

Examining the Linkage Between Supervisor Support and Quality of Work Life Through Work Family Conflict

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<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p><i>Supervisor support; Work family conflict; Quality of work life; Train drivers</i></p>	<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>Purpose: This study aimed to analyse the effect of supervisor support on quality of work life, the effect of work family conflict on quality of work life, and the effect of supervisor support on quality of work life (QWL) through work family conflict as intervening variable.</p> <p>Design/methodology/approach: Primary data were collected from 721 train drivers working in the South Central zone of Indian railways. The data collection tool was a questionnaire that is distributed online to the participants. Hierarchical regression analysis and mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 were employed to test the hypotheses.</p> <p>Main findings: Supervisor support had a significant positive effect on quality of work life, work family conflict had a significant negative effect on QWL, supervisor support showed a significant negative effect on work family conflict and work family conflict was found to be partially mediating the effect of supervisor support on QWL. Practical implications: The current research reported that a supportive supervisor can enhance employees' QWL directly, as well as indirectly by reducing conflicts at work and family interface. This finding suggests that organizations aiming to promote employees' QWL should invest in training programs that cultivate supportive behaviors among supervisors and also equip them with the resources needed to help employees manage the competing demands of work and family roles.</p> <p>Originality/value: By investigating the mediating role of work family conflict, this research uncovered the underlying mechanism through which supervisor support influences quality of work life, thereby contributing to the existing literature on QWL.</p>
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1. INTRODUCTION

An individual dedicates a considerable amount of time, energy, and effort to work, spending about one-third of their life at the workplace. Work and the work environment greatly influence a worker's physical and mental well-being, and even major life decisions such as whether or not to start a family. Therefore, it can be argued that the quality of a person's overall life is greatly affected by the quality of work life (QWL), as life at work plays an invaluable part in shaping one's total life. In fact, Md-Sidin et al. (2010) reported that quality of work life has a stronger positive relationship with overall quality of life than quality of non-work life does. Industrial psychologists and managers have realized that QWL plays a crucial role in the success of an organization by attracting, retaining and motivating talented workforce thereby gaining competitive advantage in the market.

Quality of work life is a complex construct that has undergone several definitional modifications since its origin in the 1960s. Between 1969 and 1982, QWL was conceptualized in various ways - viewed as a variable, an approach, a method, a



movement, and even everything. Danna and Griffin (1999) conceptualized QWL as a hierarchical framework comprising satisfaction with life, job, and work-specific factors (such as salary, colleagues, and supervisors) at the top, middle and bottom levels respectively. Sirgy et al. (2001) defined QWL as “an employee satisfaction with variety of needs through resources, activities, and outcomes stemming from participation in the work place” (p. 242). QWL is a construct that focuses on employees’ overall well-being and extends beyond the concept of job satisfaction. It encompasses the impact of workplace experiences not only on job satisfaction but also on non-work life domains such as family, leisure, social relationships, and financial well-being. Ultimately, QWL contributes to overall life satisfaction, personal happiness, and general well-being for an individual (Sirgy et al., 2001). It is assessed based on the extent to which one's personal needs and wants are satisfied by one's work life experience. The work life experience consists of exposure to the workplace environment and the performance of work activities (Rice et al., 1985). QWL is a multidimensional concept that covers nearly every area of employees’ organizational life. Several researchers proposed different dimensions to evaluate QWL, however it has been observed that most QWL studies preferred the eight dimensions suggested

by Walton, namely: adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space, and social relevance of work life (Walton, 1973).

The aim of QWL programs is to create a better work environment while simultaneously enhancing organizational performance. QWL initiatives are implemented with a focus on how work can improve people, rather than merely on how people can perform their jobs better. This philosophy differentiates QWL from other initiatives aimed at enhancing productivity, as it prioritizes outcomes for employees' welfare and well-being (Nadler & Lawler, 1983). A win-win situation can be attained by promoting employees’ quality of work life, as previous studies have confirmed that it benefits both people and businesses. For individuals, it increases job satisfaction (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Chan & Wyatt, 2007; Muskat & Reitsamer, 2020; Sirgy et al., 2001), improves job performance (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020), and enhances satisfaction with life (Alrawadieh et al., 2020; Mohamad, 2012; Rathi & Lee, 2017). Furthermore, it reduces burnout (Permarupan et al., 2020), positively affects general well-being (Ko, 2021) and contributes to better life quality (Md-Sidin et al., 2010). Similarly, for organizations, a good QWL increases organizational commitment (Ko, 2021; Koonmee et al., 2010; Rathi & Lee, 2017), negatively influences turnover intention (Mosadeghrad, 2013; Rathi & Lee, 2017), and reduces absenteeism, accidents, grievances (Havlovic, 1991). Additionally, a company’s QWL positively affects its organizational performance (Lau & May, 1998; Nayak & Sahoo, 2015), and also helps to motivate its employees (Ogbuabor & Okoronkwo, 2019; Putra et al., 2021).

Although there have been extensive studies on the antecedents and consequences of quality of work life, certain gaps are observed, particularly in the association between supervisor support and the quality of work life. It is well established that supervisor plays a major role in determining an individual’s work life experience, but the underlying mechanism through which the supervisor support influences QWL remains uninvestigated. This study aims to address the gap by empirically examining the connection between supervisor support and quality of work life, with work family conflict as a mediating variable. The current research contributes to the QWL literature by suggesting that supervisor support improves quality of work life both directly and indirectly, by reducing conflict at the work-family interface.

The study population comprises loco pilots (train drivers) from the South Central Zone of Indian Railways, the world’s fourth largest railways. The train driver’s job comes under the category of high strain jobs and they are responsible for passenger safety and train punctuality. Therefore, it is highly essential to examine the loco pilots’ QWL, as it can negatively affect quality of service provided by the employees (Mohamad, 2012). Indian Railways has extensive hierarchical structure, which makes support from the immediate supervisor highly crucial for train drivers. Moreover, the high job demands, irregular working hours, work overload that are inherent in the train drivers’ job generate a high level of work-family conflict (Ranjan & Prasad, 2013). The working conditions and work-home interface have been found to be major predictors of their QWL (Mazlouni, 2014). In view of this, it is imperative to investigate if supervisor support impacts QWL of loco pilots, with work family conflict as a mediator. The findings might help railway management devise policies that focus on train drivers’ QWL, with special attention to the supervisor’s role in helping them balance the conflicting demands of work and home.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Supervisor support and QWL:

Supervisors are regarded as agents of the organization and they are critical in organizing the work atmosphere and providing guidance and feedback to workers. Supervisor support refers to the workers’ perception about the extent to which supervisors recognize their contributions and are concerned about their welfare (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Support from supervisor can take various forms: providing job related information (informational), assisting in completing tasks (instrumental), praising and evaluating (appraisal), helping with personal problems and disappointments (emotional) (Amazon et al., 1999). Several empirical studies concluded that supervisor support has significant outcomes for the individuals such as reduced stress, burnout, turnover intention, emotional exhaustion (Chami-Malaeb, 2022; Grobelna, 2021; Yang et al., 2016).

Surprisingly, empirical studies on the association between supervisor support and QWL are limited. Lewis et al. (2001) claimed that external factors such as supervisor support, salary, benefits predict QWL strongly than intrinsic factors such as



role clarity, decision authority. Furthermore, the dissatisfaction with supervisor support lead to poor quality of work life among hospital workforce (Saraji & Dargahi, 2006). Flores et al. (2011) reported that elevated social support from supervisors contributes to greater quality of work life. In agreement with this finding, Rathi and Lee (2017) observed a significant positive relation between supervisor support and QWL in their research on retail sector employees. Based on our literature review, these appear to be the only empirical researches that have examined the association between supervisor support and QWL. However, supervisor support has been found to enrich employees' work life experiences by positively influencing their health and welfare at work, as well as their job, family, career, and life satisfaction (Dousin et al., 2021; Hämmig, 2017; Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu, 2022; Talukder, 2019). The above findings suggest:

H1: Supervisor support relates positively to quality of work life.

2.2 Work family conflict and QWL:

Work and family are the most significant life domains for an individual. Work-family conflict arises when the demands of work and family roles are mutually incompatible, making participation in one role more difficult due to participation in the other. This conflict can manifest in two directions: work interfering with family called work family conflict, and family interfering with work called family work conflict. Additionally, three major forms of conflict have been identified. First, time-based conflict occurs when time spent on activities of work (family) role leaves insufficient time to be spent on activities of family (work) role. Second, strain-based conflict arises when the strain caused by meeting the demands of work (family) role makes it difficult to meet the demands of family (work) role successfully. Third, specific behaviors required in work (family) role may be incompatible with behaviors desired in family (work) role resulting in behavior based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Work-family conflict has a wide variety of implications such as reduced job satisfaction and organizational commitment, high turnover intentions, burnout, etc (Bruck, 2002; Jia & Li, 2022; Ribeiro, 2023; Talukder, 2019). WFC also induces job-related stress, anxiety, depression (Lange & Kayser, 2022; Wang et al., 2023), subsequently affecting individuals' psychological well-being (Bian & Mohd Sukor, 2024; Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001; Obrenovic et al., 2020).

Many scholars in the field have suggested that a sensible integration between work life and non-work life is a significant contributor to QWL. Spillover theory has often been cited in work-family and quality of work life literature. It posits that the satisfaction or dissatisfaction in one life domain can be carried over into another domain, placed either horizontally or vertically within the domain hierarchy. Horizontal spillover refers to the transmission of experiences between adjacent life domains, such as work and family (Sirgy et al., 2001; Staines, 1980). Building on this theory, the negative experiences caused in the family domain due to work-family conflict may be transmitted into the work domain, leading to negative work life satisfaction that results in poor quality of work life. Several empirical studies have examined the connection between work-family conflict and quality of work life. According to the study conducted by Md-Sidin et al. (2010), work-family conflict reduces quality of work life, which in turn disrupts overall quality of life. In their research on veterinary doctors, Kang and Deepak (2014) identified that QWL depends not just on work place factors but also on non-work life, and it is negatively affected by work-family conflict. Similarly, work-family conflict is seen to have a negative effect on nurses' professional quality of life (Dilmaghani et al., 2022; Zandian et al., 2020). Consistent with these findings, another study on nurses conducted to assess the effect of shift types concluded that nurses working in rotating shifts are more likely to experience work-family conflict, which further results in poor QWL (Al-Hammouri & Rababah, 2023). The research findings of Hefazi Torghabeh et al. (2021) revealed that work-related accidents, combined with work-family conflict, can have a devastating effect on employees' QWL. As mentioned, work-family conflict is bi-directional; however, the current study focuses on one direction, from work to family referred to as work family conflict. Based on the previous empirical findings and Spillover theory, researchers formulated the second hypothesis as:

H2: Work family conflict relates negatively to quality of work life.

2.3 Supervisor support and work family conflict:

Resource drain theory provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the association between supervisor support and work family conflict. This theory suggests that an individual's mental and physical resources such as time, energy, attention, and effort are finite. Therefore, excessive use of these resources in one domain leads to their shortage in another, resulting in inter-domain conflict. Supervisor support reduces the amount of resources required to perform work role, thereby increasing their availability for meeting family obligations. This implies a negative relationship between supervisor support and work family conflict (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

Employees view supervisors as supportive when they pay attention to their needs and assist them in balancing their work and family obligations. Supervisor support, along with family-supportive policies, has positive implications for employees' perceived control over work and family matters, and these control beliefs were found to lower work-family conflict (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Similarly, other studies also identified that supervisor support reduces work family conflict (Pertwi & Satrya, 2022; Talukder, 2019; Yadav & Sharma, 2023). Kossek et al. (2011) concluded that general supervisor support is negatively related to work family conflict, however, work-family-specific supervisor support has a relatively stronger negative effect. These past studies, in line with resource drain theory, suggest that:



H3: Supervisor support relates negatively to work family conflict.

2.4 Work family conflict as a mediating variable:

Despite the availability of research examining the direct effect of supervisor support on quality of work life, its indirect effect through work family conflict has not yet been explored. Work family conflict was found to be mediating the effect of supervisor support on job satisfaction (Hwang & Ramadoss, 2017; Ngah et al., 2010). Previous studies indicate that supervisor support helps employees balance the conflicting demands of work and family spheres, thereby lowering work family conflict (Talukder, 2019) and work family conflict results in poor quality of work life (Dilmaghani et al., 2022; Md-Sidin et al., 2010). Based on this related literature, work family conflict is believed to help better understand the underlying mechanism through which supervisor support affects quality of work life. Therefore, researchers formulated the fourth hypothesis as:

H4: Work family conflict mediates the relationship between supervisor support and quality of work life.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design, Population and Sample:

This study employed a quantitative research approach. A cross-sectional study was conducted on the respondents and the empirical data was collected to test the proposed hypotheses. The study population for this research was running staff of South Central Railway zone in India that includes loco pilots (train drivers) and assistant loco pilots (assistant train drivers). A simple random sampling technique was used to select the study sample.

3.2 Data collection:

The research was conducted through an online survey. The data collection tool used for this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed online through Google forms. It was initially distributed to the supervisors of the train drivers, who then forwarded the link to the train drivers. Required permissions were taken from the concerned authorities explaining that the data will be utilized only for academic purposes. Same was informed to the participants and confidentiality of the collected data was assured. Only those employees who are willing to participate in the study were requested to fill the questionnaire. To ensure complete filling of the questionnaire, all options were set as mandatory questions. A total of 721 responses were received from all the divisions of South Central Railway zone.

3.3 Measures:

Measures for all the three variables were taken from previous studies. The questionnaire consists of four sections. Section one contains questions pertaining to the demographic characteristics such as age, gender, experience, marital status, etc. Sections two, three, four contain items related to supervisor support, quality of work life, work family conflict respectively. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree/very dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly agree/very satisfied) was used for all the constructs. For each respondent, the overall measure of each construct was calculated by averaging the items in its respective scale.

To measure supervisor support, a 5-item scale developed by Amason et al. (1999) was used. A sample item is “My supervisor is ready to help me whenever I need it in my job.” QWL was measured using 22 items taken from Timossi scale (2008) which is adapted from Walton’s (1973) QWL model. One of the items is “How satisfied are you with the working conditions (hygiene, noise, temperature, etc) at your work place?” For work family conflict, the scale developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996) was used. The 5 items which are related to work interference with family direction were taken from the scale. To eliminate the possibility that the results were influenced by demographic factors, the researchers adjusted for age, experience and marital status. Previous research has indicated that these variables can affect an employee’s perception of their work-related quality of life (Anyaoku, 2016; Lebni et al., 2021). Therefore, this study is treating age, experience and marital status as control variables to prevent any distortion of results due to their potential confounding effects.

3.4 Data Analysis:

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. The psychometric properties of the measuring instruments were evaluated to ensure their quality. For this purpose, principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed to obtain factor loadings. After determining the construct validity and reliability of the scales, the collected data was subjected to descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) to assess the data’s central tendency and dispersion; normality assessment (skewness, kurtosis) to ensure the normal distribution of the data. Subsequently, inferential statistical analyses (correlation, hierarchical regression analysis) were performed to test the proposed hypotheses. Furthermore, the mediation effect was verified through Model 4 of the PROCESS macro for SPSS, developed by Hayes (2013).

3.5 Common method bias test:

There is a potential for common method bias in social science studies, especially when all study variables were tested using self-reports. This may distort the inter- correlations between the variables. Therefore, preventive measures were taken in this study by carefully designing the questionnaire and assuring confidentiality of the data to minimize such bias. Additionally,



Harman's single-factor test was conducted to detect the presence of the bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The results of this test showed that the single factor extracted accounted for a total variance of 35.28% in the data. As it is less than 50%, it suggests that the data was not significantly affected by the common method bias.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Construct validity and reliability:

Principal component analysis with varimax rotation yielded factor loadings for all items. Items exhibiting factor loadings less than 0.5 and significant cross loadings were removed to improve the validity of the measurement scales. Subsequently, 8 items from QWL scale and 1 item from work family conflict scale were removed. The AVE values for all three study variables were greater than the threshold 0.5, indicating adequate convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Fornell and Larcker criterion was used in this study to assess discriminant validity. According to this criterion, the square root of AVE of a construct should be greater than its correlation coefficient with any other construct in the model. Table 4 presents the square root of AVE on the diagonals. The values in table 4 confirm that all the constructs in this study have good discriminant validity. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for all the variables were greater than the threshold value 0.7, thereby suggesting that the measurement scales have good reliability (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). These values are presented in table 1.

Table 1: AVE, Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha calculation results

Variable	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
SS	0.621	0.889	0.890
WFC	0.628	0.885	0.870
QWL	0.501	0.949	0.929

Notes: AVE - Average variance extracted, SS - Supervisor Support, WFC - Work Family Conflict, QWL - Quality of Work Life

4.2 Descriptive, normality analyses and correlations:

Table 2 provides the demographic profile of the sample. In India, female train drivers are very few compared to male train drivers; hence, the study sample also constitutes a very small percentage of female drivers which is 2.2%. Most participants (48%) are in the age group 30-40 years, followed by 22.6% belonging to 40-50 years age group. Majority of the respondents (70.7%) were married. Around 43.7% have an experience of 5-15 years and 25.7% have less than 5 years. Skewness and Kurtosis values for all variables were within acceptable range suggesting the data is normally distributed and these values are presented in table 3 along with means and standard deviations.

Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic variable	N (%)	
Age (years)	20-30	135 (18.7%)
	30-40	346 (48%)
	40-50	163 (22.6%)
	Above 50	77 (10.7%)
Gender	Male	705 (97.8%)
	Female	16 (2.2%)
Experience (years)	less than 5	185 (25.7%)
	5-15	315 (43.7%)
	15-25	167 (23.2%)



	Above 25	54 (7.5%)
Marital status	Married	510 (70.7%)
	Unmarried	211 (29.3%)

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
SS	3.48	0.853	-0.906	0.823
WFC	3.24	0.899	-0.688	-0.159
QWL	3.69	0.836	-0.439	-1.014

Notes: SD - Standard Deviation, SS - Supervisor Support, WFC - Work Family

Conflict, QWL - Quality of Work Life

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the correlations among the study variables including demographic variables as shown in table 4. The results revealed that supervisor support was significantly and negatively correlated with work family conflict ($r = -0.388, p < 0.01$), and positively with quality of work life ($r = 0.581, p < 0.01$). Conversely, work family conflict showed a significant negative correlation with quality of work life ($r = -0.663, p < 0.01$). Additionally, there is a significant correlation between the demographic variables age, experience and marital status with all the three study variables, as in age and supervisor support ($r = 0.200, p$

< 0.01), work family conflict ($r = -0.230, p < 0.01$), quality of work life ($r = 0.306, p < 0.01$); experience and supervisor support ($r = 0.171, p < 0.01$), work family conflict ($r = -0.248, p < 0.01$), quality of work life ($r = 0.302, p < 0.01$); marital status and supervisor support ($r = -0.122, p < 0.01$), work family conflict ($r = 0.084, p < 0.05$), quality of work life ($r = -0.170, p < 0.01$).

Table 4: Correlation matrix and discriminant validity

S. NO	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Age	1					
2	Experience	0.719**	1				
3	Marital status	-0.378**	-0.316**	1			
4	SS	0.200**	0.171**	-0.122**	0.787		
5	WFC	-0.230**	-0.248**	0.084*	-0.388**	0.793	
6	QWL	0.306**	0.302**	-0.170**	0.581**	-0.663**	0.700

Notes: Values in bold are square root of AVE. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

4.3 Hierarchical regression analysis:

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed to identify the unique contribution of the key predictors to the dependent variable after accounting for the control variables. In the first step, the demographic variables age, experience and marital status were added as control variables; followed by the main independent variable supervisor support in step two and mediator variable work family conflict in step three. Supervisor support had a significant positive impact on quality of work life, explaining 27.8% of the variance after excluding the effect of control variables. Entering the mediating variable in the third step explained another 19.6% of the variance in quality of work life. The regression coefficient for supervisor support decreased from 0.538 to 0.364 after adding work family conflict, which is still significant suggesting that it partially mediates the impact of supervisor support on quality of work life. Overall explanatory power of model 3 is strong with R^2 at 0.579. The hierarchical regression analysis results are presented in table 5.



Table 5: Hierarchical regression analysis results

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3				
	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p		
Age	0.156	2.555		0.011	0.072		1.407	0.160	0.056	1.328	0.185
Experience	0.156	2.615		0.009	0.141		2.844	0.005	0.058	1.411	0.159
Marital	-0.062	-1.618		0.106	-0.033		-1.029	0.304	-0.045	-1.704	0.089
SS					0.538		17.932	< 0.001	0.364	13.680	< 0.001
WFC									-0.490	-18.229	< 0.001
F		28.173					110.964			196.300	
(P -value)		(< 0.001)					(< 0.001)			(< 0.001)	
R^2	0.105	0.383	0.579								

Notes: SS - Supervisor Support, WFC - Work Family Conflict

4.4 Mediation analysis:

The mediation effect was further verified through Model 4 of the PROCESS macro. Table 6 shows the total, direct and indirect effects of the mediation analysis. Path c' which represents the effect of supervisor support on quality of work life, while controlling for work family conflict, is significant and positive (0.3838, $p < 0.001$) as hypothesized in H1; thus, H1 is accepted. Conversely, work family conflict showed a significant negative influence on quality of work life represented by path b (-0.5275, p

< 0.001), supporting H2. Additionally, supervisor support significantly and negatively affected work family conflict as demonstrated by path a (-0.3486, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. The bootstrapped 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of supervisor support on quality of work life through work family conflict did not include zero ($LLCI = 0.1520$, $ULCI = 0.2712$). Additionally, both the total and direct effects were significant, indicating that work family conflict acts as a partial mediator, supporting H4.

Table 6: Mediation analysis results

Path	Effect	P -value	$LLCI, ULCI$
c	0.5677	< 0.001	(0.5055, 0.6298)
c'	0.3838	< 0.001	(0.3287, 0.4388)
a	-0.3486	< 0.001	(-0.4150, -0.2822)
b	-0.5275	< 0.001	(-0.5844, -0.4707)
$a*b$	0.1839	-	(0.1520, 0.2172)

5. DISCUSSION

The main aim of the present study is to examine the association between supervisor support and QWL. To further understand the underlying mechanism through which supervisor support influences quality of work life, this study additionally investigated work family conflict as a mediating variable. The results provide empirical evidence supporting the research framework, which indicates that supervisor support reduces work family conflict, which in turn enhances quality of work life. This study, therefore, contributes to our knowledge about the mechanism through which supervisor support is linked to QWL.



Hypothesis 1, which proposes that supervisor support relates positively to quality of work life, is validated by the data collected for this study. The results of this research revealed that supervisor support significantly and positively impacts loco pilots' quality of work life. While supervisors are well known to influence employees' overall experience at work, there are only few studies that have investigated the relationship between supervisor support and quality of work life, all of which conclude that supervisor support is a strong predictor of QWL. This study is also in consistent with those prior empirical findings which state that a supportive supervisor enhances employees' work-related quality of life (Flores et al., 2011; Rathi & Lee, 2017; Saraji & Dargahi, 2006). Supervisors are the immediate leaders who significantly influence the experiences of employees at work place through their support and role modelling, often on a daily basis. Moreover, employees often view their immediate supervisor as an agent of the organization, therefore, support from the supervisor is perceived as a reflection of broader organizational support. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that supervisor can buffer the negative effects of work stressors by extending support in various forms such as providing job-related information, tangible assistance, constructive feedback, praise, and also expressing feelings of concern, trust and empathy; which consequently leads to good QWL.

Hypothesis 2, which proposes that work family conflict is negatively related to quality of work life, is validated. In support of this hypothesis, the results of the study show that higher the work family conflict, lower the quality of work life. This aligns with horizontal spillover theory, which posits that satisfaction or dissatisfaction in one domain spills over into a neighbouring domain. Based on this theory, dissatisfaction in the family domain, generated by work family conflict can spill over into the work domain, leading to dissatisfaction with work life that ultimately reduces QWL. This study confirms previous research that reported a negative association between work family conflict and quality of work life (Al-Hammouri & Rababah, 2023; Dilmaghani et al., 2022; Hefazi Torghabeh et al., 2021; Kang & Deepak, 2014; Md-Sidin et al., 2010; Zandian et al., 2020). The findings of the present study reinforces that quality of work life depends not only on work place factors but also on non work factors such as family satisfaction, personal happiness and general well-being. Irrespective of the source of work family conflict, the pressure from the incompatible work and family roles reduces the employees' well-being at work place, affecting their QWL (Md-Sidin et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the researchers formulated the third hypothesis H3 as supervisor support negatively affects work family conflict based on resource drain theory and previous studies. The results supported hypothesis 3, which highlights the significance of supportive supervisor in reducing the conflicting demands of work and home domains. This underscores the central idea of resource drain theory, which states that reduced utilization of mental and physical resources at work due to a supportive supervisor can prevent their shortage at family domain, thereby reducing inter domain conflict. The negative effect of supervisor support on work family conflict is significant and it agrees with the past studies (Pertiwi & Satrya, 2022; Talukder, 2019; Yadav & Sharma, 2023). Juggling professional and familial roles is one of the greatest challenges for employees, especially when job demands are high, working hours are irregular and workload is heavy. In such contexts, supervisors serve as a key resource by providing emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance to the employees and help them harmonize the relationship between home and work.

Another significant finding of this research is that work family conflict mediates the relationship between supervisor support and QWL, which suggests that hypothesis 4 is confirmed. Since the results of mediation analysis indicate that the total effect, direct effect and indirect effect are all significant, it implies that work family conflict only partially mediates the impact of supervisor support on QWL. This finding suggests that a supportive supervisor enhances employees' work-related quality of life both directly and indirectly by reducing the conflicting obligations of work and family spheres of life. Of the total effect (0.56) of supervisor support on QWL, the results show that the direct effect (0.38) accounts for 68%, while indirect effect through work family conflict (0.18) accounts for 32%. Supervisors who are responsive to employees' emotional needs create a conducive work environment by reducing workplace stress, promoting interpersonal relationships, encouraging the use of family-friendly policies, allowing flexible work schedules and increasing workers' control over their work (Hammer et al., 2009; Yadav & Sharma, 2023). These supportive practices reduce employees' work family conflict, which in turn promotes their QWL.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The theoretical contribution of the study is that it expands our knowledge about the intricate connection between supervisor support and quality of work life. By investigating work family conflict as mediating variable, the current study addresses the gap with regard to the underlying mechanism through which supervisor support influences QWL. The findings emphasize that the impact of a supportive supervisor on an employee's QWL is not merely direct, but also occurs indirectly by reducing conflict at work and home interface. Moreover, the research reported an inverse relationship between supervisor support and work family conflict. This highlights the core concept of resource drain theory that an individual can spend fewer resources (time, energy, attention, effort) at the work place in the presence of support from supervisor, thereby ensuring sufficient availability of these resources for family role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Furthermore, the current study found a negative association between work family conflict and quality of work life. This underscores horizontal spillover theory in that the negative experiences caused by work family conflict in the family domain can transfer into the adjacent work domain, thereby reducing quality of work life (Sirgy et al., 2001). Additionally, the results extend previous literature that identified the



mediating role of work family conflict between supervisor support and job satisfaction (Hwang & Ramadoss, 2017; Ngah et al., 2010), by demonstrating the same relationship in the context of QWL, which is a broader construct than job satisfaction.

The practical implication of the study is that it stresses the importance of supportive supervision in enhancing employees' QWL by revealing that the effect is both direct, and indirect through the reduction of conflict between work and family roles. Thus, it may be advised that HR practices aimed at promoting employees' QWL should focus on cultivating supportive behaviors among supervisors, especially family-supportive behaviors. This can be achieved through training and development programs to supervisors specifically directed at imparting empathy, active listening and genuine concern for employees' overall well-being. Supervisors should be able to convey to their subordinates that they are approachable and willing to support them with both work-related and personal challenges. Furthermore, supervisors should serve as role models in utilizing family-friendly policies, in doing so, they encourage employees to use them without hesitation. Organizations should equip supervisors with the necessary resources to enable them to provide all forms of support to employees such as emotional, informational, appraisal and instrumental. For organizations aiming to improve employees' QWL, the study findings help them recognize the significance of selecting and developing supervisors who can provide support to employees in both job-related and work-family matters.

7. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The major limitation to this study is its cross-sectional nature. The research findings are limited to a single zone in Indian railways. In addition, the female representation in the sample is extremely low. Future research should consider conducting the study across different industries, cultural contexts, organizational hierarchies and diverse demographic groups to make the results more widely applicable. This could help achieve a better understanding of the interrelations among the study variables in a variety of settings. Furthermore, future studies could explore potential moderators that may influence the intensity and direction of the associations. Future research could also examine the impact of other sources of social support such as co-worker support, organizational support and family support, as well as the role of family work conflict. Likewise, comparative studies between the impact of general supervisor support and family-specific supervisor support on QWL could help managers design training programs for supervisors. Addressing these constraints in future studies could contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships among supervisor support, work family conflict and quality of work life.

8. CONCLUSION

The current research was undertaken to address gaps in the existing literature on quality of work life, particularly the relationship between supervisor support and QWL. Researchers assessed the impact of a supportive supervisor on employees' work-related quality of life and tested the mediating role of work family conflict. The study was conducted on loco pilots from the South Central Zone of Indian Railways, the world's fourth largest railway system. The study results concluded that supervisor support positively influences employees' quality of work life directly, as well as indirectly by reducing work family conflict. Thus, these findings contribute to the body of knowledge on QWL as well as offer a significant new perspective for decision-makers in formulating strategies to enhance employees' quality of work life.

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