Strain-based family-work conflict	1. FSS negatively related to time- based and strain- based WFC, as well as strain-based FWC across nations 2. FSS interacted with leave (parental and annual) policies to predict time-based FWC; longer leave predicted more strain-based FWC when FSS was low.
Aryee, Chu, Kim, & Ryu (2013)	South Korea	Employees and their supervisors at twelve firms	Thomas and Ganster (1995) measure of family-supportive supervision	1. Family-supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) 2. Family-supportive supervision (FSS)	1. Contextual performance (supervisor rated) 2. Work withdrawal Mediators:	1. FSS related to performance and withdrawal, as well as control over work time and OBSE

Table 31.1.1 (cont.)

Author(s)	Country/ Countries Included in Analysis	Description of Sample Type of Employees	Measure of Family- Supportive Supervision	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Results
		service firms, four public firms, two other service			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Control over work time</li> <li>2. Org-based self-esteem (OBSE)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. OBSE mediated effects of FSS on both outcomes</li> <li>3. Control over work time mediated effects of FSS on performance</li> </ol>
Beham, Drobníč, & Präg (2014)	Sweden UK Netherlands Germany Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional and non-professional employees across twenty organizations</li> <li>• Recruited from financial services, information and communication, technology, health-care, and retail</li> </ul>	Dijkers, Geurts, Den Dulk, Peper, & Kompier (2004) measure of family-supportive supervision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Job autonomy</li> <li>2. Family-supportive organizational culture</li> <li>3. Family-supportive supervision (FSS)</li> <li>4. Work-family support from coworkers (Dijkers, et al., 2004)</li> <li>5. Use of flexible work arrangements</li> </ol> <p>Moderator: professional status</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work-home interference (WHI)</li> <li>2. Subjective work-family balance (SWFB)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Job autonomy, family-supportive culture, and FSS were related to WHI</li> <li>2. Family-supportive culture decreased WHI more for professional employees than non-professional</li> <li>3. FSS decreased WHI more for non-professional employees than professional</li> <li>4. Swedish participants reported highest perceptions of FSS; Dutch reported the second-highest</li> </ol>

Beauregard (2011)	UK	Thompson et al. (1999) "managerial support" dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample from government employees in the UK</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organizational time demands</li> <li>2. Negative career consequences</li> <li>3. Managerial support</li> </ol> <p>Moderator: gender</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Psychosomatic strain</li> <li>2. Work-home interference (WHI)</li> <li>3. Home-work interference (HWI)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. WHI mediated effects of org time demands on strain for women (partially mediated for men)</li> <li>2. Relationship between WHI and strain was weaker when managerial support was high</li> <li>3. The positive relationship between WHI and strain was weaker with high managerial support, more so for women than men</li> <li>4. The relationship between WHI and strain was stronger when org time demands were high, more so for men than women</li> </ol>
Den Dulk, Peper, Mrčela, & Ignjatović (2016)	Netherlands, Slovenia	Hammer, Kossek, Bodner, & Crain, (2013) measure of family-supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruited from 1) Slovenian hospital, 2) Slovenian university, 3)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General supervisor support</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work-family conflict (WFC)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FSSB (and LMX) negatively related to WFC in Slovenian hospital</li> </ol>

Table 31.1 (cont.)

Author(s)	Country/ Countries Included in Analysis	Description of Sample Type of Employees	Measure of Family- Supportive Supervision	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Results
Farnadi, Sharifian, Feili, & Shokrpour (2013)	Fars province (south Iran)	consultancy firm in the Netherlands, and 4) university in the Netherlands	supervisor behaviors – short form	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB)</li> <li>Leader-member exchange; quality of relationship (LMX)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work-family enrichment (WFE)</li> <li>Work-life balance satisfaction (WLB)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FSSB (and LMX) positively related to WFE in Dutch university and Slovenian hospital</li> <li>FSSB positively related to WLB satisfaction at Slovenian hospital and Dutch consultancy firm</li> </ol>
Las Heras, Bosch, & Raes (2015)	Brazil Chile Ecuador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruited students from business schools, who also were asked to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hammer, Kossek, Yruggui, Bodner, &amp; Hansen (2009) measure of family-</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family-supportive supervision (FSS)</li> <li>Work-family conflict (WFC)</li> <li>Family-work conflict (FWC)</li> <li>Job stress</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFC</li> <li>FWC</li> <li>Job stress</li> <li>Family satisfaction</li> <li>Life satisfaction</li> <li>Turnover intentions</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FSS predicted WFPS, job performance, and turnover intentions</li> </ol>

obtain additional respondents they knew (snowball); managerial and non-managerial

- Multiple sectors: profit, non-profit, and government

supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB); seven items

WFPS (tested as mediator)  
4. Family-work positive spillover; WFPS (tested as mediator)

2. Both FWFS and WFPS mediated the relationship between FSSB and job performance.  
3. With high unemployment, stronger effect of FSSB on turnover intentions  
4. With high unemployment, stronger effect of FSSB on performance mediated by WF positive spillover  
5. With high social expenditures, weaker relationship between FSSB and performance (via WF positive spillover)

1. Supervisor support correlated with WFI, FWI, and strain

O'Driscoll,  
Poelmans,  
Spector,  
Kalliath,  
Allen,

New Zealand

- Managerial personnel recruited through membership list of

Clark (2001) measure of family-supportive supervision

1. Availability and use of family-responsive org policies

1. Work-family interference (WFI)



Table 31.1 (cont.)

Author(s)	Country/ Countries Included in Analysis	Description of Sample Type of Employees	Measure of Family- Supportive Supervision	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Results
Cooper, & Sanchez (2003)		NZ Institute of Management. • Multiple industries: service and hospitality biggest proportion (44%)		2. Family-supportive organizational perceptions FSOP (tested as mediator) Moderator: supervisor support	2. Family-work interference (FWI) 3. Psychological strain	2. When WFI was high, those with high supervisor support had less strain than those with low supervisor support
Rofcanin, Las Heras, & Bakker (2016)	Mexico	• Recruited from a financial credit company, chosen randomly across occupations, locations, and hierarchical levels	Hammer et al. (2009) measure of family- supportive supervisor behaviors	1. Family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB) Moderator: family-supportive org culture	1. Work engagement 2. Job performance (supervisor-rated)	1. FSSB positively related to work engagement and job performance 2. Culture moderated relationship between FSSB and engagement, where relationship is positive when culture is high, and negative when culture is low
Sivatte & Guadamillas (2012)	Spain	• Company managers, branch	Thompson et al. (1999) "managerial support" dimension	1. Use of flexible work arrangements (FWA)	1. Work-family conflict (WFC)	1. Supervisor support related to WFC, commitment,

directors, personal contacts

- Multiple industries: information technologies, insurance, urban services, automobile components manufacture and wholesale, financial services, insurance

China

Wang,  
Walumbawa,  
Wang, &  
Aryee (2013)

2. Family responsibilities
3. Supervisor support
4. Coworker FWA use
5. Work-family culture (managerial support, career consequences, org time demands, supervisor support)
6. Supervisory responsibilities

2. Employee commitment
3. Turnover intentions
4. Job satisfaction

turnover intentions, and job satisfaction

2. In regression with control variables and all work-family resources, supervisor support negatively predicted WFC

Clark (2001) measure of family-supportive supervision

1. Family-friendly supervision (FSS) Mediators:
2. Job satisfaction
3. Relational identification with supervisor

1. FSS correlated with relational identification, job satisfaction, and OCB

2. Job satisfaction
3. Relational identification with supervisor

Moderator:  
4. Work-family conflict (WFC)

2. Relational identification with supervisor mediated relationship between FSS and task performance
3. Job satisfaction mediated relationship between FSS and citizenship behaviors

Table 31.1 (cont.)

Author(s)	Country/ Countries Included in Analysis	Description of Sample Type of Employees	Measure of Family- Supportive Supervision	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Results
Zhang & Tu (2016)	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees recruited from high-tech enterprise</li> </ul>	Hammer et al. (2013) measure of family-supportive supervisor behaviors – short scale	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family-supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB)</li> <li>Work-family enrichment (WFE)</li> <li>Ethical leadership</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family satisfaction (self- and supervisor-rated)</li> <li>Life satisfaction (self- and supervisor-rated)</li> </ol>	<p>4. Relationship between FSS and job satisfaction was stronger for those with more WFC than those with low WFC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFE mediated relationship between ethical leadership with family and life satisfaction; FSSB moderated these mediations, making indirect effects stronger</li> <li>FSSB moderated relationship between ethical leadership and WFE, strengthening the relationship</li> </ol> <p>* all were self-ratings; supervisor ratings were not related to FSSB</p>

culture and family-supportive supervision were both related to work–home interference in all countries (Beham, Drobnic, & Prag, 2014). FSS has also shown to be negatively related to work–family conflict and positively related to both work–family enrichment and satisfaction with work–family balance in a Slovenian hospital, as well as positively related to work–family enrichment in a Dutch university and work–family balance satisfaction at a Dutch consultancy firm (Den Dulk, Peper, Mrčela, & Ignjatović, 2016). The negative relationship between FSS and work–family conflict has also been demonstrated in samples in Iran (Farhadi, Sharifian, Feili, & Shokrpour, 2013), New Zealand (O’Driscoll, Poelmans, Spector, Kalliath, Allen, Cooper, & Sanchez, 2003), as well as South American countries like Peru (Agarwala et al., 2014). Beyond correlations, regression analysis has also found FSS to predict work–family conflict when controlling for satisfaction with job, gender, age, family responsibilities, and hours worked in a Spanish sample of employees from private organizations across multiple industries (Sivatte & Guidamillas, 2012). Thus, there is strong evidence that the link between FSS and work–family constructs is one that transcends national borders.

***Global research linking FSS and organizational effectiveness.*** In addition to having positive relationships with work–family variables, FSS has also been associated with organizationally based work outcomes. In Spain, FSS has been significantly correlated with organizational commitment, turnover intentions, and job satisfaction (Sivatte & Guidamillas, 2012), and the effect of FSS on organizational commitment was found when controlling for job satisfaction, gender, age, family responsibility, and hours worked. In South Korea, employees from twelve firms (across several industries) were rated higher on performance by their supervisors and had less work withdrawal behavior when they perceived high levels of FSS; this pattern appeared to be explained by increases in organizational-based self-esteem, which was found to result from FSS perceptions (Aryee, Chu, Kim, & Ryu, 2013). In Latin America, across three countries (i.e., Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador), FSS predicted self-ratings of job performance through increases in both family-to-work and work-to-family positive spillover (Las Heras, Trefalt, & Escribano, 2015). As noted by the authors, this is consistent with research in the United States showing this positive spillover as the explanatory variable mediating the relationship between FSS and job performance (Ode-Dusseau, Britt, & Greene-Shortridge, 2012). Additional research from a study conducted with employees in Mexico found FSS to be positively related to work engagement and supervisor ratings of job performance (Rofcanin, Las Heras, & Bakke, 2016). Furthermore, perceptions of a family-supportive culture moderated the relationship between FSS and engagement, in that the relationship was positive when family-supportive culture was high, and negative when family-supportive culture was low (Rofcanin et al., 2016). In sum, there is considerable evidence of the global impact of FSS on organizational outcomes, including job performance.

***FSS as a Positive contextual mechanism across cultural settings.*** As evidenced in the previously mentioned studies in South Korea and Latin America, researchers

have attempted to uncover both underlying mechanisms of the positive effects of FSS (i.e., *why* does FSS have a positive impact), as well as contextual factors (i.e., *when* does FSS have a positive impact). In a sample of pharmaceutical workers in China, employees' relational identification with their supervisor mediated the relationship between FSS and supervisor ratings of task performance, and job satisfaction mediated the relationship between FSS and supervisor ratings of citizenship behaviors (Wang, Walumbaw, Wang, & Aryee, 2013). Moreover, work-family conflict moderated this relationship in that FSS and job satisfaction were more strongly related for those reporting high levels of work-family conflict (Wang et al., 2013). In another Chinese sample that reported perceptions of ethical leadership, results revealed that work-family enrichment mediated the effect of ethical leadership on family and life satisfaction, and that FSS moderated these mediations, making the indirect effects stronger (Zhang & Tu, 2016). Contextual considerations of FSS were also specifically assessed in a sample of government workers in the United Kingdom, where FSS was examined as the moderator of experiences of psychological strain (Beauregard, 2011). Results revealed that when FSS was high, the relationship between WFC and psychological strain was weakened; notably, this effect was even stronger for women than men (Beauregard, 2011).

Although discussing cross-cultural research that can be helpful for understanding the global consistency with which FSS shows positive impacts on employees, it is insightful to be able to observe direct comparisons across countries within the same study. Several large-scale studies have accomplished this. Allen et al. (2014) tested how country leave policies (i.e., annual/vacation leaves and maternity/paternity leaves) created a national context within which FSS predicted family-to-work conflict. Predicting that FSS would be negatively related to work-family conflict, and would moderate the relationship between paid leave and work-family conflict, they found in their study of thirteen developed, industrialized countries (see Table 31.1) that not only did FSS relate to WFC, but that individuals from countries with longer leaves available had more family-to-work conflict when FSS was low. Allen et al. (2014) concluded that for country leave policies to have an impact on WFC, these policies should be paired with family-supportive supervision. Additionally, in another study comparing three Latin American countries, national context was found to play a role in the positive relationship among FSS and job performance, in that countries with high unemployment saw a stronger effect of FSS on turnover intentions, and in countries with high social expenditures, there was a weaker relationship between FSS and job performance (Las Heras et al., 2015). Overall, through various empirical designs, FSS appears to interact with or create the context that produces positive effects on employees, in addition to working through a myriad of mechanisms.

### Key Future Directions for Global and Cross-Cultural FSS

We see the expansion of FSS research globally and cross-culturally to be a key direction for future work-family research as the impact of national policies and

cross-cultural contexts have a significant impact on work–family research across the globe (Korabik, Aycan, & Ayman, forthcoming). Below we conclude with several themes for future research. These include the need to attend to cultural issues shaping construct development and measurement, giving greater attention to intervention work that takes into account multi-level country and institutional influences, and the need for more cross-national samples to attend to moderators of job level, gender, and organizational size related to globalization and stage of economic development.

### **Enhancing Measurement and Construct Development across Cultures**

Regarding methodological differences, very little research conducted outside of the United States has incorporated complex approaches to the study of FSS. Below we discuss the need for more research globally on interventions, multi-level influences, and construct development of measures that considers cultural values for support.

*Global longitudinal intervention work.* In general, regardless of the country in which the sample was collected, the preponderance of the research on FSS conducted outside of the United States tends to be cross-sectional, self-report employee data. Thus, future FSS research within a global context will be most beneficial if longitudinal, multi-source data are collected. Although research on interventions to increase FSS is gaining momentum in the United States, we could not find any studies outside of the United States that incorporated interventions, nor longitudinal, quasi-experimental, or experimental designs. Yet results from these rigorous designs would benefit the theoretical and practical understanding of how FSS creates positive effects on employees across cultural contexts. When utilizing an experimental or quasi-experimental design, researchers have opportunities to delineate organizational, industry, and national contextual variables that moderate the effects of FSS. Similarly, moving beyond cross-sectional designs allows for testing of underlying mechanisms or processes that explain how FSS affects employees, which need to be replicated across cultural contexts. Thus, global cross-cultural research should also consider more rigorous designs that incorporate interventions. We argue that cultural differences may influence how FSS is perceived, construed, measured; hence, future research on FSS should incorporate these more sophisticated designs to advance our understanding of cross-cultural work–family issues and linkages to organizational change in transforming societal contexts.

*Cross-cultural considerations in examining FSS multi-level influences.* Additionally, as multi-level research grows, it is important when comparing cultures to measure which country institutional level and agent of social support for family (e.g., from one's spouse, from one's supervisor, or from the employer or the government) is more important for reducing work–family conflict or other related outcomes, such as stress. For example, supervisor–employee dyads are very important to the enactment of work–life support in the United States. Perhaps this is because the United States is a very individualistic culture where work–life issues are often perceived as private and something the

individual should manage on their own or work out arrangements with their individual manager on a case-by-case basis. As an illustration, an employee may ask their supervisor to work at home one day a week so they can coach their child's soccer team after work instead of facing a long commute. We suspect that one consequence of the United States' individualistic cultural proclivity is that there may be more customized variation in the way in which FSS is enacted in the United States as an idiosyncratic deal with one's supervisor compared to more collectivistic cultures.

Relevant to this view is Rousseau, Ho, and Greenberg's (2006) discussion of the concept of idiosyncratic deals (or i-deals) in the employment relationship, where access to and use of flexible arrangements is part of a social exchange between supervisors and employees as a way to motivate them (Kossek & Ruderman, 2012). Most of the research on work-family i-deals has been conducted within the United States or other Western contexts (e.g., Germany), and research is needed across cultures to look at how these informal supervisory negotiations play out around the globe. For example, in more collectivistic cultures than the United States, such as the Middle East, South America, and Asia, involvement in work may be perceived as a way of meeting family needs and thus, could lead to *reduced* work-to-family conflict. In other words, family responsibilities are seen as being met by engaging in work (Mortazavi, Pedhiwala, Shafiro, & Hammer, 2009). Thus, it is important to understand these multi-level employee-supervisor relationships on a global level and how FSS varies as a function of culture and supervisor-employee dyadic relationships.

***Cultural variation in expectations and types of support.*** Relatedly, research is needed on cultural variation (e.g., cultural values, institutional, or legal) in the types of support expected and needed from a supervisor. Fundamental differences in these beliefs may impact the way that FSS is conceptualized and ultimately measured. Our review was unable to uncover any studies that focused on this issue, but other cross-cultural work on leadership styles suggest there is a theoretical reason to expect differences. For example, in terms of leadership style values across cultures, employees in non-US cultures may be more willing to accept more strict hierarchical and authoritarian communication styles that are less participatory, which may have ramifications for what is perceived as a family-supportive behavior (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Mortazavi, Pedhiwala, Shafiro, & Hammer, 2009; Thomas, 2008). Similarly, institutional differences in laws, such as the right to request a flexible schedule, as in the case with Australia or the United Kingdom, may set up a national context where employees work with supervisors to develop a work agreement that is viewed as family supportive (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). An example of legal differences is the issue that in some countries the ability for women to work outside the home requires the husband's permission (e.g., Saudi Arabia). In such cases, supervisor beliefs regarding traditionalism in gender roles, such as whether it is appropriate for women to work outside the home, may influence their level of family-supportive supervision.

In terms of values, there is also cross-cultural variation related to masculinity and femininity that shape expectations related to patriarchy and supporting men working

outside the home as the primary provider. What is considered “family supportive” may have some linkages to beliefs about the culturally acceptable roles of men and women in society as workers and caregivers. For example, in some countries women face more cultural stigma for returning to work quickly after the birth of a child. In such nations, having a supervisor support a woman returning from work after having a child in a country where cultural expectations are for women to stop working once a child is born may be empathic and relevant to FSS item development or interview protocols. Data supports this idea; qualitative interviews with employed Bahraini women attending a management development workshop revealed that maternity leave was not a common option (Metcalf, 2007). Instead, women described being expected to leave the organization when a child was born, and that flexible work arrangements and part-time work were not available. In fact, 70% of the women reported there was a lack of family-oriented HR policies. Similarly, across nations, having a supervisor support a woman being able to leave work periodically to go to school while working full-time in a country such as Afghanistan where girls historically were not encouraged to be formally educated may create inherently different FSSB items for a scale. Additionally, people in some countries value strong separation between work and personal life (e.g., Germany or France) and employees in such cultures may not feel comfortable sharing personal problems with the direct supervisor but rather prefer the family to provide more support.

Although there is no known research on this topic, anecdotes also illustrate its applicability. The vice president of a major semiconductor firm told the first author of this chapter that referral to employee assistance plans (EAPs) run by the company can be quite effective in the United States, as people are very individualistic and accept workplace support. However, in this same company, EAPs are less utilized in Asian collectivist countries as in these countries the family is seen as the preferred provider of support to manage family issues that involve the need for mental health counseling. In summary, the construct of FSS clearly may vary across societies, and may reflect gender norms and practices in a specific culture. Researchers should be careful to not simply assume US developed measures have the same meaning in other cultures.

### **Future Cross-National Research on Often Overlooked Moderators in Non-US Samples**

Future research taking a global view needs to broaden the types of jobs studied, examine gender in cross-national and organizational contexts, and consider stage of organizational size.

***Broadening the job and income populations studied.*** There is a need for more non-US research based on samples of lower-level nonprofessional employees. In attempting to replicate the positive effects of FSS across countries, it becomes important to also show the effects across different levels of employees, relative to their status within the organization. In the United States, effects of FSS have been



found for both managerial and professional-level employees (e.g., Kelly et al., 2014), as well as low-wage workers (e.g., Griggs, Casper, & Eby, 2013; Hammer et al., 2011; Muse & Pichler, 2011). A global review of family-supportive supervision research, however, reveals that studies appear to largely be conducted on managerial and professional-level employees outside of the United States (e.g., Agarwala et al., 2014; Den Dulk, Peper, Mrčela, & Ignjatović, 2016; O'Driscoll, Poelmans, Spector, Kalliath, Allen, Cooper, & Sanchez, 2003), while some have a mix of employee levels (e.g., Beham, Drobnič, & Präg, 2014), or where job level is not noted (e.g., Allen et al., 2014). An exception would be a sample of nurses and nurse assistants in Iran where family-supportive supervision was found to negatively predict work–family conflict and job stress (Farhadi et al., 2013). Another study across five countries in Western Europe did compare professional to non-professional employees, finding family-supportive culture as well as family-supportive supervision (FSS) decreased work–home interference more for professional employees than non-professionals (Beham et al., 2014). Nonetheless, given the lack of instrumental resources available to these populations (Griggs et al., 2013), more research on low-wage workers is important to show places where FSS is perhaps even more beneficial, as has been found in studies conducted in the United States (Muse & Pichler, 2011). In general, it is imperative that cross-cultural research provide information about the job context. Otherwise, it is difficult to isolate whether findings that vary across countries are attributable to differences in samples or other more macro variables.

***Gender as a moderator of FSS in cross-national context.*** One particular variable that is often controlled for, although not explicitly examined in studies within and outside of the United States as a direct predictor of FSS, is gender. In our search, we found one study that compared male and female governmental employees in the United Kingdom, which revealed that the positive relationship between work-to-home interference and strain was weaker with high managerial support, more so for women than men, and that the relationship between work-to-home interference and strain was stronger when organizational time demands were high, more so for men than women (Beauregard, 2011). Another study was conducted only on fathers; work–family conflict and family–work conflict among a Swedish sample were significantly related to perceived work–family support from top managers, but not direct supervisors, while both top manager support and direct supervisor support were significantly related to work-group support (Allard, Haas, & Hwang, 2011). Given the varying mix of males and females across industries, not to mention the role that national context has on the availability of gender-based parental leaves, we were surprised to not find more non-US research where gender was explicitly used as a predictor or moderator, suggesting an area ripe for future research.

***Organizational characteristics.*** Size and extent of globalization of the firm may also matter. Size is often linked to policy adoption rates and the number of policies available. For instance, larger firms simply have more human-resource and work–life policies available (Kossek, 2005), and this may relate to the extent of

industrialization of the nation and the number of global firms operating in the country. In global firms, size may correlate with extent of cross-cultural complexity and multiculturalism in ways that shape the ways in which work–life issues are implemented. A multinational organization in one country may follow the work–life norms of the global parent county culture, while the local small employer in that same country might strictly follow national cultural work–life norms. For large global firms with US origins, there may be some convergence of what FSS means. In such contexts, researchers might find it useful to take two levels into account in intervention design – such as national cultural level and organizational level (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). Or alternatively, some firms may follow two-tiered supportive supervision across the hierarchy. Here the parent company’s policies and norms may be available to the executive and professional levels, while local work–life norms and supports may be enacted for employees at the lower level.

## Conclusions

This chapter has examined family-supportive supervision (FSS) origins and its expansion cross-nationally. We have discussed how the construct has evolved from measurement of perceptions to also include assessments of behaviors; and studies around the globe are demonstrating linkages between FSS and work–family conflict and organizational effectiveness. The movement to focus on measuring supervisor behaviors has fostered a new field of research on leadership development and training and interventions that needs increased attention in the design and implementation of studies outside of the United States. Given the increasingly global nature of work, it is important for research on supportive supervision for families and personal lives to evolve to capture cultural diversity within and across national borders.

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