



The Wellbeing Equation: Work-Life, Support, and Satisfaction in Policing

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Abstract

Policing is characterized by high occupational demands that often disrupt work-life balance (WLB). Grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and Work-Family Enrichment theory, this study examines the structural relationships between perceived social support, job satisfaction, and WLB among police personnel in Bengaluru, India. A cross-sectional survey of 400 officers was conducted using stratified random sampling, and Structural Equation Modelling was employed to test direct and indirect effects. The results indicated that social support significantly predicted job satisfaction and WLB. Job satisfaction also positively influenced WLB and partially mediated the relationship between social support and WLB. The findings highlight the importance of relational resources in promoting occupational and cross-domain well-being in high-demand professions.

Keywords: Work-life balance, Well-being, Job satisfaction, Police personnel, Social support.

Introduction

Policing is widely recognized as one of the most demanding public service professions, characterized by high job demands, irregular working hours, emotional labour, and continuous exposure to stressful and unpredictable situations (Kausar, 2016; Dhanush & Shobha, 2023). Officers are required to maintain vigilance, emotional stability, and rapid decision-making under

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conditions of public scrutiny and institutional pressure (Dhanush & Shobha, 2023). Such occupational demands often disrupt equilibrium between the professional and personal domains, increasing vulnerability to work-life conflict and psychological strain (Viegas & Henriques, 2020). While existing research has extensively documented stress, burnout, and role overload in policing, comparatively less attention has been directed toward understanding the psychosocial resources that promote positive occupational functioning and domain balance (Dhanush & Shobha, 2025). Among these resources, social support is conceptualized as the perceived availability of emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance from significant others (Cobb, 1976; Zimet et al., 1988). In high-strain professions, perceived support functions as a protective factor that buffers the adverse effects of occupational stress (Hobfoll & Stokes, 1988). Social Support theory proposes that relational backing enhances perceived control and emotional security, thereby mitigating stress outcomes (Cobb, 1976). Complementing this perspective, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory highlights that individuals accumulate and mobilize valued resources, including social support, to prevent resource depletion and psychological strain (Hobfoll, 1989). Empirical evidence indicates that social support is positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment across occupational settings (Sigursteinsdóttir & Karlsdóttir, 2022). Thus, social support is very important in stressful work environments such as policing (Acoba, 2024).

Job satisfaction is defined as a positive evaluative and affective orientation toward a person's job role and work environment (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001; Sandhya, 2024). Higher job satisfaction has been associated with improved psychological functioning and reduced work-related strain (Lambert et al., 2021). It is associated with positive job attitudes, and such positive attitudes may extend beyond the workplace and influence personal life experiences (Tadampali & Hadi, 2017). Employees who indicate a lower level of job satisfaction report minimal organizational, supervisor, and colleague support (Yucel, 2020; Van Gelderen et al., 2017). Likewise, satisfaction at work results in enhanced productivity, better commitment, reduced absenteeism, lower turnover, and increased efficiency (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). Work-Life Balance (WLB) is the ability of an individual to apportion adequate time for professional duties and family responsibilities (Dhanush & Shobha, 2024).

Researches state that WLB enhances the level of work satisfaction (Staines, 1980; Brough et al., 2014), and job satisfaction in return contributes to positive experiences in personal life (De Clercq et al., 2021). Enrichment theory by Greenhaus & Powell (2006) suggests that resource gains and positive affect generated in one domain enhance functioning in another

domain. Similarly, the spillover theory explains that affective states developed at work may transfer into non-work domains, either positively or negatively (Staines, 1980). Within this theoretical framework, social support may influence work-life balance directly, as a stress-buffering resource, and indirectly through its effect on job satisfaction (Sigursteinsdóttir & Karlsdóttir, 2022). This inter-connection proves to be very effective psychological resources in highly responsible and stressful careers such as policing (Marcinkus et al., 2007; Malik et al., 2010). Despite the need for these interconnections in challenging professions, few studies address this phenomenon with empirical evidence. This study prioritizes this framework and investigates its relation to the well-being of police personnel.

Review of Literature and Hypotheses

Social support has been consistently identified as a critical psychosocial resource in occupational settings. Grounded in Social Support theory and COR theory, support functions as a buffering mechanism that mitigates stress and preserves psychological resources (Andersen et al., 2023; Acoba, 2024). Employees who perceive higher levels of emotional and instrumental support are better equipped to cope with job demands, resulting in more favourable work attitudes (Jung et al., 2024). Empirical research across diverse professional contexts demonstrates a positive association between social support and job satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2015). Support from colleagues, supervisors, and family has been shown to enhance affective attachment to work roles (Alsakarneh et al., 2022) and strengthen positive evaluations of the work environment (Garmendia et al., 2023). Within policing, where occupational stressors are persistent and multifaceted, the availability of relational support may play an even more crucial role in sustaining professional fulfilment (Setiawan et al., 2019; Rousseau & Aubé, 2010). Given that social support operates as a resource-preserving mechanism, it is theoretically plausible that officers who perceive greater support experience higher job satisfaction. Drawing from the existing literature, we identify three testable hypotheses for our study: (1) perceived social support has a positive influence on job satisfaction, (2) social support demonstrates a positive impact on work-life balance, (3) job satisfaction has a positive impact on work-life balance, and (4) job satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived social support and work-life balance.

Perceived social support positively influences job satisfaction

According to Greenhaus et al. (2003), WLB is composed of time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance. Studies showcase the impact

of social support in protecting the workforce against psychological distress (Garipey et al., 2016). It can be availed in any form and received from any source, including friends, colleagues, spouses, kids, or even pets, which provides adequate strength to overcome psychological stressors (Ford et al., 2007). The stress-buffering perspective suggests that individuals with strong support networks are better able to manage competing role demands (Cobb, 1976). Social support enhances coping capacity and reduces role strain, thereby facilitating more effective integration of work and non-work responsibilities. Empirical evidence supports the positive association between social support and WLB (Kose et al., 2021). Supportive relationships provide both practical assistance and emotional reassurance (Shahid et al., 2016), which can reduce work–family conflict and promote domain equilibrium (Garmendia et al., 2023). In high-demand professions such as policing, where irregular schedules and emotional labour are common, perceived support may directly contribute to improved balance across life domains.

Social support demonstrates a positive impact on work-life balance

The relationship between job satisfaction and WLB is theoretically anchored in Work–Family Enrichment theory (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and Spillover theory (Staines, 1980). Experiences at work impact the experiences at home (Staines, 1980), and thus, the level of job satisfaction may be predicted by the level of perceived WLB (Adhikari & Gyawali, 2024). People with better satisfaction at work tend to demonstrate better balance between domains (Aruldoss et al., 2020), showcasing a clear sign of positive association between satisfaction and balance (Brough et al., 2014). These perspectives suggest that positive experiences and affective states generated in one domain can transfer to another domain, enhancing overall well-being. Conversely, work-life imbalance is inversely linked with job satisfaction, further supporting that satisfaction with work is positively linked to WLB (Viegas & Henriques, 2020). Within the policing context, positive work attitudes may therefore facilitate healthier integration between professional and personal roles.

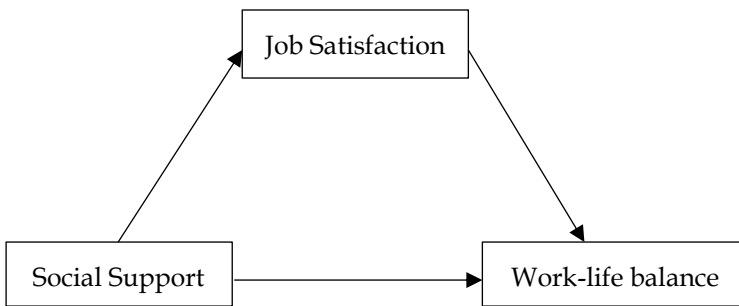
Job satisfaction has a positive impact on work-life balance

Theoretical perspectives also suggest that job satisfaction may function as a mediating mechanism linking social support to WLB. According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), social resources enhance positive psychological states, which in turn influence broader life outcomes. Similarly, Work–Family Enrichment theory proposes that resource gains at work may

improve cross-domain functioning through affective and motivational pathways (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Empirical evidence indicates that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between support mechanisms and work-life outcomes (Zhang et al., 2015). Given that social support enhances job satisfaction and that job satisfaction contributes to domain equilibrium, it is reasonable to propose an indirect pathway through which support influences WLB.

Given the different pathways by which variables affect each other, we propose our final hypothesis as depicted in Figure 1. This also reflects the broader conceptual framework of the study, which notes that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived social support and work-life balance.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study



Source: Authors' creation using AMOS

Research Design and Data Collection

This study employs a cross-sectional quantitative research design to examine the structural relationships between perceived social support, job satisfaction, and WLB among police personnel. Data were collected between November 2024 and April 2025, from policemen serving in the southern region of Bengaluru (Bengaluru South and South-East Zones), comprising 30 police stations. The target population consisted of 15,475 personnel (Gowda, 2024). The minimum required sample size was determined to be 376, through Cochran's (1977) formula for a finite population at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. To enhance statistical precision and account for potential non-response bias and incomplete surveys, 432 questionnaires were distributed using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation across stations and divisions. 400 valid and complete responses were retained for analysis, with a response rate of 92.6%. The final sample ($n = 400$) achieved

a margin of error of approximately 4.84% and strengthened the reliability and generalizability of the findings to the overall population. Data was collected through structured personal administration of the survey instrument to improve response accuracy and minimize missing data, considering the demanding occupational context of policing. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the study prior to participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured throughout the process. Questionnaires with substantial missing responses were excluded during preliminary screening to maintain data integrity.

Construct Measurement

A 12-item research instrument was designed with reference to validated scales from the existing literature. The list of items considered for construction of this research instrument is provided in the appendix (Table A-1). Perceived social support was operationalized as an individual's perceived availability of emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance within their social environment (Cobb, 1976). The construct was measured using a four-item scale adapted from Santiago et al. (2023). Job satisfaction was operationalized as a positive evaluative and affective orientation toward one's job role and work environment (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001) and was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Sandhya (2024). WLB was operationalized as the perceived equilibrium between professional and personal life domains, consistent with the multidimensional framework of time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003), and was measured using a four-item scale adapted from Brough et al. (2014).

All measures were assessed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The instruments were adapted to the policing context without altering their underlying conceptual structure. The constructs were specified as reflective latent variables within the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, while convergent validity was evaluated through average variance extracted (AVE). One negatively worded indicator (WLB2) within the WLB scale was reverse-coded before analysis and was subsequently removed due to low factor loading during Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The final measurement model satisfied established reliability and validity criteria.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The sample comprised 400 police personnel, of whom 68% were male and 32% were female. The age group with most number of respondents was 31–

40 years (40.5%), followed by 41–50 years (30.5%), 21–30 years (23.75%), and 51–60 years (5.25%). In terms of educational qualifications, 58.25% were graduates, 25.25% held postgraduate degrees, and 16.5% reported other qualifications. Most respondents were married (73.25%), while slightly above one-fourth of the respondents (26.75%) were unmarried. Regarding service tenure, 31.5% had less than five years of experience, 23% had 6–10 years, 21.25% had 11–15 years, 12.5% had 16–20 years, and 11.75% had over 20 years of service. Departmentally, 67.25% were affiliated with the Law-and-Order division and 32.75% with the Traffic division.

Measurement model

Results from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis verified the model's conformity with the observed data. Recommended model fit values are Chi-square Minimum/ Degree of Freedom (CMIN/df) <5; Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) > 0.9 (Hair et al., 2010), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) > 0.9 (Tucker & Lewis, 1973), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > 0.9 (Bentler, 1990); Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) < 0.08 (Hair et al., 2010). In accordance, the outcome reported CMIN/df = 1.534; GFI = 0.969; TLI = 0.983; CFI = 0.987; RMSEA = 0.037; SRMR = 0.04. Items with loadings less than 0.5 were removed from the scale to achieve an appropriate model. Overall results fell within the acceptable range and supported the conceptual model. Besides acceptable measures of model fit, factor loadings of all items in the model were >0.5, demonstrating satisfactory contribution to the model fit. The obtained alpha values of the target variables were 0.830 for social support, 0.830 for job satisfaction, and 0.758 for WLB. Additionally, they demonstrated sufficient reliability with their composite reliability values of 0.855, 0.855, and 0.781, respectively. The condition of the convergent validity was satisfied with all variables reporting an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value > 0.5. Table 1 illustrates the details of items, their factor loadings, alpha values, composite reliability, and AVE.

Table 1. Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Social support	SS1	0.848	0.830	0.855	0.600
	SS2	0.815			
	SS3	0.599			
	SS4	0.812			

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Job satisfaction	JS1	0.846	0.830	0.855	0.550
	JS2	0.579			
	JS3	0.840			
	JS4	0.559			
	JS5	0.824			
Work-life balance	WLB1	0.815	0.758	0.781	0.547
	WLB3	0.788			
	WLB4	0.597			

Source: Authors’ calculations based on primary data.

To confirm that the hypothesized structure has no overlapping constructs, divergent validity was examined. Divergent validity accounts for the independence of one latent construct from other latent constructs in the proposed research model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 2 validates divergent validity among the target variables. Upon confirmation of both convergent and divergent validity, the proposed model presents the collinearity statistics to reflect that there are no multicollinearity issues among the latent constructs of the hypothesized research model. Absence of multicollinearity can be confirmed with tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor values as in Table 2. Tolerance values greater than 0.2 and VIF values less than 10 reflect that there is no multicollinearity problem with the data structure, and thereby this study can proceed to the analysis of structure.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity and Collinearity Statistics

	Fornell and Larcker Criterion			Collinearity statistics	
	WLB	SS	JS	Tolerance	VIF
WLB	0.740			-	-
SS	0.368	0.775		0.963	1.039
JS	0.477	0.248	0.742	0.963	1.039

Source: Primary data analysis

Note: WLB: Work-life balance; SS: Social support; JS: Job satisfaction; VIF: Variance Inflation Factor

Analysis and Interpretation

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Following confirmation of measurement adequacy, the structural model was estimated using maximum likelihood estimation with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to assess the significance of direct and indirect effects. The model explained 29% of the variance in work-life balance ($R^2 = 0.29$), indicating moderate explanatory power. The results supported H_1 , as perceived social support exerted a positive and statistically significant effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.304, p < 0.01$). Similarly, H_2 was supported, with social support demonstrating a significant positive effect on work-life balance ($\beta = 0.353, p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that perceived relational resources contribute both to favourable job attitudes and to improved domain equilibrium. Consistent with H_3 , job satisfaction was positively associated with work-life balance ($\beta = 0.444, P < 0.01$). Mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of social support on work-life balance through job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.353, p < 0.01$), with the bootstrapped confidence interval excluding zero. This suggests that social support influences work-life balance both directly and indirectly through its impact on job satisfaction.

Table 3. Regression analysis

Hypothesis	Relationship	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence Interval		p-value	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound		
H_1	SS→JS	0.304	-	0.161	0.439	<0.01	Supported
H_2	SS→WLB	0.353	-	0.206	0.518	<0.01	Supported
H_3	JS→WLB	0.444	-	0.317	0.583	<0.01	Supported
H_4	SS→JS→WLB-		0.135***	0.070	0.221	<0.01	Partial mediation

Source: Primary data analysis

Notes: 1. SS: Social support; JS: Job satisfaction; WLB: Work-life balance.

2. H_1 : Perceived social support has a positive influence on job satisfaction; H_2 : Social support demonstrates a positive impact on work-life balance; H_3 : Job satisfaction has a positive impact on work-life balance; H_4 : Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived social support and work-life balance.

Discussion

The findings provide empirical evidence that perceived social support functions as a critical psychosocial resource influencing both occupational attitudes and cross-domain well-being among police personnel. The positive association between social support and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.304$, $p < 0.01$) aligns with the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which stresses that access to valued resources enhances adaptive functioning in high-demand environments. In policing, relational support appears to preserve psychological resources and strengthen positive work-related evaluations (Kausar, 2016). The significant direct effect of social support on work-life balance ($\beta = 0.353$, $p < 0.001$) further supports the stress-buffering mechanism proposed in Social Support theory (Cobb, 1976). In demanding professions such as policing, where irregular schedules and emotional labour are prevalent (Kausar, 2016), perceived support likely enhances coping capacity and perceived control over competing demands. Job satisfaction demonstrated a strong positive effect on work-life balance ($\beta = 0.444$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that positive evaluations of work significantly influence personal domain outcomes. This result is theoretically anchored in Work-Family Enrichment theory (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and the spillover theory (Staines, 1980), which suggest that affective gains in one domain may transfer into another. Empirical evidence supports this cross-domain transmission, showing that higher job satisfaction is associated with improved work-life balance and overall well-being (Brough et al., 2015; Haar & Bardoel, 2008).

The mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of social support on work-life balance through job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.135$, $p < 0.001$), indicating partial mediation. This finding reinforces the integrated application of COR theory and enrichment perspectives, suggesting that relational resources enhance job-related affect, which subsequently facilitates positive spillover into personal life domains. While prior research has reported variability in spillover patterns depending on contextual constraints (Wolter et al., 2019), negative or neutral associations have often been observed under conditions of inadequate or strained support (Antunes et al., 2024; Kurtuluş et al., 2023). The present findings suggest that when support is perceived as adequate and resource-enhancing, it contributes constructively to both professional satisfaction and personal domain equilibrium.

Conclusion

This study showcases the need for social support at work and in other areas to improve an individual's contentment and social life (Jolly et al., 2020).

Social support in policing not only develops the feeling of being cared for (Turner, 1981) among the policemen but also creates mutual respect and coordination (Lambert et al., 2021), which makes the job easier. Considering the health of law enforcement officers, whether physical or psychological, it is the responsibility of the law enforcement agencies to safeguard them in terms of health and care. Therefore, social support could be the primary solution to protect resilience and commitment among its workforces. The indirect effect of job satisfaction on the WLB particularly explains the functioning of positive spillover effects from one domain to the other (Staines, 1980). Therefore, working on the development of social support networks and the freedom to approach supervisors in the conduct of duty can motivate, direct, and support the policemen in achieving their role expectations. This could be achieved through initiatives including peer support programs, family support policies, WLB programs, and orientation programs explaining the benefits of the social culture to the police force. These results affirm the relevance of the Positive Spillover theory in the context of policing, where professional support systems translate into better management of personal responsibilities. Given the high-stress nature of policing, these findings emphasize the importance of systematically integrating social support into workplace practices and policies.

While this study provides evidence for the role of social support in enhancing job satisfaction and promoting WLB among police personnel, several directions remain for future inquiry. We limited to the police personnel in Southern Bengaluru, and future research may extend the geographic scope to include diverse regional, cultural, and organizational contexts across India and internationally to examine the generalizability of the findings. Comparative analyses between urban and rural police forces, as well as among specialized units such as traffic, cybercrime, and intelligence divisions, may offer deeper insight into contextual differences in the functioning of social support. In addition, social support was examined as a unified construct; future studies may investigate its subdimensions, including emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support, to determine their distinct effects on job satisfaction and WLB. Exploring source-specific support from supervisors, colleagues, family members, or friends may further clarify which relational networks most strongly influence professional and personal well-being. Longitudinal research designs may also be adopted to understand the evolving relationships among social support, job satisfaction, and WLB over time. Incorporating additional psychological variables such as stress, burnout, resilience, and coping strategies may enrich the theoretical framework and provide a more comprehensive understanding of well-being in policing.

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