

Moderating Effect of Work-Family Conflict on the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Job and Life Satisfaction: A Study during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The constant changes observed in the work context resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges to organizations and workers. This study examined the moderating effect of work-family conflict on the relationship between perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction. The collected sample comprised 476 Portuguese workers, of whom 223 were females (46.8%), and 253 were males (53.2%). Data were collected via a questionnaire composed of self-report measures and a sociodemographic questionnaire. The findings demonstrated a significant positive association between perceived organizational support and employees' satisfaction with work and life. Furthermore, the statistical analysis revealed that work-family conflict moderated the relationship between perceived organizational support and satisfaction with work and life. These results indicate that organizations seeking to enhance employee satisfaction in the workplace should create an environment that promotes benefits for the work-family interface (e.g., family-friendly policies), facilitating the conciliation of professional and family roles. It is crucial to develop and make such resources available to employees.



Keywords

Work-Family Conflict, Perceived Organizational Support, Job Satisfaction,
Life Satisfaction

1. Introduction

In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic (Zheng et al., 2021). Consequently, governments and health authorities worldwide were forced to adopt measures to contain the evolution of this disease (Hu et al., 2021). The employment sector was the target of specific actions (e.g., adopting remote work), which brought new challenges to organizations and workers. Salas-Nicás et al. (2021) said these changes led to decreased psychosocial working conditions, negatively affecting workers' physical and mental health. However, organizations were not prepared to deal with this new context, nor had they defined specific support policies for workers who were working remotely (Zhou et al., 2023). In this context, in the absence of organizational measures to face an unprecedented context, workers had to deal with work interference in their family life since, in situations of lockdown and remote work, the performance of work tasks took place in a housing context (Tuan, 2022). This impact of work on family life, in addition to decreasing job satisfaction, could also lead, through a spillover effect, to a reduction in satisfaction with life.

In disruptive contexts, concepts such as perceived organizational support (POS) assume particular relevance in the business context, as they help workers deal with contextual changes and create a sense of stability. POS is an essential concept in organizational research as it is believed to enhance employees' commitment and work involvement; when workers feel that their organization cares about their well-being, they tend to feel valued and act reciprocally, which benefits organizational functioning (e.g., through increased job performance) (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Thus, it becomes crucial to understand how workers perceive the level of support received in contexts of unpredictability, as well as to know how the support received can contribute to an increase in satisfaction, both in terms of the tasks performed (i.e., job satisfaction) and the global assessment that workers make of their life (i.e., satisfaction with life). However, it is also crucial to understand how perceived support relates to other constructs, e.g., work-family conflict, which arises due to changes in work and family structures (Schonfeld & Chang, 2017).

Some studies have explored the relationship between work-family conflict and schedule flexibility. Contrary to expectations, Allen et al. (2013) found that time availability had a negative association with work-family conflict. Furthermore, French et al. (2018) identified differences in the magnitude of the relationship between various sources of support and work-family conflict. Social support

theory suggests that broad sources of support should be strongly associated with work interference with family and family interference with work than specific sources of support. Organizations need to implement workplace changes, such as assistance with childcare and/or elderly care, working from home, and flexible working hours, to address the need to balance roles and resources (Caudron, 1997; Flynn, 1997). Given the pandemic, it is crucial to understand the moderating role of work-family conflict in the relationship between POS and occupational well-being, measured through job and life satisfaction. Therefore, this study aimed to contribute to a better understanding of how work-family conflict intervenes in the relationship between POS and satisfaction with work and life, to reflect on the necessary adjustments in organizations for effective integration of workers' professional and family life. The specific objectives of our study were to examine the direct associations between POS, work-family conflict, and job and life satisfaction and to evaluate the moderating effect of work-family conflict on the relationship between POS and job and life satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

According to Bakker & Demerouti (2017), the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory was first introduced in English literature in 2001 by Demerouti and colleagues (Demerouti et al., 2001). Since then, it has inspired numerous empirical studies, literature reviews, and meta-analyses. The JD-R theory has evolved from a simple model, emphasizing two processes, health impairment and motivational, to a theory with specific propositions, comprising interactions between job demands, job resources, personal resources, job crafting, occupational well-being indicators, and work-related outcomes (Bakker et al., 2023). The popularity of the JD-R theory is mainly characterized by its flexibility since it divides all work characteristics and contexts into two categories: job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Job demands refer to the work-related aspects of physical, psychological, social, or organizational origin that require efforts of a physical or psychological nature. On the other hand, job resources (e.g., POS) refer to work-related aspects of physical, psychological, social, or organizational origin that lead to psychological and professional growth and decrease the detrimental effects of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). According to Bakker and Demerouti (2014), another characteristic is the dynamic nature of the theory, which leads to two processes: health impairment, which leads to burnout, and motivational, which leads to work engagement.

Despite its relevance, the JD-R theory is not free from limitations. For example, the fact that it is an open model means that all types of concepts can be framed as job demands, job resources, personal resources, and work-related outcomes (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Furthermore, it is a theoretical model that does not survive on its own; it needs to resort to other models (e.g., Conservation of Resources Theory; Hobfoll et al., 2018) to justify the central premises of the JD-R. An additional limitation comes from the empirical literature, where studies (e.g.,

Viseu et al., 2023) assess one of the JD-R processes in isolation, neglecting that the health impairment and motivational processes must be addressed simultaneously. The JD-R also does not consider the existence of possible antecedents of job demands and job resources, even though there is evidence that substantiates the importance of these antecedents (e.g., Idris et al., 2011; Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Finally, this model neglects the importance of job demands or job resources specific to some occupations, e.g., workers from the education sector (Dixit & Upadhyay, 2021).

2.1. Perceived Organizational Support

POS refers to workers' perceptions of the value attributed to their contributions and concern for their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This construct, widely addressed in empirical and review studies, is based on the idea that employees personify the organization where they work and perceive that it values and cares for them. It can be general or grouped into specific beliefs and expectations (Santos & Gonçalves, 2010). According to Eisenberger et al. (2020), POS is shaped by fairness perceptions, human resources practices and policies, and leadership styles.

Research has shown that this construct is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance, and lower turnover intentions and absenteeism (Andrade & Neves, 2022). Talukder (2019) emphasized that when employees perceive high levels of support from their organization, they are more likely to be satisfied with their job, committed to the organization, and engaged in positive behaviors, e.g., organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). To synthesize POS outcomes, Eisenberger et al. (2020) created three groups: one associated with organizational- and work-related variables, another to desirable work behaviors, and one linked to well-being. However, work-family conflict, considered a job demand in the JD-R theory (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014), can interfere with employees' well-being and satisfaction. For example, remote workers must simultaneously fulfill their work and domestic tasks, which can lead to incompatibility. Previous research has suggested the importance of POS to mitigate the adverse effects of work-family conflict and co-worker conflict on job satisfaction, work-life balance, and organizational commitment (Wattoo et al., 2018). When employees perceive high levels of support from their supervisors, colleagues, and organization, they may be better equipped to manage the demands of work and family and to navigate conflicts with co-workers, which leads to greater job satisfaction, better work-life balance, and a stronger commitment to the organization (Talukder, 2019).

2.2. Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a form of role conflict in which work and family roles are mutually incompatible, meaning that participation in the work role is hindered by involvement in the family role. This concept is one of the most stu-

died aspects of the work-family interface and has significantly developed throughout recent years due to the social and labor evolution (Byron, 2005; Pascucci et al., 2022). Byron (2005) found that an individual's work-related factors, or work domain variables, are more related to work interference with family (WIF) than family interference with work (FIW). In other words, the more hours an individual spends at work, the greater the likelihood of interference with family life. Similarly, factors related to an individual's family life and non-work domain variables are expected to be more related to FIW than WIF. Individuals with greater family support may experience less family-work interference, but that does not mean they do not have FIW.

Michel et al. (2011) highlighted that work-related social support is negatively related to work-family conflict. Additionally, French et al. (2018) found that social support from work leads to reduced WIF and FIW, suggesting that POS may be the most important source of support. Their study differentiated the domain of social support (work or family), the specific form (perceptions and behaviors), the source (organization, co-worker), and the type (emotional and instrumental) and analyzed the context (cultural, economic) as a moderator of these relationships. Furthermore, Qu and Zhao's (2012) research revealed that work-family conflict negatively impacts employees' lives and job satisfaction. However, social support from supervisors and colleagues can moderate the negative impact of work-family conflict on job satisfaction. Wattoo et al. (2018) found that POS negatively affected work-family conflict and employee well-being.

2.3. Job Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been extensively studied in organizational research as it is considered a crucial factor contributing to employees' well-being and productivity (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Weiss (2002) defined job satisfaction as an individual's evaluation of their work experience, which can be positive or negative, that contributes to the development of an affective state, which can be pleasant (positive affects) or unpleasant (negative affects). This definition aligns with the premise of Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012), who argued that job satisfaction has two dimensions: cognitive and affective. Furthermore, job satisfaction has been linked to life satisfaction, a cognitive component of well-being that refers to individuals' life assessment (Diener et al., 1985).

The JD-R theory proposes that job resources like POS can increase job and life satisfaction. In contrast, job demands, such as work-family conflict, can threaten job and life satisfaction (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). With the COVID-19 pandemic, work-family conflict has become more prevalent, making it crucial for organizations to create a supportive work environment that encourages work-life balance, boosts employee satisfaction, and provides resources to help them navigate this challenging time. Previous research has shown that POS can moderate the effects of work-family conflict on job satisfaction (Eby et al., 2005). Our study,

using a sample of Portuguese workers, investigated the interactive mechanisms between POS, work-family conflict, and job and life satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 1).

Considering the previously presented theoretical and empirical arguments, as well as the objective of this research, the following research hypotheses were defined:

Hypothesis 1. POS is negatively related to work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2a. Work-family conflict is negatively related to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b. Work-family conflict is negatively related to life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3a. POS is positively related to life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3b. POS is positively related to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4a. Work-family conflict moderates the relationship between POS and life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4b. Work-family conflict moderates the relationship between POS and job satisfaction.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

A sample of 476 Portuguese workers, 223 (46.8%) females and 253 (53.2%) males, with an average age of approximately 43 years old ($M = 42.66$; $SD = 9.01$), was collected. Most participants were married or living in common law ($n = 337$; 70.8%), followed by those that were single ($n = 85$; 17.9%), separated or divorced ($n = 51$; 10.7%), and widowed ($n = 3$; .6%). Regarding household composition, 68.5% of participants reported having dependent individuals under their responsibility. On average, each household comprised three individuals ($M = 3.08$; $SD = 1.19$; Min. = 1; Max. = 8). Relatively to the academic background, most of the respondents had a high school education ($n = 202$; 42.4%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree ($n = 99$; 20.8%), master's degree ($n = 68$; 14.3%), university frequency ($n = 58$; 12.2%), PhD degree ($n = 29$; 6.1%), second and third cycle of basic education ($n = 19$; 4%), and third cycle of basic education ($n = 1$; .2%).

Regarding the employment status, approximately 61% of participants informed that they had dependent employment with an open-ended contract ($n = 291$; 61.1%), followed by those with dependent employment with a fixed-term contract ($n = 69$; 14.5%), worked on full-time ($n = 58$; 12.2%), were self-employed ($n = 41$; 8.6%), had dependent employment with precarious work contracts ($n = 11$; 2.3%), and worked on part-time ($n = 6$; 1.3%). Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, most participants continued to perform their work-related tasks, adopting schedule changes ($n = 188$; 39.5%) and remote work ($n = 153$; 32.1%). Other participants reported that they have continued working without significant changes ($n = 94$; 19.7%), while others indicated that they had interrupted their professional activity; however, they have maintained their contract with the employer ($n = 41$; 8.6%).

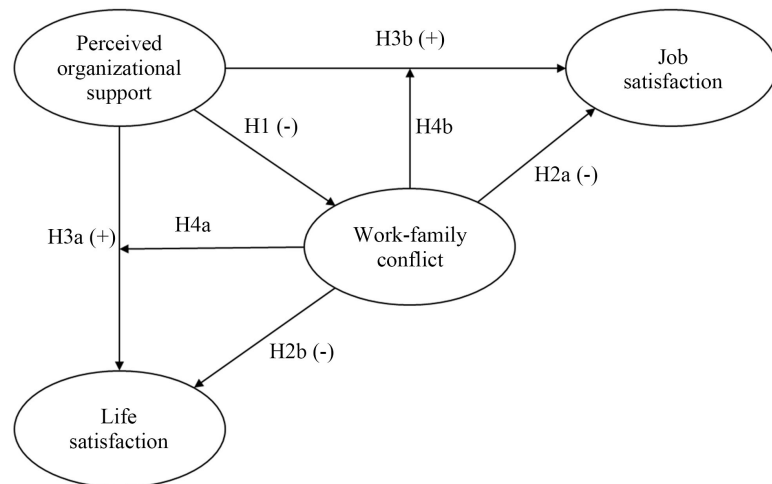


Figure 1. Theoretical model with the moderation of an indirect effect.

3.2. Measures

Life satisfaction was assessed with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985; Simões, 1992), which is composed of five items (e.g., in most ways my life is close to my ideal.) with a seven-point Likert scale (1-Totally disagree; 7-Totally agree).

Job satisfaction was measured with the Short Index of Job Satisfaction (SIJS; Brayfield & Rothe, 1951; Sinval & Marôco, 2020), which possesses five items (e.g., I feel fairly satisfied with my present job.) with a five-point Likert scale (1-Strongly disagree; 5-Strongly agree). Two items, namely three and five, must be reversed to calculate the job satisfaction index.

POS was evaluated with a short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Santos & Gonçalves, 2010), which presents eight items (e.g., The organization values my contribution to its well-being.) with a seven-point Likert scale (1-Totally disagree; 7-Totally agree). This measure possesses two dimensions of perceived support, affective and cognitive, each with four items. The items of the cognitive dimension must be reversed.

Work-family conflict was analyzed with three items (e.g., Do your family and friends tell you that you work too hard?), with a five-point Likert scale (1-Never/Almost never; 5-Always), from the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ-II; Kristensen et al., 2005; Silva et al., 2011).

Lastly, a sociodemographic questionnaire was developed, with questions about the sex, age, marital status, household composition, educational background, and employment status of the participants.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

The research protocol was developed and hosted on the Google Forms platform, explaining the context and objectives of the study, as well as presenting information on the ethical procedures adopted and the self-report instruments selected. Regarding confidentiality and anonymity standards, respondents were informed

that the collected data would only serve the purpose of this study, that they could withdraw their participation at any time without prejudice to either party and that there were no rewards associated with participation, monetary or otherwise. Before filling out the protocol, participants should read and agree with this information. Two inclusion criteria were defined: respondents had to be over 18 years old and be in an active professional situation. The dissemination of the research protocol followed a non-probabilistic sampling technique of convenience and snowball. The research team forwarded, via e-mail, to their contacts the link with the protocol. Moreover, they asked their contacts to forward the message and protocol to other contacts who met the inclusion criteria. Simultaneously, the protocol was disseminated online through social media.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Firstly, a descriptive statistical analysis presented the mean, standard-deviation, and reliability (Cronbach's alpha; α) values. This procedure was conducted with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

Subsequently, data were assessed through structural equation modeling (SEM) with the software Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 20. The first step in the analysis is evaluating the multivariate normal distribution. There is no consensus on the skewness and kurtosis values that indicate respect for this assumption; however, for the maximum likelihood estimation method, the most common in SEM, skewness and kurtosis values below two and seven, respectively, suggest that there are no significant departures from a multivariate normal distribution (Curran et al., 1996).

A tripartite analysis using absolute, incremental, and parsimonious fit indices was performed to evaluate the overall model fit, following Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson's (2014) suggestions. Before this procedure, the value of the goodness-of-fit Chi-squared test was calculated, which must present *p-values* higher than .05. Nevertheless, this index is influenced by the sample size. In samples with several participants, statistically significant values may emerge ($p < .05$) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982). To overcome this gap other fit indices were adopted: 1) Goodness of fit index (GFI), values between .90 - .95 indicate a good fit and higher than .95 indicate a very good fit; 2) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), values between .05 - .10 indicate an acceptable fit and lower than .05 indicate a very good fit; 3) Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), values between .05 - .08 indicate an acceptable fit and lower than .05 indicate a good fit; 4) Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Incremental Fit Index (IFI), values between .90 - .95 indicate a good fit and higher than .95 indicate a very good fit; and 5) Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI), Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI), and χ^2/df , for the PCFI and PNFI values between .60 - .80 indicate an acceptable fit and higher than .80 indicate a good fit, for the χ^2/df , values equal or lower than five indicate an acceptable fit and lower than two indicate a good fit (Byrne, 2010; Marôco, 2021).

The overall model fit was calculated regarding validity and reliability (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982). Factor validity was related to the standardized factor loadings of the indicators. A value equal to or higher than .50 must be observed (Marôco, 2021). Convergent validity was assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) coefficient. Values equal to or above .50 must be observed (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Sharma, 1996). Discriminant validity was based on the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, i.e., comparing the latent constructs' AVE and squared correlation values. Two indicators evaluated reliability, Cronbach's alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR). Values equal to or higher than .70 must be achieved (Hair et al., 2014).

Data were collected on a single occasion and with the same research protocol, which increases the probability of common-method bias. To surpass this situation, the unmeasured latent method construct method was used (Podsakoff et al., 2003). As such, the standardized factor loadings of the two models were compared with or without the common-latent factor. The differences between these models must be lower than .200 (see Archimi et al., 2018).

Lastly, the structural model was analyzed by observing the signal and statistical significance of the assessed relationships. The moderating effect was based on the matched-pairs method (Collier, 2020). This model eliminates some gaps in other frameworks to test moderation since the items from the independent and moderating variables are used to create the interaction effect, and no item can be repeated to form this effect (Marsh et al., 2004). The items with the higher standardized factor loadings must be selected to generate the interaction effect. Moreover, these items must be standardized (Z-values) (Collier, 2020). The results must report the values of the unstandardized estimates, the results of the t-test, and its significance level (Collier, 2020).

4. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the analyzed constructs. Reliability results for job satisfaction were based on two items since, in the presence of the other indicators, the obtained results were below the cut-off of .70.

Table 1. Descriptive, correlational, and reliability analyses (N = 476).

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Job satisfaction	2.99	.344	(.811)					
2. Life satisfaction	3.02	.742	.200**	(.818)				
3. Affective perception	4.11	1.51	.325**	.249**	(.906)			
4. Cognitive perception	4.06	1.51	.246**	.233**	.759**	(.885)		
5. Perceived support	3.57	1.235	.311**	.262**	.950**	.916**	(.930)	
6. Work-family conflict	2.92	.880	-.143**	-.216**	-.236**	-.263**	-.265**	(.818)

Note. *M* = mean values; *SD* = standard-deviation values; ** $p < .01$; In the diagonal are the Cronbach's alpha values.

Skewness and kurtosis values were below the threshold of two and seven, respectively. Thus, the assumption of multivariate normal distribution was respected. A SEM analysis was performed through the maximum likelihood estimation method. The fit indices respected the cut-off values, and model fit varied between acceptable and very good (Table 2).

Multivariate normal distribution, factor validity, convergent validity, and reliability results are presented in Table 3. Some items were removed from the model since they prejudiced the model quality. The remaining items respected the threshold values. As such, it can be argued that there is evidence of factor validity, convergent validity, and reliability.

Table 4 presents the results for discriminant validity. According to the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, there was evidence of this type of validity.

Common-method bias assessment demonstrated that, in most cases, the obtained results were below the .200 cut-off. When this was not verified, the values registered were marginally higher than .200 (e.g., .201 and .233). Thus, it can be concluded that the proposed model was not affected by the common method bias.

Five research hypotheses were corroborated (H2b, H3a, H3b, H4a, and H4b). Work-family conflict established a negative relationship with life satisfaction. That is, the greater the level of conflict experienced between work and family demands, the lower the life satisfaction experienced. In turn, POS was positively associated with job and life satisfaction; the concern demonstrated by an organization about employees' well-being led to greater personal and professional satisfaction. Lastly, the moderation hypotheses showed that work-family conflict decreases the intensity of the relationship between POS and life and job satisfaction. Therefore, work-family conflict acts as a buffer, showing that, although employees may feel supported and valued by their organization, a conflict between work and family leads to decreased personal and professional satisfaction (Figure 2, Table 5).

Table 2. Overall model fit summary.

Fit indices	Results	Comment
χ^2	260.970 ($p = .000$)	
GFI	.950	Good
RMSEA	.054	Acceptable
90%CI RMSEA	[.047 - .062]	
SRMR	.043	Good
CFI	.977	Very good
NFI	.965	Very good
TLI	.971	Very good
IFI	.977	Very good
PCFI	.765	Acceptable
PNFI	.756	Acceptable
χ^2/df	2.776	Acceptable

Table 3. Multivariate normal distribution, factor validity, convergent validity, and reliability results.

Constructs and indicators	sk/ku	Standardized factor loadings*	Alpha/CR	AVE
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)			.919/.934	.781
1-The organization values my contribution to its well-being.	-.361/-.917	.841		
4-The organizational really cares about my well-being.	-.380/-.840	.878		
6-The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.	-.308/-.911	.923		
8-The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	-.328/-.825	.891		
Work-Family Conflict (WFC)			.817/.892	.738
1-Do you feel that your job demands a lot of energy, which negatively affects your private life?	-.404/-.161	.915		
2-Do you feel that your job requires a lot of time that ends up negatively affecting your private life?	-.333/-.227	.955		
3-Do your family and friends tell you that you work a lot?	-.371/-.393	.681		
Life Satisfaction (LS)			.892/.887	.663
1-In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	-.018/-.659	.788		
2-The conditions of my life are excellent.	.042/-.674	.780		
3-I am satisfied with my life.	-.010/-.747	.901		
4-So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.	-.211/-.825	.782		
Job Satisfaction (JS)			.804/.867	.766
2-Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.	-.558/-.288	.902		
4-I find real enjoyment in my work.	-.921/.165	.847		
Interaction POS*WFC			.779/.914	.781
Item 4 POS*Item 1 WFC	1.101/2.844	.914		
Item 6 POS*Item 2 WFC	1.303/3.207	.938		
Item 8 POS*Item 3 WFC	1.371/3.554	.792		

Note. sk = skewness results; ku = kurtosis values; Alpha/CR = Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability coefficients; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. *Statistically significant value for $p < .05$.

Table 4. Discriminant validity assessment.

Latent constructs	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Perceived organizational support	.781				
2. Work-family conflict	.037	.738			
3. Life satisfaction	.045	.035	.663		
4. Job satisfaction	.218	.047	.232	.766	
5. Interaction POS*WFC	.021	.008	.001	.001	.781

Note. POS = perceived organizational support; WFC = work-family conflict. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are bolded on the diagonal.

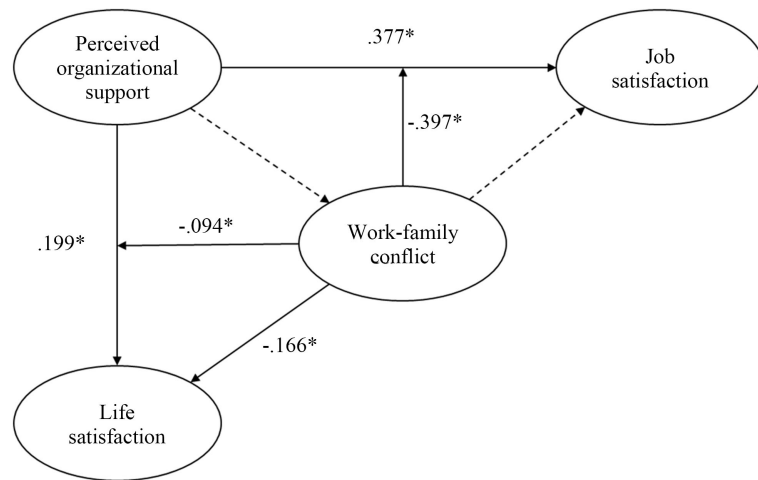


Figure 2. Structural model results.

Table 5. Structural model results.

Research hypotheses	Non-standardized estimates	t-test results	Hypothesis
H1: POS → WFC	.060	2.795 [†]	Unconfirmed
H2a: WFC → JS	-.035	-.665	Unconfirmed
H2b: WFC → LS	-.166	-3.940 ^{***}	Confirmed
H3a: POS → LS	.119	6.081 ^{***}	Confirmed
H3b: POS → JS	.377	13.668 ^{***}	Confirmed
Moderation analysis			
H4a: POS*WFC → LS	-.094	-2.318 [†]	Confirmed
H4b: POS*WFC → JS	-.397	-7.268 ^{***}	Confirmed

Note. WFC = work-family conflict; POS = perceived organizational support; JS = job satisfaction; LS = life satisfaction. [†] $p < .05$; ^{***} $p < .001$.

5. Discussion

This study investigated the interactive mechanisms between POS, work-family conflict, and job and life satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a sample of Portuguese workers. It was observed that POS was positively associated with job and life satisfaction, showing that the higher the perception of support, demonstrated through the concern for the well-being of employees and valuing their participation in organizational life, the greater the personal and job satisfaction. These results agree with previous research (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 1990; Iqbal et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2009; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Wattoo et al., 2018; Zhang & Wu, 2020; Zhao et al., 2020). The moderation hypotheses showed that work-family conflict decreases the magnitude of the relationship between POS and life and job satisfaction, acting as a buffer. This showed that, although employees may feel supported and valued by their organization, a conflict between work and family leads to decreased personal and professional satisfaction. In a conflict situation, individuals are no longer fulfilled in

personal and professional terms. It was possible to confirm that work-family conflict established a negative relationship with life satisfaction; the greater the level of conflict experienced, the lower the perceived life satisfaction. This moderation effect is harmonious with past studies (e.g., Iqbal et al., 2022; Siqueira & Padovan, 2008). The results did not confirm that POS established a negative association with work-family conflict and that work-family conflict established a negative association with job satisfaction. One possible justification for these results is that the support provided by the organization may not be sufficient to decrease work-family conflict. Organizations must adopt a proactive posture in developing human resources policies and practices that allow an adequate adaptation of workers to situations of instability. Perhaps more specific sources of support, e.g., support from supervisors and colleagues, are more effective or contribute more significantly to reduce the impact of work-family conflict, as indicated in some previous studies (Kossek et al., 2011; Thompson et al., 1999). Also, policies targeted at improving support sources may promote higher job and life satisfaction (Iqbal et al., 2022), given that it must be considered that the greater the perception of support received by the organization, the greater the satisfaction felt by individuals in the different domains. In other words, creating policies and practices that value support for workers could have a dual effect, i.e., reducing the conflict between work and family and promoting occupational well-being through increasing job satisfaction and life (Iqbal et al., 2022).

Another explanation for this result is that the characteristics of the sample, relative to the job functions included in the study, are not expressive of a single reality or work context. This means that different professional occupations (e.g., health professionals *versus* security professionals) have other characteristics and, as such, may interpret POS differently.

The results showed a positive association between POS and job and life satisfaction, supporting previous studies (e.g., Wattoo et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2020; Zhang & Wu, 2020). Work-family conflict was found to moderate the relationship between POS and job and life satisfaction, indicating that the negative impact of work-family conflict reduced the magnitude of the positive association between POS and job and life satisfaction. Furthermore, work-family conflict was found to have a negative association with life satisfaction but not with job satisfaction. Finally, the study did not find evidence of a negative association between POS and work-family conflict or between work-family conflict and job satisfaction.

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

In addition to the macro-structural impacts on the economy, society, and labor caused by COVID-19, family functioning patterns have also been changed. Routines have been significantly disrupted, the social support network has been weakened due to social distancing measures, and the high number of hospitalizations and deaths has profoundly impacted individuals' emotional reactions.

All of these factors have had a negative effect on the population's health, quality of life, and satisfaction with work and life, presenting families with stressful elements and intensifying their vulnerability. Consequently, there is a need for family reorganization and financial and social support structures. In the pandemic context, managing work-family conflict is of significant importance. As highlighted by [Pascucci et al. \(2022\)](#), the study of work-family conflict in contexts of instability, e.g., pandemic or war, is essential for developing prevention strategies to help workers develop skills to relieve tension before returning to the family domain. Thus, workers will avoid a negative spillover effect, i.e., from the work domain to the family domain, of the detrimental experiences in the work context. Although the work context can have a negative impact on family life, the family can also serve as an element that promotes well-being, e.g., helping the worker experience recovery from work ([Sonntag et al., 2022](#)). The literature has demonstrated that individuals need a recovery period, e.g., through psychological detachment from work, before they are prepared to face work-related stressors again.

Despite the pandemic, most respondents continued to work, using work schedule adjustments and telecommuting. It is essential to make organizations and managers aware that positive actions are necessary to reduce work-family conflict. This may include taking steps such as time management or flexible working hours focusing on results rather than specific hours worked to maintain satisfaction with work and life and achieve work-family balance ([Michel et al., 2011](#)). According to [Kossek et al. \(2011\)](#), research on work-family conflict has not been valued by organizations. These authors also pointed out that the growing evolution of the labor market would make organizations adjust their practices to face contextual changes.

POS must increase to address these challenges, and one way to do this is to improve organizational resources, such as professional advisory and management services (e.g., implementation of a time management system) and support in using technologies. It is crucial to optimize job resources that can coach workers, give more time to the family, and contribute to the quality of the relationship between the organization and its employees' families. Other strategies may include giving workers more autonomy to adjust the tasks to be performed. In addition, managers must allow workers to adopt flexible hours and grant time off work, whenever possible, to accompany family members to medical appointments ([Schonfeld & Chang, 2017](#)). Furthermore, recruitment and selection processes must focus on person-organization and person-role fit since an individual who is not adapted to the functioning of an organization, e.g., in terms of volume and pace of work, may not be able to deal with job demands and therefore, these will harm family life and functioning ([Lopes et al., 2022](#)).

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the research sample is small, which limits the generalizability of the results. To overcome this, future research should consider using a larger sample size to enhance

the external validity of the findings. Furthermore, using the same research protocol for all participants may have increased the likelihood of common method variance. Moreover, the study followed a cross-sectional design, which prevents causal inference.

Future research should adopt a more robust methodological design, e.g., longitudinal design, to observe cause-effect relationships and decrease the likelihood of common method variance. Additionally, new variables, such as culture, should be considered in future studies, and cross-cultural analyses should be conducted to observe if the results obtained follow the same pattern or if there are differences. Comparative analyses between different organizations or countries should also be conducted to better understand the phenomena under analysis. Lastly, it is recommended that this research is replicated in a post-pandemic context to enable comparisons with the current results and identify potential changes over time.

This study sheds light on the interactive mechanisms between POS, work-family conflict, and job and life satisfaction in the context of a pandemic. The results highlight the need for organizations to take proactive steps to reduce work-family conflict and prioritize POS and work-family balance to enhance the well-being of their employees. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between POS, work-family conflict, and job and life satisfaction in a pandemic context, marked by anxiety and uncertainty, and emphasizes the importance of organizations in promoting the well-being of their employees.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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