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A Moderated-Mediation Model of Perceived Supervisory Support, Developmental Experiences, and Employee Attitudes in Indian Organizations

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the interaction between perceived support from the supervisor, their developmental experiences, trust in the organizational, organizational identification, and employee deviance for Indian manufacturing and service firms. According to different theoretical perspectives, the study postulates trust as a salient mediator between supportive supervision and developmental experiences and favorable employee identification and reduced deviance. Survey data from 801 managerial staff from Indian manufacturing and service companies substantiate the model proposed, highlighting the role of developmental experiences and supervisor support in impacting trust, in turn developing identification and restraining deviance. Positioning these constructs within the changing Indian industry context, the study not only contributes to organizational behavior research but also finds practical application for managers seeking to nurture trust, commitment, and ethical conduct to ensure competitiveness and employee thriving.

Keywords: Perceived supervisor support, Developmental experience, Organizational trust, Organizational identification, Employee deviance, Structural equation modeling.

INTRODUCTION:

Workplace conflict is a ubiquitous aspect of organizational life, and its impact varies from constructive argumentation and innovation to destructive behaviors that corrode trust and performance. Conflict management, thus, has been a priority issue among organizations that aim to reconcile efficiency with employees' well-being. Developed economies have produced much evidence on the antecedents and processes of conflict management, but there is limited knowledge derived from emerging economies, despite having different cultures and structures (Vanitha et al., 2021).

India's manufacturing and services sectors present a fascinating case in which to examine these dynamics. Both sectors are undergoing radical restructuring caused by globalization, digital changes, and competition, and all contribute to the potential for interpersonal and organizational conflict (Aji & Reyzak, 2021). The manufacturing workplace, traditionally hierarchical and process-oriented, usually has conflicts linked with authority, labor relations, and accommodation to technological developments. The services sector, particularly information technology (IT), financial services, and business process outsourcing, is highly people-centered, whereby conflict typically emerges in client relationships and in work groups (Paros, 2021). In both contexts, conflict management is as much a matter of adjudication as facilitating trust, reducing deviance, and aligning workers with organizational goals (Luthuli et al., 2019).

Prior research on Indian organizational conflict has generally centered on surface-level outputs such as productivity or turnover, and overlooked the deeper psychological mechanisms by which conflict either grows or recedes (Jain et al., 2021). Key constructs such as perceived supervisory support (PSS), developmental experiences (DEs), organizational trust (OT), organizational identification (OI), and employee deviance (ED) are critical in ascertaining how conflicts are managed on both the relational and the transactional level. These, though, have been hardly examined in a collective sense in the Indian context.

Particularly, there are gaps in understanding how positive mechanisms, such as supportive supervision, developmental opportunities, and trust, mitigate the escalation of conflict into deviant behaviors. Conversely, there has been less emphasis on how the mechanisms transform conflict into constructive ends, such as identification and commitment. Further, there are hardly any cross-sectoral comparisons, despite apparent differences in how conflict functions in the manufacturing sector, in which structures are established and authority-based, and in the services sector, in which work is flexible and relationship-based (Davidescu et al., 2020).

This research fills these gaps by placing PSS, DEs, and OT as conflict management processes within Indian organizations. It examines how PSS and DEs work together to build OT, how trust solidifies OI, and how it insulates against ED that so often results from unchecked conflict. Through a moderated-mediation

model and testing it within both manufacturing and services, the research hopes to contribute a new wave in conflict management research while providing practical application for organizations looking to manage conflict within culturally sensitive and fast-changing settings.

Following on from the above, the research objectives are threefold. First, the study investigates how supervisory support and developmental experiences collectively influence trust as a foundation for conflict resolution. Next, it examines how OT mediates the relationship between antecedents, PSS, and DEs, and their outcomes, OI and ED, which are strongly associated with conflict escalation and resolution, respectively. Finally, the study, set in Indian organizations, attempts to provide culturally sensitive managerial pointers, thus contributing to the existing literature on conflict management.

Theoretical background
The leader-member exchange (LMX) theory centers on the dyadic relations among leaders and subordinates (Morganson et al., 2017). The highest-quality exchanges, which are tempered by support and mutual reciprocity, increase PSS, in turn impacting job satisfaction and organizational citizen behaviors (Bagger & Li, 2014). In the Indian service sector, where supervisor-subordinate interactions directly influence client-facing behaviors, PSS plays a crucial role in developing employee well-being and deterring deviant behaviors. In the manufacturing sector, support-oriented supervisors are no less critical, especially in settings where unions are present and mistrust can arise.

In this connection, the dynamic capability lens explains how a company is capable of assimilating, creating, and transforming resources in reaction to competency in dynamic environments (Vrontis et al., 2022). DEs, including training, coaching, and job rotations, form the micro-foundations of the above capabilities (Ro et al., 2025). Among Indian manufacturing companies undergoing technological changes, investments in such DEs enhance flexibility, foster employee identification, and reduce deviance dispositions (Dubey et al., 2019).

In continuation, the social identity theory details that workers gain part of their self-concept by membership in their group and organization (Rockstuhl et al., 2020). OT enshrines the identity, and, as a result, employees are capable of conforming to behaviors shared with collective goals (Sousa et al., 2015). As in India in specific and in collectivist cultures in general, workers are oriented towards in-group harmony, and trust bears a mediating role essential in linking perceptual antecedents and their attitudinal consequences like loyalty, identification, and deviance reduction (Akram et al., 2018).

Last but not least, job embeddedness theory provides insight into employees' likelihood of engaging in identifying or deviant behaviors (Scannel & Gifford, 2010). Employees with a strong fit to the organizational culture, meaningful connections with colleagues, and high perceived costs of leaving are less inclined toward misconduct (Ragins et al., 2014). Their social and professional ties raise the risks associated with deviance (Gonzalez et al., 2018). Conversely, employees with weak embeddedness face fewer constraints and are more likely to disengage, manifest absenteeism, withdrawal, or counterproductive acts (Swart & Kinnie, 2010). Thus, job embeddedness acts as a buffer that steers employees toward positive participation and reduces the likelihood of destructive outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND FORMATION OF HYPOTHESES
PSS, DES, AND OT
PSS, DEs, and OT are connected constructs that have been studied thoroughly in the organizational behavior and human resource development literature (Guohao et al., 2021). Whilst PSS is the extent to which employees perceive that their supervisors value and are concerned with their well-being (Chan, 2017), DEs involve systematic opportunities for learning, such as mentoring, education, and access to complex work, that foster employee capability and career development (Chandel & Sharma, 2022). OT, on the other hand, captures employees' beliefs that their organization and its voices operate with fairness, integrity, and dependability (Jayaraman et al., 2025). Earlier studies have found PSS to be an essential correlate of employees' attitudes and behaviors (De Mattos et al., 2025) because supervisors are the direct voices of the organization, and employees make sense of organizational intent and fairness through such supervisory relationships. Similarly, other studies have established that prosocial kinds of supervisory behaviors increase PSS, in turn positively impacting subordinate work performance and work engagement (Yang et al., 2009).

In contrast, the absence of PSS leads to deviant workplace behaviors, underscoring the multifaceted nature of support (Tuzun et al., 2017). Deprived employees who lack such reassuring relationships with their supervisor are more prone to disengage and, in fact, exhibit counterproductive behaviors towards their colleagues or the organization (Ghosh, 2015). Such situations place a premium on PSS as a protectant against negative behavioral consequences. Furthermore, evidence shows that supervisors profoundly influence the conflict management climate within organizations. McCarthy and Pearce (2025), for example, reveal that supervisors are central actors in the resolution forums of workplace conflicts, and their conflict management approaches make a difference in whether or not conflicts are resolved constructively or they devolve into long-term deviance.

DEs in organizations are fundamental drivers in development, learning, and eventually employee retention (Goh, 2012). These experiences would encompass formally structured training programs, mentoring, coaching, and job rotations, and less systematically codified peer-to-peer learning experiences (Chai, 2018). Wickramasinghe (2020) identifies that learning interventions are a significant

talent development contributor by aligning individual development needs with organizational aspirations.

Developmental activities, for employees with varying backgrounds and abilities, are career-enhancing opportunities that simultaneously contribute to workplace wellness (Shakespeare et al., 2017). Training and development initiatives in Van Niekerk et al.'s (2022) study illustrate how they establish overall workplace wellness in social, intellectual, and occupational areas among employees with disabilities, and thus support organizational trustworthy intentions.

In the Indian scenario, where skill obsolescence and rapid worker turnover are significant issues, developmental exposures not only train workers in the ever-changing technological settings but also reinforce the impression that the organization is committed to their long-term employability (Mellor & Trust, 2013). Such developmental signals, alongside PSS, beget a feeling of fairness and reciprocity and lay the foundation for OT (Ocampo et al., 2018).

In this regard, OT provides the psychological foundation of effective workplace relationships. Trust is the willingness of employees to be vulnerable to the actions of their supervisors and organizations in the hope of fair and honest dealings (Banerjee & Malik, 2025). Trust arises from recurrent PSS, frank communication, and congruent organizational practices and espoused organizational values.

The mediating role of trust between PSS and employee outcome has been amply established (Aaltonen & Turkulainen, 2018). Thus, Allen et al. (2018) validate that trust mediates the interrelationships among supervisory justice, perceived support, and citizenship behavior. Correspondingly, work on organizational socialization shows that socialization efforts aimed at assimilating newcomers into work culture build OT, thus securing commitment (Choi, 2021). Again, trust is equally strongly connected with generational dynamics, as seen among millennials, whose OT strongly predicts commitment, but the interrelationship is conditioned by turnover intent (Cui et al., 2018). This conditionality implies that in settings such as India's IT-enabled services, where millennials are the overwhelming force, establishing trust remains a prerequisite but potentially vulnerable to erstwhile high propensities for turnover (Yamini et al., 2025).

The above discussion reveals that, collectively, PSS and DEs function as antecedents to OT. In a recent study (Hoogenboom et al., 2024), a configurational perspective has been adopted to reveal that leadership support, development opportunities, and trust combinations function collectively to reduce destructive conflict paths, highlighting the interdependence among the three. Supervisors providing career coaching, constructive criticism, and access to development opportunities are considered champions of employee development (Salzsieder & Cornell, 2013). Such perception fosters trust in both supervisor and organization (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). As per the social exchange theory (SET) terminology, practical supervisory actions and developmental interventions are considered investments in workers, which they reciprocate in the form of trust and commitment (Laird et al., 2015). However, in the absence of development opportunities, workers feel neglected, which undermines trust and dilutes commitment (Ertas, 2015).

There is cross-cultural evidence, too, that supportive and benevolent supervision strongly applies in collectivist cultures, in which relational interactions are strongly prized (Bingwen & Xiaoli, 2019). Trust, in effect, in such environments, becomes both a subjective perception and a collective cultural norm within organizations themselves (Burns, 2018).

From the above discussion, the following hypotheses are put forward.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Employees' perceived supervisory support is associated with positive levels of organizational trust among them.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Employees' developmental experiences are positively linked with employees' levels of trust in the organization.

DEs as a moderator

The moderating role of DEs can be approximated by the fact that if developmental interventions are experienced by employees as mutual investments by the organization and if the supervisors allow access to development, then supervisory support is realized as a credible and reciprocation-worthy trust by workers (Mistry et al., 2022). DEs, therefore, strengthen employees' fit and align it with the organization, and thus, it reinforces the effect of PSS on OT (Qian et al., 2020).

As an immediate corollary to the above argument, the following hypothesis emerges.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Employee development experiences buffer their perceived supervisory support in a way that builds their organizational trust levels.

OT, OI, and ED

OT, OI, and ED are a trilogy of interrelated constructs that impact employee conduct and organizational strength profoundly (Afshin et al., 2012). Whereas OT proposes employees' predisposition to be vulnerable to action by the organization in hopes of fairness, capability, and dependability, OI takes into account employees' sense of oneness within the organization, connecting their self-definition with affiliation within the organization (Bachmann & Inkpen, 2011). In contrast, ED indicates voluntary actions transgressing organizational norms and a threat to the organization's well-being (Lee & Lim, 2018).

Following the discussion above, OT can be theorized as the foundation of organizational relations, arising out of clear supervision, fair treatment, and consistent

communication (Byun & Ko, 2013). Transparency in organizations alleviates employee stress, increasing employee well-being and decreasing deviant behaviors, leading to employees' OT and shaping their resilience (Shukla & Vanka, 2025). In a similar vein, Ko et al. (2020) uncovered that OT in the healthcare domain increases responsiveness and patient need orientation, highlighting directly how it facilitates prosocial behaviors. Conversely, as noted by Alaaraj et al. (2018), trust decreases transaction costs and enhances relational governance, highlighting its systemic function in maintaining cooperation, thus illustrating that low OT increases stress, absenteeism, and counterproductive behaviors. These results point to OT as a predictor as well as a needed buffer against ED.

To proceed, OI is employees' emotional attachment to their organization, driving employees to internalize the goals of the organization as part of themselves (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2010). Park (2019) showed that OI mediates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, implying that employees with greater identification are less likely to leave despite stress. Qian and Jian (2020) broadened this perspective, revealing that OI mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational cynicism, insulating against detrimental attitudes, preventing deviance, and promoting resilience. OI, however, is differential in its impact, as demonstrated by Qiuyun et al. (2020), who showed that OI diminishes deviance probability in employees with a greater sense of power, thereby unveiling its conditional function.

ED covers behaviors like absenteeism, theft, sabotage, and interpersonal aggression (Tabassi et al., 2025). Samnami et al. (2013) established that deviance augmentation is strongly predicted by negative affect, while positive affect decreases interpersonal deviance. Kong and Yuan (2018) supplemented that perceived deviance tolerance by leaders leads to moral disengagement, leading to deviant work behavior. These findings indicate that deviance does not only originate from individual affectivity but also from organizational climates. Sawitri et al. (2018) suggested that deviance is diminished by supportive leadership through promoting OT, OI, and ethical organizational climates.

From the foregoing, it is manifest that OT reinforces OI by communicating organizational integrity. Workers whose sense is informed by fair treatment and transparent communication are more likely to feel a sense of identification with their organizations. In addition, high OT diminishes the chances that empowered workers exploit their sense of agency on deviance. Also, OT diminishes moral disengagement, mitigating the impact of perceived deviance tolerance on misconduct. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed.

All the study hypotheses are agglomerated and presented as a latent variable model (LVM) in Figure 1 below, which is carried forward for further empirical verification.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Employee levels of organizational identification are positively associated with their organizational trust.

Hypothesis 5 (H5). Employee deviance is negatively associated with organizational trust.

OT as a mediator
OT, a social construct demonstrating workers' desire to be vulnerable towards organizational actors in hopes of fair treatment, competency, and altruism, is increasingly viewed as a primary transmission instrument through which leadership behaviour, attempts at empowerment, human resource management (HRM) approaches, and ethical climates are transmitted into workers' attitudes and behaviour (Erturk & Albayrak, 2020).

Prior research (Kim, 2019) established that OT and OI sequentially mediate job insecurity and organizational citizenship behaviors. Workers who feel insecure are more likely to exhibit citizenship behavior if trust and identification are robust, highlighting OT's mediating role in stress-filled settings. Wang et al. (2021), for instance, in the building business, demonstrated that trust can endure conflicts, depending on how disputes are resolved. It was established that proactive conflict approaches retain trust. Avoidance destroys it, thereby providing evidence comparable with the results in the study, which places OT as a potential mediator among supervisory support, developmental opportunities, and employee end-states.

Similarly, Sixpence et al. (2021) argue that HRM practices need to anchor employee performance with retention and skill development. The study revealed that HRM practices influence performance through complex processes, and OT mediates this process by ensuring that HR policies are perceived as fair, consistent, and beneficial rather than exploitative. Earlier work (Okoth & Flora, 2019) revealed that OT mediates intrinsic motivation and discretionary effort. Employees in low-trust environments work less hard above contractual levels, driven by extrinsic incentives. These findings support the position that OT is a promising mediator among employee-related attitudinal and behavioral constructs.

The following hypothesis is thus proposed based on the above argument.

Hypothesis 6 (H6). Organizational trust among employees mediates the relationships between the primary antecedents, namely their perceptions of supervisory support, their development experiences, and the interactions among such perceptions and experiences, and the final consequences, namely organizational identification and employee deviance.

Figure I. The conceptual latent variable model and the hypothesized links
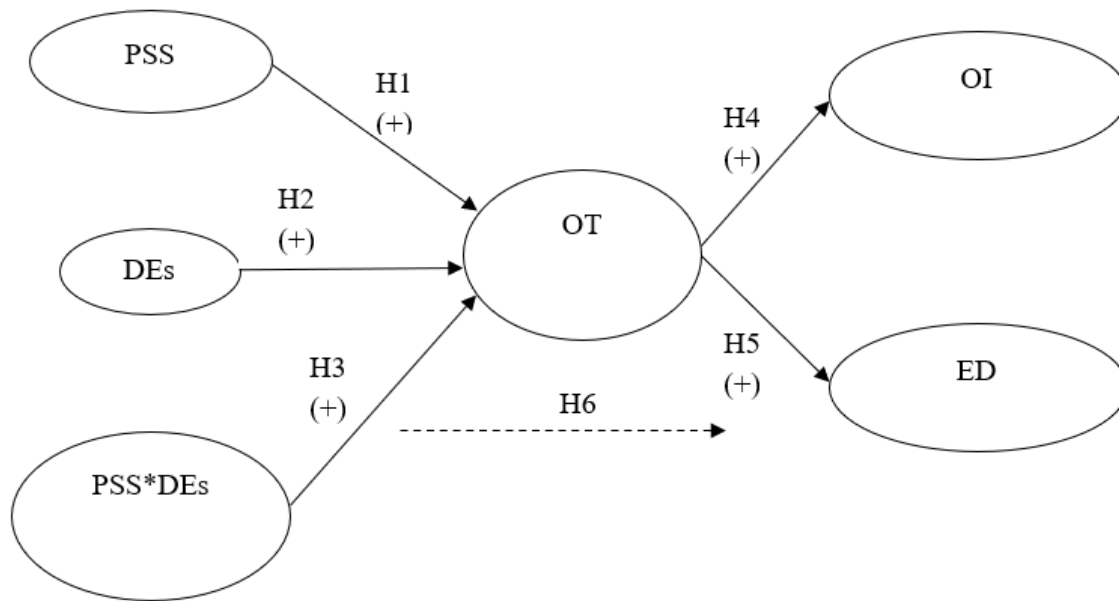
METHOD

Sample and procedures

Data for this study were collected through a random survey conducted in multiple organizations spread across India. With exact data not available for the workforce population, the sample size was approximated using the method when the population is infinite (Liu, 2014). Initially, about 39 organizations were randomly selected from the National Business Directory of India. 11 of these 39 organizations agreed to allow their employees to participate in the survey, of which seven were from the manufacturing sector and the rest belonged to the services sector. A list of voluntary participants, all of whom were executives belonging to the managerial cadre, from each organization was drawn up. Based on this list, 1400 questionnaires were distributed. A total of 801 filled and usable questionnaires were collected, which were then considered for data analysis procedures. Thus, the response rate for this study was about 57 percent.

The average age of the respondents was 37.5 years, and their average work experience was around 11.44 years. Of the 801 respondents, 552 were males and the remaining 249 were females. Further, 468 respondents belonged to organizations from the manufacturing sector, and 333 were from the services sector organizations. Finally, 401 respondents were from the junior, 299 from the middle, and 101 from the senior levels of management.

Measures

All the study variables were measured on a five-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

PSS. Three items from the Perceived Organizational Support scale developed and reported by Eisenberger et al. (1986) and adapted as per the suggestions of Eisenberger et al. (2002) were used to measure PSS. An example item from the inventory used for this study was, 'My supervisor is willing to extend her/himself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability'. The reliability of this measure, as per its Cronbach's alpha value, was .78.

DEs. The four-item scale reported by Wayne et al. (1997) was used to measure DEs. An example item of this scale was 'In the positions that I have held in my organization, I have often been assigned projects that have enabled me to develop and strengthen new skills'. The internal consistency reliability value of this scale was .79.

OT. OT was measured using seven items developed and reported by Robinson (1996). An example item of this measure was 'I believe my employer has high integrity'. Two items from the scale had to be reverse-scored, an example of which was 'I am not sure if I fully trust my employer'. The reliability index of this measure, as indicated by its Cronbach's alpha value, was .81.

OI. To measure OI, six items reported by Mael and Ashforth (1992) were used. An illustrative item of this scale would be 'My organization's successes are my successes'. The Cronbach's alpha value for this measure was .76.

ED. ED was measured by adapting the seven-item scale developed by Bennet and Robinson (2000). A sample item was 'There have been instances when employees of this organization have made fun of others at work'. The internal consistency reliability value of this measure was .89.

Control variables. For all subsequent analyses, respondents' age, work experience, gender (1 = male, 2 = female), Level of Management or LoM (1 = junior, 2 = middle, and 3 = senior), and the sector to which their organization belonged (1 = manufacturing, 2 = services) were treated as control variables. The control variables were chosen as per earlier research similar to the present one (Xu et al., 2019).

RESULTS
Common method bias
For this study, a common latent variable model (CLVM) associated with the manifest variables of the five study constructs was tested against the conceptual LVM proposed earlier (see Figure I) to check for differences in model fit. The comparative-fit-index (CFI) and the incremental-fit-index (IFI) of the proposed model were .90 and .90, respectively, whereas the same indices were .63 and .63, respectively, for the CLVM. As such, the CLVM was not accepted, and this eliminated the risk of CMB in the proposed LVM.

Evaluation of the measurement model
The measurement model was tested by scrutinizing its reliability and validity as the main criteria of assessment (Ramayah et al., 2011). As per Table I, the composite reliability values ranged from .71 to .90, establishing construct reliability, while the average variance extracted (AVE) values varied between .59 and .75, demonstrating convergent validity. Furthermore, the squares of the intercorrelations between the study variables were less than the AVE values, which provided evidence of discriminant validity (Koufteros, 1999). Additionally, the heterotrait-monotrait method was also examined, and as shown in Table I, these values spread from .02 to .15, thus providing further substantiation of discriminant validity.

Table I. Evaluation of the measurement model

Variables	C.R.	1	2	3	4	5
1. PSS	.76	.64				
2. DEs	.81	.30 (.15)	.68			
3. OT	.83	.11 (.04)	.05 (.02)	.71		
4. OI	.71	.18 (.02)	.13 (.03)	.10 (.09)	.59	
5. ED	.90	.06 (.05)	.01 (.08)	.08 (.05)	.03 (.03)	.75

Note. n = 801; C.R. is 'Composite reliability'; The diagonal values of the matrix represent the average variance extracted while the off-diagonal values are the squares of the correlations between the study variables; Off-diagonal values in parentheses are results of the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) analysis; 'PSS' is 'Perceived PSS', 'DEs' is 'Developmental experiences', 'OT' is 'Organizational trust', 'OI' is 'Organizational identification', and 'ED' is 'Employee deviance'.

Configural invariance tests
Before proceeding with further analysis, configural invariance was proven between the groups, namely, sector, gender, and LoM. The results indicate that the measures carried out for this study were invariant across sector ($\Delta\chi2df$ = 292.5289, p = .43), gender ($\Delta\chi2df$ = 307.2289, p = .22), and LoM ($\Delta\chi2df$ = 602.3578, p = .23), hence justifying the generalizability of results across all groups.

Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and internal reliabilities

Table II presents the mean, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and internal reliability indices of the key study variables. As expected, PSS and DEs correlated positively and significantly with OT (r = .33, p ≤ .01; r = .22, p ≤ .01, respectively). Further, OT correlated significantly and positively with OI (r = .31, p ≤ .01) and negatively with ED (r = -.28, p ≤ .01). The diagonal values in parentheses represent the scale reliabilities as measured by Cronbach's alpha for each study variable.

Table II. Descriptive statistics, inter-correlations, and Cronbach's alpha reliability indices

	ean	.D.								0
. Age	7.50	.92	.00							

. Work Experience	1.44	.65	82**	.00							
. Sector	.42	49	.03	.02	.00						
. Gender	.31	46	.16*	.13**	21*	.00					
. LoM	.37	70	.07	.03**	01**	12**	.00				
. PSS	.71	72	.04	.02*	04	06	06**	.78)			
. DEs	.73	62	.07	01*	.03	02**	03	55*	.79)		
. OT	.61	67	07	03**	03*	05	09*	33**	22**	.81)	
. OI	.70	68	09*	06	04	01**	11	42*	36**	31**	.76)
0. ED	.23	96	.03**	.02**	.03	07*	06	.24**	.12**	.28**	.18*	.89)

Note. n = 801; S.D. is Standard Deviation; *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01; Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are reported in parentheses on the diagonal.

PSS, DEs, OT, and interaction analysis

In this section, the main and interaction effects of PSS and DEs on OT have been tested. For this purpose, three competing LVMs, namely, LVM1, LVM2, and LVM3, designating absence of moderation, full-moderation, and quasi-moderation, respectively, were cross-checked with the data being subjected to structural equation modeling (SEM) procedures with maximum likelihood estimates. The standardized regression estimates of the accepted model, that is, LVM3, establishing H1 and H2, are presented in Table III, and the fit measures comparing the three LVMs in this section, leading to the acceptance of H3, are presented in Table IV below.

Table III. Regression analyses of LVM3

Values (→) / Paths (↓)		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized estimates	C.R.†	Remarks
		b	Standard error			
OT	PSS →	.59	.08	.35	4.42	H1 accepted
OT	DEs →	.42	.04	.24	4.83	H2 accepted
→ OT	PSS*DEs	.62	.09	.38	2.16	H3 accepted

Note. n = 801; †C.R. is 'Critical Ratios', a recommended basis for testing the statistical significance of SEM components. C.R.≥±1.96 indicates significance at the 95% level and C.R.≥±2.58 indicates significance at the 99% level.

Table IV. Analysis of moderator

Values (→) / Models (↓)	Fit indices							
	Absolute fit indices				Comparative fit indices			
	med χ2	NorFI	GEA	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	NFI	RFI
LVM1 (no moderation)	4.25	.81		.09	.78	.78	.75	.72

LVM2 (full moderation)	3.22	.89	.08	.88	.88	.3	.879	.
LVM3 (quasi-moderation)	2.86	.91	.05	.91	.91	.1	.990	.

Note. Minimum acceptable values are as mentioned in the text.

OI, OT, ED, and mediator analysis

To reiterate, LVM3 from the previous analyses was carried forward for analyses to three new LVMs, namely, LVM4, LVM5, and LVM6. These were competing LVMs and represented path models with the absence of mediation, full-mediation, and quasi-mediation, respectively, by OT. As per the results, the standardized regression estimates indicating the acceptance of H4 and H5 are presented in Table V, and the fit measures comparing the three LVMs in this section, namely, LVM4, LVM5, and LVM6, are presented in Table VII below. According to the results, the LVM6 model, which indicates OT as a quasi-mediator, was found to be the most suitable.

Table V. Regression analyses of LVM5

Values (→) Paths(↓)	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized estimates	C.R.†	Remarks
	b	Standard error			
OT → OI	.46	.08	.33	5.61	H4 accepted
OT → ED	-.30	.07	-.25	2.96	H5 accepted

Note. n = 801; †C.R. is 'Critical Ratios', a recommended basis for testing the statistical significance of SEM components. C.R.≥±1.96 indicates significance at the 95% level and C.R.≥±2.58 indicates significance at the 99% level.

Table VI. Analysis of mediation

Values (→) Models(↓)	Fit indices							
	Absolute fit indices			Comparative fit indices				
Model	Normed χ2	GFI	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	NFI	RFI	
LVM4 (no mediation)	6.34	.67	.10	.76	.76	.75	.70	.
LVM5 (full mediation)	3.12	.70	.06	.87	.87	.84	.82	.
LVM6 (quasi-mediation)	2.91	.94	.04	.93	.93	.92	.90	.

Note. Minimum acceptable values are as mentioned in the text.

Additional mediation analyses as per the procedures suggested by MacKinnon et al. (1995) were also conducted. Accordingly, OT was established as a quasi-mediator in the proposed LVM, and H6 of the present study was accepted. Finally, although the application of SEM procedures established organizational identification as a quasi-mediator and precluded problems of correlated measurement errors, tests were conducted as per the z-prime method (MacKinnon et al., 2002) to discount the possibilities of Type-I error. Moreover, the ratios of the indirect effects on the total effects of all the mediated paths were computed and expressed as 'percentage of mediation'. These results are presented in Table VII below.

Table VII. Additional analysis of mediation

Values (→) Paths (↓)	Path analyses		Additional mediation tests				
	Whether regression estimate of (direct path) > (path under mediated	Whether regression estimate of (path under mediated condition) is	Sobel's test	Aorian's test	Goodman's test	Percentage of mediation	Results of the additional mediation analyses

	(condition)?	significant?						
PSS →OT→ OI			4.53**	4.51**	4.56**	4.5	28.83	
PSS →OT→ ED	YES	YES	-3.70**	-3.68**	-3.73**	-	43.49	Organizational trust is a quasi-mediator.
DEs → OT→ OI			5.04**	5.03**	5.06**		24.98	
DEs → OT→ ED			-3.96**	-3.95**	-3.98**		32.64	
PSS *DEs→ OT→ OI			4.41**	4.38**	4.4**		25.81	
PSS *DEs→ OT→ ED			-3.63**	-3.61**	-3.67**		45.81	

Note. n = 801; **p ≤ .01.

DISCUSSION

The findings support supervisory support and development opportunities as important antecedents of OT, and both OT, in turn, shape deviance and identification. The application of the results to conflict management shows how workplaces can avert, alleviate, and convert conflict into a positive force.

Theoretical implications

First, this study demonstrates that PSS functions as a conflict-preventive mechanism. Supportive supervisors signal fairness, care, and accessibility, which reduce interpersonal tensions before they escalate into destructive conflict. In line with the LMX and the SET perspectives, the results confirm that supportive dyadic relationships foster trust, which in turn diminishes the likelihood of conflict manifesting as deviance (Tomlinson et al., 2021).

Second, DEs emerged as an antecedent of trust as well as a moderator augmenting the conflict-mitigating function of PSS. Through development opportunities, organizations signal long-term commitment, reframing potentially conflictual relationships as collaborative and developmental ones (Haynie et al., 2020). Towards that end, DEs facilitate institutionalized conflict transformation on the constructive agenda, whereby conflicts over resources or roles are transformed into adaptability and learning (Scully-Ross and Torraco, 2020).

Third, OT performs a quasi-mediator function that is central in conflict management theory. Trust allows the needed psychological safety on behalf of employees to debate without fear of getting taken advantage of and, thus, transform potential conflict into shared problem-solving (Gruys & Sackett, 2003). The results validate trust's double function in that it enhances OI, i.e., a positive, integrative response to conflict, while at the same time decreasing ED, a conflict-focused and destructive behavior (Zheng et al.,2021).

Finally, the research enriches conflict management knowledge by framing these dynamics within the Indian manufacturing and services sectors. The inter-sectoral evidence suggests that, as conflict manifests differently in hierarchical and relational structures, the processes involved in PSS, DEs, and OT are universally critical, thereby acknowledging the value added by cultural and institutional context in conflict dynamics.

Practical implications

From a practical point of view, the results emphasize that conflict management goes beyond reactive solving of disputes and requires actively creating conditions to minimize destructive conflict. Organizations thus need to train front supervisors in communication and supportive leadership, turning them into frontline conflict managers. Managers also need to institutionalize DEs through training, mentoring, and job rotation to turn potential conflicts on issues or expectations into development opportunities. Organizational policy designers also need to integrate trust-building mechanisms in HR and managerial processes, having fair procedures, clear communication, and consistency in the relationship between organizational values and practices.

Further, the results highlight the importance of conflict management going beyond reacting to dispute dynamics and focusing on anticipating and designing organizational circumstances that curtail harmful conflict. In the Indian setting, such learnings can find operational expression through complementarity with national HRD and labor policy. The evidence for the value of supportive supervision and developmental avenues for organizational trust-building underpins the development of binding supervisor training programs aligned with the National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2015, revised 2022), wherein lifelong learning and workplace well-being form an integral part of the skill development agenda. In a similar vein, the evidence for the effectiveness of trust in minimising deviance aligns with

the Industrial Relations Code (2020), which emphasises preventive resolution of disputes and early resolution of conflicts. Complementarily, the indubitable importance of organisational trust-building, institutionalising developmental avenues, and bolstering grievance redressal as separate organisational metrics for performance and conflict prevention underscores the dimensions through which organisational conflict management strategies can align with emerging national policy landscapes.

Through the implementation of all these mechanisms within a general conflict management approach, Indian manufacturing and services companies are in a position to lower adverse deviance, build identification, and develop conflict pressure-proof work settings.

Limitations of the study

Although this research provides valuable information on conflict management processes in Indian organizations, it contains a few shortcomings. The first limitation concerns the application of a cross-sectional design, which limits causal inferences on how supervisory support, developmental experiences, and trust influence conflict-related outcomes in the long term. Longitudinal designs would be more effective in capturing how conflict processes and conflict management progress along various stages in organizational life.

Second, since both manufacturing and service firms were considered in the study, it did not account for all the different conflict settings within the two industries. Multinational corporations, medium and small-sized companies, and family firms could demonstrate different conflict behaviors as a function of various structures, cultures, and leadership processes. These contextual subtleties could restrict the generalizability of results.

Future research scope

Future work could apply longitudinal and multiple-source approaches to expand understanding of how conflict prevention and resolution procedures develop. How trust mediates conflict management in online and hybrid working environments, particularly in post-COVID environments, would be a helpful extension.

Comparisons both within and across sectors and cultures could also shed light on how cultural norms shape conflict management processes. For instance, a comparison of collectivist and individualist settings could clarify how trust, identity, and deviance differ as conflict outputs. In addition, incorporating burgeoning variables like online communication, computer intelligence, and algorithmic control could draw attention to novel fountains of conflict and complementary management approaches.

Ergo, future research should clearly explore how constructive conflict, such as disagreement and argument, can be differentiated from destructive conflict, including deviancy and disengagement, and how support and developmental opportunities can guide conflict towards innovation rather than trouble.

CONCLUSION

The study adds value to conflict management books by introducing PSS, DEs, and OT as main mechanisms in preventing, dampening, and transforming workplace conflict. The results indicate that constructive supervision and opportunities for development build trust, which strengthens OI and diminishes ED, two aspects closely linked with escalation or resolution of workplace conflict.

By placing these dynamics in the Indian manufacturing and services sectors, the research adds both a theoretical and practical contribution. With respect to theoretical contributions, the research introduces constructs traditionally studied in organizational behavior into the broad field of conflict management and adds depth to the role trust plays as a pivot in conflict processes. To practice, it provides managers with crucial instruments through which to manage conflict ahead of time through supportiveness in leadership, avenues for development, and trust climates.

Above all, this study highlights that effective conflict management is less about settling conflicts and more about creating organizational circumstances that banish destructive conflict and support constructive ones.

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