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Family Relationship and Quality of Life among Police Personnel: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Police personnel perform critical duties under stressful and demanding conditions. Long working hours, shift duties, exposure to traumatic events, and occupational stress can negatively affect their family relationships and overall quality of life. Family relationships play a significant role in providing emotional support, resilience, and psychological well-being to police officers. The present systematic review aims to examine the existing literature on the relationship between family relationships and quality of life among police personnel. A review of empirical studies published between 2004 and 2025 was conducted. The findings indicate that supportive family environments, marital satisfaction, family cohesion, and social support are positively associated with quality of life, whereas family conflict, work-family imbalance, and marital strain are negatively associated with well-being. The review highlights the importance of family-centred interventions and organisational policies to improve the quality of life of police personnel.

Keywords: Family Relationship, Quality of Life, Police Personnel

Introduction

Police personnel occupy one of the most socially significant and psychologically demanding roles in modern society. Charged with maintaining law and order, ensuring public safety, preventing crime, and responding to emergencies, they operate in an environment characterised by persistent exposure to violence, trauma, human suffering, and institutional pressure. Unlike most occupational groups, police officers routinely confront life-threatening situations, witness human tragedy, and bear the emotional burden of public accountability — often without adequate psychological support. These occupational realities collectively impose extraordinary demands on the physical health, mental well-being, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life of police personnel.

Quality of life (QoL) is understood as an individual's subjective perception of overall well-being, encompassing physical health, psychological functioning, social relationships, emotional stability, and life satisfaction (WHO, 1997). For police personnel, the maintenance of a satisfactory quality of life is not merely a personal concern but a professional imperative. Research consistently documents that

elevated occupational stress among law enforcement officers is associated with burnout, anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, substance use, and impaired job performance (Lilly et al., 2015; Jain & Qureshi, 2022). Understanding the factors that protect and promote quality of life within this population is therefore a matter of both individual welfare and public safety.

Among the various factors identified as protective buffers against occupational stress, family relationships have emerged as particularly significant. The family unit serves as the primary source of emotional support, psychological refuge, and social belonging for most individuals, and police officers are no exception. Positive relationships with spouses, children, and extended family members provide officers with care, encouragement, and the emotional stability necessary to withstand the rigours of their professional duties. Healthy family environments have been associated with greater resilience, improved coping capacity, higher life satisfaction, and better mental health outcomes among law enforcement personnel (Rajpoot et al., 2017; Moradi & Keshavarz, 2021).

Conversely, the demanding and unpredictable nature of police work frequently creates conditions that strain family relationships. Long and irregular duty hours, mandatory night shifts, emergency deployments, and the psychological weight of traumatic exposure reduce the time and emotional availability officers can offer their families. Work-family conflict — defined as the interference of occupational demands with family responsibilities — has been widely reported among police populations and is linked with marital dissatisfaction, family dysfunction, reduced parenting quality, and diminished quality of life (Howard et al., 2004; Rathi & Barath, 2013; Lambert et al., 2017). Furthermore, spouses and children of police officers are themselves vulnerable to secondary stress, anxiety, and emotional burden arising from the risks and demands inherent in police work (D'Silva et al., 2023; Hanley, 2025).

Methodology

Search Strategy

Relevant studies were identified through electronic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, PubMed, ResearchGate, and PsycINFO.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Studies published between 2004 and 2025.
2. Studies involving police personnel, law enforcement officers with similar occupational characteristics.
3. Studies examining family relationships, family support, marital satisfaction, work-family balance, or family well-being.
4. Studies reporting outcomes related to quality of life, well-being, stress, life satisfaction, or mental health.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Non-English publications.
2. Studies unrelated to family variables or quality of life.

Selection of Studies

Twenty relevant studies were selected for systematic review.

Review of Literature

The role of family support as a protective resource against occupational stress and its positive influence on quality of life has been highlighted in several studies. Rajpoot et al. (2017) studied the relationship between family support and stress among police personnel and found that officers living with their families experienced lower levels of occupational stress and higher levels of life satisfaction, whereas officers living away from their families due to work postings reported greater stress. The presence of family members provided emotional support, practical care, and psychological reassurance, which helped reduce the impact of professional pressures. Moradi and Keshavarz (2021) further explained that not only the presence of family, but also the quality of family relationships, is an important determinant of life satisfaction. Their study found that police officers who had strong emotional bonds within the family, closeness with spouses, and open communication reported greater happiness, emotional well-being, and psychological stability. Such positive relationships improved stress management and helped officers maintain emotional balance despite occupational demands. Masoudnia (2016) examined the negative side of family relationships and reported that poor communication, continuous family conflicts, and emotional distance negatively affected both job performance and mental health among police personnel. Officers experiencing family tension and disagreement reported higher psychological stress, imbalance between personal and professional life, and reduced emotional energy. The study clearly indicated that the family environment can act as a source of support, but when relationships become unhealthy, the same environment may also function as a major source of stress. More recently, Kaur (2025) found that family support not only improves the emotional well-being of police officers but also positively affects their professional performance. Officers who received continuous encouragement and understanding from family members showed greater motivation, better emotional regulation, and stronger engagement with their work. These findings highlight the strong bidirectional relationship between family well-being and occupational functioning. The intersection of professional demands and family responsibilities represents one of the most consistently documented sources of stress and reduced quality of life among police personnel. Howard et al. (2004) conducted an early and influential examination of inter-domain work-family conflict, finding that higher levels of conflict between occupational and family roles were significantly associated with lower life satisfaction and diminished psychological well-being. Long working hours and the emotional demands of police work left officers with insufficient time and energy to fulfil family roles, generating emotional strain and reducing overall happiness.

Subsequent research has reinforced and extended these findings. Rathi and Barath (2013) demonstrated that work-family conflict negatively affected both family satisfaction and job satisfaction simultaneously, suggesting that the consequences of role imbalance are not confined to any single domain of life. Hall et al. (2010) further established that excessive job demands and workload were direct antecedents of work-family conflict, creating a cascade of emotional exhaustion and burnout that permeated officers' personal lives. Lambert et al. (2017), in the Indian context specifically, found that work-family conflict significantly increased job-related stress and decreased satisfaction among police personnel, lending particular relevance to the issue within South Asian policing environments.

Sousa et al. (2023) enriched this body of evidence through qualitative inquiry, capturing the lived experiences of police officers navigating work-family tensions. The study revealed that while irregular schedules and operational unpredictability created genuine challenges for family life, officers who possessed effective coping strategies and emotionally responsive family members were better able to sustain a workable balance. Emotional support from family emerged as a critical mediating resource that mitigated the adverse effects of occupational demands on personal well-being.

Valmari et al. (2023) further confirmed that officers who achieved effective management of their dual roles as professionals and family members reported higher life satisfaction and better psychological health outcomes. Youngcourt and Huffman (2005) introduced an important organisational dimension,

demonstrating that family-friendly workplace policies — including flexible scheduling, adequate leave provisions, and formal support programs — significantly reduced work-family conflict and improved emotional well-being. These findings collectively suggest that the responsibility for promoting work-family balance rests not only with individual officers but equally with their employing organisations.

Marital Relationships and Quality of Life

Marital relationships constitute the most proximate and emotionally significant family bond for most police officers, and their quality has been closely linked with psychological well-being and quality of life. Karaffa et al. (2015) found that elevated occupational stress directly impaired marital relationship quality, reducing communication, emotional intimacy, and mutual understanding between officers and their spouses. Lower marital satisfaction was, in turn, associated with diminished psychological well-being and life satisfaction, establishing a pathway through which occupational stress exerts its effects on quality of life via the marital relationship. D'Silva et al. (2023) broadened the analytical lens to include the experiences of spouses, finding that the emotional burden carried by the partners of police officers was substantial. Spouses reported elevated anxiety, loneliness, and emotional strain arising from their partners' demanding schedules, exposure to danger, and occupational stress — a secondary stress that reverberated through the family system and indirectly affected officers' own well-being. Hanley (2025) similarly documented the psychological challenges faced by police spouses, including chronic worry, relational isolation, and difficulty establishing normalcy in family routines, all of which created adverse conditions for marital functioning and family stability. The Open University Report (2023) offered a systemic perspective on police family well-being, identifying a consistent unmet need for counselling services, peer support, and family-centred welfare provisions. The report found that the cumulative effect of occupational demands on family relationships was often underacknowledged by both police organisations and officers themselves, resulting in delayed help-seeking and the entrenchment of relational difficulties. Rose (2025) similarly found that spouses recognised the centrality of emotional communication and relational quality to officers' psychological health, emphasising the importance of strong family systems in sustaining police well-being. Beyond individual dyadic relationships, broader family cohesion and collective resilience have been identified as meaningful contributors to the psychological well-being of police personnel. Lilly et al. (2015) found that police officers embedded in cohesive, emotionally connected family systems were better equipped to manage occupational stress and maintain psychological stability. Strong family relationships, combined with wider social support networks, functioned as protective buffers against the development of psychological distress, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and burnout. Alam (2019) confirmed that family structure and the quality of the home environment were significant predictors of mental health outcomes among police personnel. Officers residing in stable, supportive family settings reported lower rates of anxiety and emotional disturbance compared to those experiencing family conflict or living in isolation. These findings suggest that the family environment is not merely a backdrop to individual functioning but an active determinant of psychological health. Kurtz (2012) introduced a gender dimension to the analysis, finding that female police officers faced distinct and compounded challenges in managing the intersection of professional duties and family responsibilities. Women officers frequently experienced greater conflict in balancing work demands with domestic and caregiving roles, resulting in elevated stress levels relative to their male counterparts. This finding highlights the need for gender-sensitive approaches in the design of family support initiatives within police organisations. Jain and Qureshi (2022) situated these dynamics within the Indian context, confirming that heavy workloads, inadequate family time, and poor work-life balance were primary contributors to diminished quality of life among Indian police officers. Their study also found, encouragingly, that emotional support from family and effective personal coping strategies were significant protective factors — underscoring the importance of both interpersonal resources and individual resilience in sustaining quality of life within this demanding occupational group.

Discussion

The present systematic review examined the relationship between family relationships and quality of life among police personnel. The findings of the reviewed studies clearly show that family relationships play an important role in shaping the psychological well-being, emotional stability, and overall quality of life of police officers. Police personnel work under stressful and demanding conditions, including long working hours, irregular shifts, exposure to traumatic situations, and occupational pressure. These work-related challenges often affect their personal and family life.

The reviewed studies consistently highlighted that supportive family environments, healthy marital relationships, and strong emotional bonds contribute positively to the well-being of police personnel. Studies by Rajpoot et al. (2017), Moradi and Keshavarz (2021), and Kaur (2025) showed that family support helps police officers manage occupational stress more effectively and improves emotional well-being and life satisfaction. Similarly, Lilly et al. (2015) and Valmari et al. (2023) found that family resilience, social support, and effective work-family balance act as protective factors against stress and psychological distress.

The review also revealed that work-family conflict negatively affects both personal and professional life among police personnel. Studies conducted by Howard et al. (2004), Rathi and Barath (2013), Hall et al. (2010), and Lambert et al. (2017) reported that excessive job demands, long working hours, and difficulty balancing family responsibilities increase stress, emotional exhaustion, and dissatisfaction among police officers. These findings suggest that poor work-life balance can reduce overall quality of life and create emotional strain within families.

Marital relationships were also found to be an important factor affecting quality of life. Karaffa et al. (2015), D'Silva et al. (2023), and Hanley (2025) reported that occupational stress often affects marital satisfaction and family functioning. Spouses of police personnel frequently experience anxiety, emotional burden, and stress due to the demanding nature of police work. Such family strain indirectly influences the psychological well-being and life satisfaction of police officers.

The findings further indicate that organisational support and family-friendly policies can improve the well-being of police personnel. Youngcourt and Huffman (2005) emphasised that flexible work arrangements and supportive workplace policies reduce work-family conflict and improve family satisfaction and emotional health. Therefore, police organisations should promote counselling services, stress management programs, and work-life balance initiatives to strengthen family relationships and improve quality of life.

Overall, the reviewed literature strongly supports the view that healthy family relationships, emotional support, and work-family balance are essential for maintaining the mental health and quality of life of police personnel.

Conclusion

The present systematic review clearly shows that family relationships play an important role in the quality of life of police personnel. Police officers work under stressful conditions such as long duty hours, irregular schedules, heavy workload, and exposure to traumatic situations. These occupational pressures not only affect their mental and emotional health but also influence their family life. The review findings suggest that supportive family relationships help police personnel manage stress more effectively and maintain better emotional well-being and life satisfaction.

The reviewed studies further indicate that positive family environments, including emotional support, open communication, and strong marital relationships, improve resilience and psychological health among police officers. In contrast, work-family conflict, family disagreements, and poor communication increase stress, emotional exhaustion, and dissatisfaction in both personal and

professional life. The review also highlights that the well-being of spouses and family members directly affects the emotional stability and work performance of police personnel.

Overall, the findings suggest that police organisations and policymakers should give greater importance to family welfare and mental health support for police personnel. Family-friendly workplace policies, counselling services, flexible duty schedules, and support programs for police families may help improve both officer well-being and job performance. Future research should focus on long-term and culturally sensitive studies, especially in the Indian context, to better understand the relationship between family dynamics and quality of life among police personnel.

Implications

1. Development of family counselling programs for police personnel.
2. Implementation of family-friendly workplace policies.
3. Promotion of work-life balance initiatives.
4. Regular psychological support services for police families.
5. Inclusion of family well-being indicators in police welfare programs.

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