

Department of Human Resources and Organizational Behavior

Career Breaks: Antecedents and Impacts

Margarida do Carmo Belmar da Costa de Mendoça

Master's in Human Resources Management and Organizational Consultancy

Supervisor:

Inês Carneiro e Sousa, Invited Assistant Professor at Department of Human Resources and Organizational Behavior, Iscte Business School

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Resumo

As pausas na carreira representam interrupções intencionais no percurso profissional, concebidas para responder a necessidades pessoais ou familiares. Este estudo investiga os motivos que levam os trabalhadores a optar por pausas, os seus impactos pessoais e profissionais e as barreiras de quem nunca as realizou.

Aplicou-se um inquérito a 172 trabalhadores, recolhendo dados sobre histórico de pausas, motivações, perceção de impactos e barreiras. A análise incluiu estatística descritiva, testes t e ANOVAs para comparar médias de impacto em subgrupos demográficos.

Os resultados mostram que 41 % dos inquiridos fizeram pelo menos uma pausa, motivados principalmente por razões familiares. Entre quem pausou, verificaram-se efeitos positivos na felicidade e na saúde, embora o impacto na produtividade tenha sido menor. Entre os que nunca fizeram pausas, as principais razões foram restrições financeiras, timing de carreira e receio de estagnação profissional.

Estes resultados estendem a teoria das carreiras sustentáveis ao demonstrar que pausas estratégicas funcionam como mecanismos de desenvolvimento de recursos, a par do job crafting e da aprendizagem ao longo da vida. Defende-se que as organizações legitimem estas pausas através de políticas flexíveis de Recursos Humanos. Apesar de limitações, este estudo redefine a pausa na carreira como um investimento planeado, capaz de formar trabalhadores mais felizes, saudáveis e, a longo prazo, empresas mais resilientes.

Palavras-Chave: Pausas na Carreira, Carreiras Sustentáveis, Bem-estar

Classificação JEL

J22 – Alocação de tempo e oferta de trabalho

J24 – Capital humano; competências; escolha ocupacional; produtividade do trabalho

Abstract

Career breaks represent intentional interruptions in one's professional journey. This study integrates them within the sustainable-career framework to address two central questions: what motivates Portuguese professionals to interrupt their careers and how these pauses affect their personal and professional lives.

A survey of 172 employees from varied sectors collected data on break history, motivations, perceived impacts on happiness, health and productivity, and the barriers noted by non-breakers. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were employed to explore subgroup differences and compare mean impacts across demographic variables.

Results reveal that 41 % of respondents had taken at least one break, most frequently for family caregiving, health recovery, further education or personal development, the motives frequently overlapping. Individuals who took breaks reported positive impacts in happiness ($M = 4.26/5$) and health ($M = 4.25/5$), but only a slight rise in productivity ($M = 3.74/5$). These benefits are held across age, career stage and job function. Among individuals who did not take career breaks, the main reasons were financial constraints (60%), poor career timing (37%) and fear of career stagnation (29%).

The findings extend sustainable-career theory by showing that strategic pauses act as resource-building mechanisms alongside job crafting and lifelong learning. Practically, this study encourages organizations to legitimize breaks, introduce structured returnship programs and address financial or reputational obstacles. While limited by a predominantly female, service-sector sample, the study reframes career breaks as investments that can develop a happier, healthier and ultimately more resilient workforce.

Keywords: Career Breaks, Sustainable Career, Well-Being

JEL Classification

J22 – Time Allocation and Labor Supply

J24 – Human Capital; Skills; Occupational Choice; Labor Productivity

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Introduction

Work plays a crucial role in people's lives, providing a sense of purpose and community contribution. Over the years the concept of career has progressed significantly due to various global changes, such as demographic aging, the meaning of work and the importance of mental health (Drosos & Korfiatis, 2023). Today, career concerns are a top priority and the way people perceive their careers has transformed dramatically.

One of the explanations for this change in the conceptualization of career is the increasing average life expectancy at birth over the past years. According to Newman (2011), the boomer generation is the healthiest one and consequently will live longer (expectancies into 80 years old). This increase fosters the possibility of later retirement, which means longer careers than before. Due to this change over time, people have been planning their career counting on several indicators, trying to make their careers sustainable. This concept is relevant to this study, since it focuses on the urge to act on it, as sustainable careers need to be preserved and continued.

The average life expectancy at birth has risen. To understand this indicator, the two periods were examined: the past ten years (2014-2023) and the ten years prior (2004-2013). According to *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (2023), the total average life expectancy between 2004 and 2013 was of 78,81 years, with men averaging 75,62 years and women 81,81 years. Between 2014 and 2023, the total average increased to 80,88 years, with men averaging 77,9 and women 83,47 years. This represents a growth of 2,63% in the total average life expectancy from the period of 2004-2013 and 2014-2023 (3,02% for men and 2,03% for women). After this analysis, it is possible to conclude that the life expectancy at birth has increased over the years. Consequently, this trend allows for the possibility of later retirement, which means careers last longer than before.

Sustainable careers are "(...) the sequence of an individual's different career experiences, reflected through a variety of patterns of continuity over time, crossing several social spaces, and characterized by individual agency, herewith providing meaning to the individual" (Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015). Sustainable careers are increasingly important in contemporary work contexts to ensure sustained motivation and engagement among employees. If people are not driven by satisfaction, they are most likely to quit their occupation or to feel unhappy and unproductive. According to Tordera et al. (2020) a career is more sustainable if the employee's health, happiness and performance are decent, which is valuable both for employees and employers. Organizations play a crucial role in promoting sustainable careers for their employees and each employer should practice human resources policies to enhance its

importance. According to Bal and De Lange (2014), these policies can include various initiatives that increase people's motivation in their careers. One example can be flexibility in combining career and personal life, leading to greater job satisfaction and overall performance. Such practices directly contribute to better management of sustainable careers.

As stated before, career is defined, in this study, as the sequence of work experiences that evolves over the individual's life course (Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015). The authors define this concept by dividing it into four different elements: time, social space, agency and meaning. The element of time, related to careers, is based on the explanation that the concept of time has been changing over the years. This has been changing the mindset that careers should last longer, once individuals will face a longer career in terms of expected retirement age (Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015), as discussed before.

The element of Social Space highlights the fact that careers have become boundaryless instead of bounded (Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015). Careers have become more complex over time once people have other priorities other than their professional life, such as family responsibilities (spending time with their spouse, kids or elderly relatives), health and well-being (regular exercise, activities to manage stress), education and personal development and social relationships (including volunteer work, for example).

When it comes to agency, this element is related to the fact that careers are nowadays owned by the individual more than by the organization. Individuals are more independent than they used to be in the past, when they would depend more on the organization itself. Because of this change, individuals would have to have more specific career competencies so that they could secure a place in what they were interested in. The last element is meaning. Over the years, the meaning of careers and career success has changed. Careers, nowadays, are considered dependent on career satisfaction by the individual, contrasting the traditional, hierarchical concept of a career before.

In order to achieve these sustainable careers, career breaks are introduced as an initiative to support people to take a break from their jobs (Bravo & Herce, 2022) for several reasons, for example to reset, to rest or to experience new opportunities in life. These breaks are important because they help people prevent mental health matters specifically related to work, such as burnout. This research on career breaks reveals several significant gaps. One of the main gaps is the lack of in-depth studies on this topic, in which most existing research focuses primarily on career breaks related to maternity among women (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the different concepts which bring this a relevant topic, providing a more comprehensive and detailed understanding. By addressing this neglected area,

this work hopes to contribute to a more robust and diverse body of knowledge, offering new perspectives and practical initiatives for career breaks.

This study aims to explore individuals' experiences, perspectives and expectations regarding career breaks. Specifically, this investigation seeks to examine whether individuals have taken career breaks and their motivations for taking these breaks, as well as their plans or intentions regarding future career breaks. By understanding these factors, the study aims to identify ways for organizations to support individuals in building sustainable and flexible careers that align with their evolving needs, preferences and goals, and life circumstances, by allowing employees to take career breaks, if desired.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

1.1. Sustainable Careers

Sustainable careers have gained popularity as a required notion in recent years since organizations and individuals view the need of long-term satisfaction in career, employment, and life-work balance. Unlike the traditional models of progressive work in one single organization, sustainable careers prioritize change, well-being, and growth through an individual's identity throughout the entire professional career (Van der Heijden et al., 2020). This shift reflects what has been happening in society, including increased life expectancy, shifting labor market conditions, and the increasing awareness of mental health and well-being (Mir et al., 2024). These shifts in society need the rethinking of conventional career models, which have led to the creation of sustainable careers as a model for long-term professional success.

Van der Heijden et al. (2020) have defined sustainable careers as those that allow people to sustain productivity, engagement, and well-being over time while responding to internal and external changes. This definition by Van der Heijden et al. (2020) and colleagues focuses on three essential dimensions: the individual, meaning a person's ability to drive their career via continuous learning, persistence, and adaptability; the context, meaning the role of workplace facilitation, forces in the labor market, and social norms; and time, meaning the acknowledgement that career ambitions and requirements differ across different phases of life. These three dimensions describe the importance of a holistic approach to career management that considers both individual agency and external influences.

Sustainable careers are most important in the current situation where individuals are expected to maintain longer working lives with retirement ages being moved further back. This requires a proactive career strategy with ongoing learning, adaptability, and resilience being the central themes (Mikulec, 2025). Several theoretical perspectives provide valuable insights into how sustainable careers can be achieved.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) describes how work-related factors can affect career sustainability. It makes the distinction between job demands, such as workload or time pressure, which can lead to stress or burnout if poorly managed, and job resources, such as autonomy, social support, or career development opportunities, which enhance engagement and well-being. This model is often used to inform

policies that help organizations create a healthier balance between demands and resources, with the goal of preventing burnout and promoting sustainable, fulfilling careers.

When this balance is achieved, employees are more likely to maintain their energy, commitment, and satisfaction over time. On the other hand, when job demands repeatedly outweigh available resources, individuals may experience ongoing exhaustion or disengagement. Kinnunen et al. (2011) further expand the JD-R model by introducing the concept of recovery experiences, which are activities or states that allow individuals to detach from work, relax, and restore their mental and emotional resources. In such cases, taking a career break can serve as an effective strategy for recovery, allowing individuals to engage in these restorative experiences, regain their energy, and clarity to re-engage with their professional paths in a more sustainable way.

Sustainable careers can be fostered within organizations by embedding job crafting principles in Human Resources Management practice, for example, through providing training to enable employees to re-design the job to suit their interests and strengths.

Job crafting is a central theory in sustainable careers. Originally developed by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) and later studied by Akkermans and Tims (2017), job crafting, as originally defined, is the changes workers introduce to their work environment to align it more with their strengths, values, and interests. All these changes may be of different types: task crafting, which means modifying job tasks to enhance meaning and satisfaction; relational crafting, which means developing healthy workplace relationships to improve social support, and cognitive crafting, which means modifying perceptions about job roles to improve motivation and fulfillment (Junça-Silva et al., 2022).

For instance, task crafting might involve voluntarily taking on new responsibilities or seeking more meaningful assignments; cognitive crafting could mean reframing the purpose of one's work—for example, viewing routine tasks as contributing to a larger goal; and relational crafting may include building stronger interpersonal connections at work, such as forming friendships with colleagues (Junça-Silva et al., 2022).

Through job crafting, one is able to make workplaces favorable to long-term sustainable careers by pausing burnout and increasing job engagement. Its main role is to align workers' personal values with their professional activity.

Based on that notion, Kossek and Ollier-Malaterre (2019) introduced the concept of collaborative job crafting, which means stressing common effort including employees, coworkers, and their supervisors in restructuring tasks at work collectively. It leads to higher motivation while strengthening professional relationships.

Therefore, increasing long-term career satisfaction and happiness also includes the understanding that demands and resources, and their impact on individuals, vary over time, a concept that is at the center of the lifespan perspective, which emphasizes that sustainability in careers needs to be studied in terms of various phases of life (Van der Heijden et al., 2020).

The early-career stages focus on skill acquisition and networking; mid-career stages are about leadership roles and work-life integration; later stages are about mentoring or retirement preparation. (Van der Heijden et al., 2020).

This dynamic career approach across the course of life is particularly crucial when considering larger population trends, such as increased life expectancy, which have significant implications for sustainable careers. This added dimension means longer working lives, so sustainable means are required to prevent burnout and skills obsolescence.

Portugal's Active Aging Strategy (República Portuguesa, 2024) encourages initiatives like lifelong learning programs and flexible retirement arrangements. Still, there are difficulties for workers with physically demanding jobs or those discriminated against based on age. Career transition policies into less labor-intensive positions are essential to help ensure sustainability in various professions.

Moreover, career breaks can play a strategic role within this framework by giving individuals the opportunity to step back, reflect, and invest in their growth. These pauses can be used to pursue further training, refresh outdated skills, or explore new career paths that can significantly boost employability in an evolving job market. For aging workers, in particular, taking time off can offer a valuable chance to reskill or focus on personal development, making it easier to stay active and engaged in their professional lives while adapting to new challenges and expectations (OECD, 2024b).

Being key stakeholders in the labor market, organizations have a key role to play in creating sustainable careers through HRM practices such as continuous learning, providing training programs that enable employees to update their skills on a regular basis, flexible work schedules, providing choices such as working from home or part-time schedules to address personal needs, and employee well-being programs, implementing programs focused on mental health care or stress management.

Research by Barakat et al. (2024) reveals that organizations with effective HRM policies not only enhance employee satisfaction but also achieve competitive advantage when it comes to attracting top talent.

As populations age and technological advancements reshape working life, traditional career paths are evolving, and alternative career models are gaining prominence as potential

solutions. In this context, freelance work and portfolio careers have become increasingly popular, driven by technological changes and shifting employment market conditions.

Arthur (1994) conceptualized boundaryless careers, where employees prioritize moving across industries or organizations rather than following a stable, linear career trajectory. While these models offer flexibility and autonomy, it is essential for employees to continue learning and adapting in order to maintain employability. Furthermore, work-life balance remains the foundation of sustainable careers, with flexible models like hybrid work arrangements allowing employees to manage personal commitments without sacrificing professional productivity.

The Covid-19 pandemic has drastically highlighted the importance of such types of policies since there has been an increased uptake of working from home and hybrid models so that flexibility can be extended to meet more work-life requirements (Vohra et al., 2023).

Specifically, the pandemic forced businesses to quickly adopt a remote work model, and this led to an overall understanding of the benefits of flexible work arrangements. (Vohra et al., 2023). The shift brought to attention the potential of sustainable careers being more realistic in the near future, particularly for those with caregiving obligations or who need greater control over their working schedules. However, it also highlighted challenges such as blurring boundaries between work life and personal life, increased social isolation, and worsening digital divides (Mir et al, 2024). The pandemic highlighted the importance of such policies to maintain well-being during difficult times.

Despite the advancements towards developing sustainable careers, challenges still exist like unequal access to resources for low-paid workers, gender inequality resulting from caregiving obligations, or workplace discrimination and age discrimination impacting older workers' career opportunities or reintegration following interruptions. These challenges need to be dealt with through collaborative actions by policymakers, companies, and individuals.

To sum up, sustainable careers are concerned with adaptability, employability, and well-being throughout an individual's working life. By combining models like job crafting and JD-R theory with organizational support practices, it is viable to craft settings that enable long-term success. As demographic shifts continue to redefine professional journeys across the globe, sustainable careers will remain a critical research domain for individuals seeking fulfillment and organizations seeking productivity.

1.2. Career breaks: Antecedents

The concept of sustainable careers highlights the importance of long-term employability, adaptability, and well-being throughout an individual's professional life (Van der Heijden et al.,

2020). As mentioned before, while traditional career development models emphasize continuous progression, ongoing perspectives recognize that career sustainability does not always follow a linear trajectory. Instead, it involves a dynamic process of adaptation, where individuals may strategically step away from the workforce to realign their professional and personal goals (Gwal, 2016).

Non-traditional career paths, including career breaks, are becoming increasingly normalized in today's labor market, particularly within flexible work structures and the gig economy, like Arthur (1994) mentioned. Career breaks, therefore, should not be perceived merely as interruptions but rather as intentional career management strategies that allow individuals to maintain long-term professional sustainability (Gwal, 2016). Whether driven by personal, familiar, or professional motives, career breaks can serve as mechanisms to enhance skill development, well-being, and work-life balance.

A career break refers to a temporary, voluntary, or involuntary withdrawal from the workforce, typically undertaken with the intention of returning to professional activity. According to Gwal (2016), career break is defined as a time out of employment due to specific reasons. It is defined as a period during which an individual temporarily leaves their professional path, with the intention of returning later. The interruption period is not very well known as it can vary from career to career. For example, O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) discuss career breaks as an integral aspect of women's career trajectories, particularly in contrast to classic, male-centric models of career development.

Unlike unemployment, which is involuntary and dictated by external labor market conditions, career breaks are often intentional and planned.

As there is no universally agreed-upon definition of a career break, for the purposes of this study, it is defined as a temporary and voluntary interruption of professional activity, with a minimum duration of thirty days. This interruption in one's career can be done due to various motives. According to Jones (2023) these can be due to reasons such as end of a fixed term contract, maternity leave, caring responsibilities, health issues, for travel, a sabbatical or other reasons. These reasons are going to be further developed. However, it is important to note that these motives are not yet fully understood within existing literature. Therefore, this section also aims to identify theoretical gaps and contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors leading to career breaks.

Research shows that career breaks can have several implications (Gwal, 2016) and are often studied in the context of career transitions and re-entry in the workforce. Career transitions refer to significant changes in an individual's professional path, such as periods of

unemployment, changes between sectors, or temporary withdrawals from work, which require adaptation and adjustment. In the case of career breaks, re-entry into the workforce involves navigating barriers such as skill depreciation, loss of professional networks, or biases from employers. Most existing studies tend to focus on maternity leave as a form of career break, analyzing its impact on women's career trajectories and their subsequent reintegration into professional roles (Gwal, 2016).

Career breaks are often mixed with other employment gaps, but they have distinct characteristics. Gap years, on the one hand, are typically associated with younger individuals who take time off between education and employment, often for travel or volunteer work. (Schwartzstein & Marzouk, 2024)

Sabbaticals, on the other hand, are linked to corporate settings, where employees take extended paid leaves, for research, personal development or travel, with an assurance of job security upon return. Suchikova and Nazarovets (2024) define Sabbatical as paid leave for study or travel.

Extended Leaves are related to leaves for more personal matters, such as health care and caregiving responsibilities (Gwal, 2016). These kinds of breaks are usually unpaid, and the person may or may not be secure of their job upon return.

These terms represent a general definition of these breaks, but their specific conditions and policies vary across organizations and countries, with differences in duration, eligibility, compensation, and job security upon return. This variability is crucial, as it directly impacts on individuals' perceptions of the feasibility and desirability of taking a career break. In contexts where support mechanisms are limited or where returning to work may be uncertain, individuals may be discouraged from interrupting their careers. Factors such as concerns about job security, fear of missing career advancement opportunities, financial constraints, organizational commitment, uncertainty about the future, perceived stigma, or being at an early career stage can all contribute to the decision not to take a career break.

The increasing normalization of career breaks within non-linear career paths (Baruch, 2004) highlights their role in supporting long-term employability and adaptability. Understanding these distinctions is essential in framing career breaks as part of a broader sustainable career strategy rather than disruptions to professional continuity.

This section is divided into three main categories for career breaks' motives: social, personal and professional. This categorization was chosen to better capture the complexity and multidimensional nature of the reasons behind career breaks. Grouping the motives in this way

allows for a clearer understanding of how external social factors, individual circumstances, and career-related considerations interact and influence the decision to take a career break.

Social motives for career breaks arise primarily from familial obligations and culturally shaped expectations around care and support. These are often externally influenced and rooted in relational responsibilities (Gwal,2016).

One of the most prevalent social reasons for taking career breaks, particularly among women, is related to parental leave and childcare. The transition to parenthood usually necessitates a temporary exit from the workforce to care for a newborn. While many countries, including Portugal, have implemented policies supporting paid parental leave, some individuals choose to extend their leave beyond the legally mandated periods, this extension constitutes a voluntary career break (Gwal, 2016).

In Portugal, mothers are entitled to 120 to 150 days of parental leave, and fathers are also granted legal paternity leave (República Portuguesa, 2025). However, despite these progressive policies, many parents face reintegration challenges post-leave (Gwal, 2016).

Beyond childcare, caring for elderly or ill family members is another common reason for career breaks. With an aging population, particularly in European countries like Portugal, professionals often take extended leaves or exit the workforce temporarily to provide care. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in cultures with strong familial expectations, where professional caregiving services may be costly or culturally discouraged. Research shows that the performance of these cares is done by family members, and that a caregiver is rarely provided (Mónico et al., 2018).

Personal motives for career breaks are intrinsically driven by the desire for self-exploration, well-being, and individual goals. In modern career paths, there is a growing emphasis on personal fulfillment and life balance. Some individuals take career breaks to pursue personal interests such as long-term travel, volunteering, or self-discovery. These breaks often prompt career re-evaluation and a quest for new experiences that contribute to personal growth. Notably, travel during career breaks provides individuals with the opportunity to develop several critical soft skills, such as adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and resilience, skills that can significantly enhance future employability (Robles, 2012).

In today's fast-paced, ever-changing business environment, soft skills have become indispensable assets for organizations striving to stay competitive. Unlike technical or hard skills, which tend to be industry-specific, soft skills such as communication, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and teamwork are universally valued. These interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities enable employees to collaborate effectively, resolve conflicts, and

navigate the complexities of workplace dynamics (Bhaskar et al., 2025). With the rise of automation and artificial intelligence, which increasingly handle routine tasks, the human element of work, emotional insight, creative problem-solving, and relationship-building, has never been more crucial. Organizations that cultivate and prioritize these soft skills create environments where innovation and collaboration thrive, directly enhancing productivity and employee engagement (Robles, 2012).

Moreover, soft skills are pivotal in fostering a positive organizational culture and improving employee retention. In today's remote and multicultural workspaces, the ability to communicate clearly and empathically across distances is essential for maintaining team cohesion and aligning with organizational goals. Employees who possess strong emotional intelligence, for instance, are better equipped to manage stress, lead with empathy, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. These skills not only improve individual well-being but also contribute to a resilient and sustainable workforce, reducing turnover (Bhaskar et al., 2025). In the complex and globalized marketplace, soft skills are no longer a supplementary advantage; they are fundamental to long-term success and organizational growth. Soft skills are just as critical to an organization's success as technical expertise (hard skills) (Robles, 2012).

The increasing popularity of digital nomadism and remote work in Portugal has further emphasized the desire for a balance between work and personal exploration. Nowadays, the main appeal to become a digital nomad is the possibility of being able to work while discovering the world and travel all over (Banywana & Kampala International University VII, 2025). As more professionals take career breaks for travel, they gain soft skills that directly contribute to their professional effectiveness. These experiences of self-exploration and cultural immersion not only enrich personal development but also strengthen the capabilities required to excel in diverse and dynamic organizational environments (Kim, 2024).

Still inside the personal motives, the increasing recognition of work-related stress and burnout has made mental health a key driver of career breaks. The pandemic of Covid-19, nominated a Tsunami on Human Well-Being by Ramalho et al. (2023), is considered one of the causes of increased mental health problems in between professionals. It brought an unrepresented amount of stress and burnout to employees. In a study developed by Atanackovic et al. (2025), it was concluded that, counting with the sample case study professional, 43% reported worsened mental health.

And so, because of such stress, many professionals step away from work to prioritize their well-being, recover from exhaustion, or seek professional mental health support Ramalho et al., (2023).

In Portugal, although discussions around workplace mental health are gaining traction, stigma still exists around career breaks taken for psychological reasons. As a result, many individuals hesitate to disclose mental health as their primary reason for a break, fearing potential employer biases. These dynamics relate to broader issues of shame, societal expectations, and the lack of open conversations around psychological health in the workplace (Amanawa, 2024).

Finally, professional motives involve a deliberate pause from work aimed at improving skills, gaining qualifications, or reorienting one's career path. These breaks are often planned and future-oriented, focusing on long-term employability and career sustainability.

Career breaks for educational purposes are another common antecedent, particularly among mid-career professionals seeking to upskill or transition into new industries.

In today's fast-changing world of work, lifelong learning has become less of a choice and more of a necessity. As Mikulec (2025) explains, the idea of lifelong learning has changed over time, from a humanistic vision focused on personal development and social equality to a more economically driven concept, where learning is often linked to productivity and employability. International institutions like the OECD and the European Union have played a major role in promoting this shift, framing lifelong learning as a way to keep individuals competitive in a globalized, knowledge-based economy (Mikulec, 2025).

Recent reports (Cedefop, 2023; Eurofound, 2023) highlight that skills development is at the heart of the twin transition, the simultaneous green and digital transformation reshaping labor markets. The need for reskilling and upskilling has become even more pressing, with Cedefop (2023) emphasizing that a 'skills revolution' is necessary to address future labor market tensions and avoid skills mismatches. Eurofound (2023) also stresses the urgency of promoting lifelong learning to mitigate risks of labor shortages and ensure workers can adapt to the changing demands of the economy.

In this context, taking a career break to pursue education or retraining is no longer seen as stepping away from work, but rather as a strategic move to remain employable and adaptable. Especially as careers become less linear and more flexible, the ability to continuously learn and update one's skills has become essential for long-term career sustainability. Lifelong learning, then, is not just about keeping up, it's about making sure people can thrive personally and professionally throughout their lives (Mikulec, 2025).

In Portugal, the "Programa Qualifica" is one example of a government initiative that encourages individuals to enhance their qualifications through flexible learning opportunities. However, taking time off for education often comes with financial considerations, making it a

less accessible option for individuals without sufficient savings or employer sponsorship (Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional [ANQEP], n.d).

Career breaks may also include formal education paths such as MBAs or advanced technical training programs, often supported or subsidized by employers. These programs, while demanding temporary withdrawal from the workforce, are increasingly seen as strategic investments in professional growth (Beck & Dodson, 2025).

While the motives described above primarily reflect social, personal, and professional drivers, external factors can significantly influence the decision-making process around taking a career break.

The decision to take a career break can be influenced by wider economic and cultural factors that either support or discourage stepping away from work. When the economy is stable and job opportunities are relatively abundant, individuals may feel more confident taking a break, knowing that re-entering the labor market is likely to be manageable. On the other hand, during times of economic downturn or uncertainty, career breaks can feel like a much riskier choice, especially for those working in industries with low re-employment rates or for older professionals who may already face age-related bias (OECD, 2019; European Commission, 2023). In Portugal, as in many other countries, macroeconomic trends, such as employment growth, labor market flexibility, and sectoral demand - play a significant role in shaping how feasible and safe it feels to pause one's career, even temporarily.

Cultural perceptions are also key. In Portugal, extended parental leave has become accepted, supported by legislation and shifting social norms. Wall et al. (2019) discuss how Portuguese public attitudes towards parental leave have evolved, noting an increasing institutional and societal acceptance of longer parental leave periods. However, when it comes to other types of breaks, the picture becomes more complex. These kinds of breaks are still sometimes viewed with suspicion, particularly by employers in more traditional or conservative sectors (Allen, 2021). Whether a career break is seen as a legitimate and valuable choice often depends on an organization's internal culture and policies. Companies that invest in reintegration support, flexible working arrangements, and inclusive career development frameworks are generally more open to non-linear paths and view career breaks as part of a sustainable career journey Arthur (1994).

In contrast, environments that lack these structures may unintentionally penalize individuals who take time off, making it harder for them to regain momentum after returning to work. This highlights an important point: the outcome of a career break isn't only about the

individual's motivations; it is also deeply influenced by the economic climate and the organizational context they return to (Suchikova & Nazarovets, 2024; Randstad, 2025).

The following section will examine the consequences of career breaks, exploring their economic, social, professional, and individual impacts, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of their role in long-term career sustainability.

1.3. Career breaks: Impacts

This section moves beyond defining career breaks and their antecedents, focusing instead on a critical examination of their impacts and consequences, both positive and less positive, for individuals and organizations. The primary aim is to provide a complete understanding of how career breaks shape professional trajectories, workplace dynamics, and overall career sustainability.

Career breaks can offer a wide range of benefits, both for individuals and, indirectly, for organizations. These advantages can be categorized into enhanced personal well-being, skill development, and improved work-life balance. This categorization is supported by existing research, which identifies these areas as primary outcomes of career breaks for individuals and organizations (Gwal, 2016).

One of the most salient benefits of career breaks is their potential to enhance personal well-being and mental health. Periods of intense work or high-stress environments can lead to burnout, a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion characterized by cynicism, detachment, and reduced professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Career breaks provide a crucial opportunity for recovery, allowing individuals to disengage from work-related stressors and rejuvenate (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2019).

In addition to detachment, the literature emphasizes that specific types of recovery experiences—such as relaxation, mastery, and gaining control over one's time—play distinct roles in replenishing personal resources and fostering resilience (Notebaert et al., 2025). For instance, engaging in activities that promote relaxation or that offer a sense of mastery has been associated with lower emotional exhaustion and higher feelings of personal accomplishment, two critical indicators of workplace well-being. Thus, beyond simply stepping away from work, career breaks can actively cultivate diverse recovery experiences, contributing not only to immediate restoration but also to longer-term resilience across multiple psychological dimensions. Moreover, they can facilitate realignment of personal and professional goals, allowing individuals to reassess their priorities and make more intentional career choices upon their return (Notebaert et al., 2025).

Career breaks often serve as a mechanism for restoring work-life balance, particularly for individuals with caregiving responsibilities or those seeking a better integration of personal and professional life (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). These breaks can provide the necessary time and space to address personal needs, nurture family relationships, and pursue personal interests, thereby reducing long-term conflicts between work and personal life. For parents or caregivers, career breaks can mean being more present during critical developmental stages or providing essential support to family members (Mónico et al., 2018). This improved balance not only enhances individual well-being but can also lead to greater job satisfaction and commitment in the long run.

Contrary to concerns about skill atrophy during time away from the workforce, many individuals leverage career breaks to pursue skill development and lifelong learning (Mikulec, 2025). Individuals may use this time to pursue formal education, acquire new certifications, or engage in self-directed learning activities that enhance their employability and adaptability in a rapidly changing labor market. These periods can also foster personal growth, broaden perspectives, and cultivate valuable soft skills such as resilience, independence, and adaptability (Baruch, 2004). This investment in personal and professional development can lead to increased confidence and enhanced performance upon returning to work, as mentioned earlier.

While career breaks offer numerous potential benefits, they also entail potential downsides. These less positive consequences can include barriers to re-entry, financial and professional costs, and the aggravation of gender and social inequities. Many of these outcomes stem from a negative perception of career interruptions, which persists in organizational contexts. Career breaks are often viewed as career discontinuities that require justification during recruitment and selection processes, where unexplained gaps in employment history may be perceived as a sign of lower commitment, competence, or ambition (Weisshaar, 2018). This stigmatization not only reinforces existing inequalities but also constitutes a significant barrier for individuals seeking to re-enter the workforce after a break.

Individuals returning to the workforce after a career break may face significant barriers to re-entry and career progression. Employers may hold biases or skepticism towards those with employment gaps, perceiving them as less committed or less up to date with industry trends. This stigma can be particularly pronounced for longer breaks or in rapidly evolving fields where skills can quickly become outdated. As a result, returnees may encounter difficulty securing comparable positions, experience downshifting in their career trajectories, or face limitations in advancement opportunities (Weisshaar, 2018).

Extended or unpaid career breaks can have substantial financial implications, impacting income, retirement savings, and long-term financial security. These career breaks can lead to immediate income loss and long-term impacts on savings, retirement contributions, and financial security. According to the OECD (2024a) report, countries like Portugal, where average wages are lower relative to other European economies, present a particularly challenging environment.

The report's insights into tax burdens highlight that higher tax wedges further reduce disposable income, limiting the feasibility of career breaks for many workers (OECD, 2024a). Although the report does not address career breaks directly, its findings illustrate the broader economic pressures that make extended periods away from paid work financially precarious for a significant portion of the Portuguese workforce.

Furthermore, individuals may miss out on professional development opportunities, networking events, and promotions, which can delay their career advancement and earning potential (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2019). Being away from the workplace can limit their access to new skills, valuable relationships, and visibility among key decision-makers. Over time, this can make it harder to regain momentum, as colleagues who stayed active may have moved ahead, securing opportunities that might be harder to reach. As a result, career breaks can sometimes lead to slower salary growth, fewer chances for advancement, and a sense of falling behind professionally (Weisshaar, 2018).

The consequences of career breaks are not uniformly distributed across the population; gender and social inequities can exacerbate the negative impacts, particularly for women (Arun et al., 2004; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Women are disproportionately likely to take career breaks for caregiving responsibilities, a phenomenon that contributes to existing gender gaps in pay and leadership.

The lack of supportive workplace policies, such as flexible return-to-work programs and affordable childcare, can further disadvantage women, delaying their ability to re-enter the workforce and advance their careers on an equal footing with their male counterparts (Gwal, 2016).

The impact of career breaks is also significantly influenced by contextual factors, including organizational culture, industry norms, and available support systems (Arthur, 1994). Organizations with flexible work policies, return-to-work programs, and supportive management practices can mitigate the negative consequences of career breaks and facilitate smoother transitions (Barakat et al., 2024). Industries with a culture of continuous learning and a willingness to embrace non-linear career paths may also be more accepting of career breaks.

Conversely, in sectors characterized by constant change and disruption, workers are expected to continuously update their skills and knowledge, making it more challenging to reintegrate after a period of absence. In such environments, even short breaks can lead to skill obsolescence or perceived gaps in professional development. Moreover, societal attitudes toward work-life balance and non-traditional career trajectories play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and reducing stigma associated with taking time off from work (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

To conclude, career breaks are neither inherently beneficial nor detrimental; their impact centers on a complex interplay of individual circumstances, organizational support, and societal attitudes (Van der Heijden et al., 2020). While career breaks can offer valuable opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and improved well-being, they also carry the risk of creating barriers to re-entry, financial strain, and the perpetuation of gender and social inequities.

Recognizing these complexities, it is essential that organizations and policymakers take a proactive approach, promoting supportive reintegration policies, cultivating inclusive cultures, and challenging stigmas associated with career breaks (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2019).

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

2.1. Procedure

This study followed a quantitative research approach to explore employees' motivations and desires to take a career break. A survey was chosen as the primary method for data collection because it allowed us to gather a large amount of information from a diverse group of individuals.

The survey was designed using Qualtrics and shared through the researcher's personal social media and email. The data collection lasted seven weeks between March 10th and April 25th. Before starting the survey, participants were required to provide informed consent, where they were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Before launching the full study, a pilot test was conducted with a small group (2–4 participants) to check for any issues with question clarity or survey flow. Their feedback was used to refine the final version of the questionnaire.

2.2. Participants

The study included adults aged 18 and older who understand Portuguese and have been in the labor market for at least one year. A non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was used, aiming to include individuals from various age groups, industries, and career stages.

Overall, the survey initially gathered 277 responses. However, several were excluded from the final analysis due to incomplete answers to the final question. Additionally, respondents who were not working in Portugal or who identified solely as students were also disqualified, in line with the study's inclusion criteria.

The final sample consists of 172 individuals. Across the retained 172 cases, item non-response ranged from 0% (on the variable gender) to 9% (on the household size variable). All percentages reported above are therefore based on valid responses for each variable.

The gender distribution is predominantly female (70.3%), with males representing 29.7% of the respondents. Most participants are between 18 and 34 years old (55.4%), followed by individuals aged 35 or older (44.6%).

In terms of education, the sample is highly qualified: 45.6% hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent, 43.9% have completed a master's degree, 7.0% have a high school diploma, and

3.5% hold a PhD. Regarding job function, participants were categorized into six professional areas: 35.2% work in Human Resources and Consulting, 30.2% in Management, Administration and Direction, 8.6% in both Marketing, Communication and Sales and in Education, Research and Social Work, 7.4% in Product and Technology roles, and 9.9% were classified as Other.

Regarding the employment sector, the largest group of participants (29.1%) work in Consulting and Professional Services. This is followed by Technology, Media, and Telecommunications (12.8%), Infrastructure, Transport, and Logistics (12.2%), Education, Sports, and Community Services (11.0%), and Retail and Commerce (11.0%). Smaller proportions are employed in Industry, Construction, and Productive Activities (6.4%), Hospitality and Tourism (5.8%), and Health and Pharmaceuticals (4.7%).

When it comes to work experience, 41.0% of participants have over 15 years of professional experience, followed by 19.9% with 6–10 years, 18.7% with 3–5 years, 14.5% with up to 2 years, and 6.0% with 11–15 years of experience. In terms of career stage, 45.3% are in the early stages of their career, 22.7% are mid-career professionals, and 32.0% are in advanced or final stages of their career.

As for household composition, 26.9% of participants live in households of four people, 23.7% in households of two, 20.5% in households of three, 17.3% live alone, and 11.5% share a home with five or more individuals.

Additionally, most participants indicated they have financial responsibilities, with 46.5% reporting shared financial responsibility within the household, 23.3% stating that another person is the main provider, 20.3% identifying as the sole financial provider, and 9.3% describing themselves as the primary contributor. In terms of dependent care, 59.9% of respondents stated they had no dependents, while 33.1% reported having at least one person dependent on their financial or caregiving support. These variables offer important context to better understand each individual's personal and professional constraints, which may influence decisions around taking a career break.

To ensure both statistical robustness and clarity, several key variables were recoded prior to analysis. Participants' ages, originally recorded in continuous years, were collapsed into two groups: "18–34 years" and "35 years and older." The same happened with the category of years or experience, which was divided into six groups: No experience, until 2 years of experience, 3 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years and more than 15 years of experience.

The original four-level career-stage measure ("early-career," "mid-career," "advanced-career," and "late-career") was simplified into three categories by merging the "advanced-career" and "late-career" stages into a single group. Additionally, the dependent variable

capturing caregiving responsibilities was converted from a count of dependents into a binary indicator: respondents reporting one or more dependents were coded as “with dependents,” while those reporting none were coded as “without dependents.” Finally, the variable of function, initially recorded as text, was divided into six groups: Human Resources and Consulting, Management, Administration and Executive leadership, Marketing, Communication and Commercial, Projects, Product and Technology, Education, Research and Social Sector and Others.

These recodings were assumed to improve interpretability and ensure adequate cell sizes for all comparisons.

2.3. Survey Instrument

The survey was divided into two main sections. The first section focused on participants’ personal experiences with career breaks. Those who had taken one were asked about their motivations and their impact, while those who had not were asked whether they had considered it and why. The second section gathered demographic details, such as age, gender, household structure, and employment-related information (Atanackovic et al., 2025).

In addition to these sections, the first and last questions of the survey asked participants about their perception of the concept of "Career Break." This aimed to assess whether their views shifted after reflecting on the reasons for taking one.

To gather data on participants’ perceptions of career breaks and their personal experiences, the survey included both closed-ended and multiple-choice questions designed to gather data on participants' perceptions of career breaks and their personal experiences. To assess respondents' opinions on the impacts of career breaks, a Likert scale was used (Gwal, 2016). This scale asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements related to the perceived benefits and challenges of taking a career break. The scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing respondents to express their level of agreement with each statement. The statements included three different types of impact: happiness, health and productivity (Tordera et al., 2020).

Apart from the mandatory informed consent question, all survey responses were optional, ensuring that participants felt comfortable skipping any questions they did not wish to answer.

Because the target population consists of professionals working in Portugal and the data were collected in their native language, the full questionnaire is presented in the appendix in Portuguese to preserve the original wording and measurement validity.

2.4. Data Analysis Strategy

The data collected in this study was analyzed using SPSS v.29. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and their experiences with career breaks.

Cross-tabulations were used to explore trends, such as differences in career break intentions across age groups. Then, tests like Independent T-tests and One-way Anova's were conducted, mostly on the impacts.

Given that the study was descriptive, the analysis was focused on descriptive statistics. The goal was to provide a clear overview of the data and highlight key patterns in participants' responses.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Of the 172 professionals who completed the questionnaire, 71 (41.3%) reported having taken at least one career break, while 101 (58.7%) never interrupted their career. Among these, 16 respondents (22.5%) were on a break at the time of the survey.

To assess the stability of respondents' attitudes toward taking a career break, 171 participants were asked the same question answered in a 1 to 10 scale - "How important do you consider taking a career break?" - at the beginning (Opinion 1) and at the end (Opinion 2) of the survey. A paired-samples t-test showed no statistical change: the mean rating was 7.39 ($SD = 2.26$) at the beginning of the survey versus 7.42 ($SD = 2.28$) at the end of the survey, $t(170) = -0.43$, $p = 0.67$, Cohen's $d = -0.03$. The two measurements were highly correlated ($r = 0.92$, $p < .001$).

These results indicate that participants' perceptions of career-break importance remained stable over the course of the questionnaire. Moreover, with mean ratings around 7 on a 1 to 10 scale, the overall attitude toward taking a career break was strongly positive.

To evaluate overall satisfaction, participants who had taken at least one break ($n = 71$) were asked if they would do it again. Of those who responded, 74.6% said they would, 16.9% said "Maybe," and only 8.5% said they would not. This strong willingness to repeat further underscores the personal value respondents place on career breaks.

From this moment forward, the analysis centers on two dimensions: the motivations for either embracing or avoiding a career break and, on the other hand, the outcomes (impacts) perceived by respondents who have done so.

3.1. Motives

3.1.1 Profile of Respondents with Prior Breaks

Seventy one of the 172 professionals surveyed (41.3%) had interrupted their professional career at least once, and 16 (22.5% of leavers) were on leave when they completed the questionnaire. The leaver group is predominantly female: 50 women (70.3%) versus 21 men (29.7%). Most are in mid- or late career. Forty four individuals (60.9%) are 35 or more years old and 27 (38%) place themselves in the advanced or final phase of their career; a further 22 (31%) describe themselves as early career and 22 (31%) as mid-careers.

Sectorally, Consulting and Professional Services companies dominate, representing 21 leavers (29%). Technology, Media and Telecommunications contributed 13 (18.8%), followed by Education, Sport and Community Services with nine (13%) and Infrastructure, Transport, and Logistics with eight (11.6%). Smaller shares come from Retail and Commerce (7.2%), Banking, Insurance and Finance (5.8%), Hospitality and Tourism (5.8%), Health and Pharmaceuticals (4.3%) and Industry and Construction (4.3%). Functionally, among the leavers, 25 respondents (35.4%) work in Human Resources or Consulting roles and 22 (30.8%) occupy Management, Administrative or Executive posts.

3.1.2 Patterns of Interruption and Primary Motives

When it comes to the number of breaks done by these individuals, 40 respondents (56.3%) have taken exactly one break, 13 (18.3%) have taken two, and 14 (19.7%) report three or more. The first breaks lasted, on average, 2.9 months ($SD = 2.10$). However, the distribution is wide: 17 leavers (28.8%) return within three months, 15 (25.8%) stay out for three to seven months, but 23 (39.4%) remain away for seven months or longer.

Respondents selected multiple reasons for their breaks. On average, each selected 2.3 motives of the ones provided (8 motives). Family reasons is the most selected option, mentioned by 35 leavers (21.8%). Health related considerations follow ($n = 28$; 17.6%), then further Education ($n = 24$; 15.1%) and the wish to change careers ($n = 23$; 14.4%). Personal development and time away to travel each attract 19 endorsements (11.8%). A residual category, covering “other” motives accounts for 12 mentions (7.6%).

Motives vary systematically with age. Breaks for family care, career change and structured self-development are most visible in middle-aged and older workers: at least seven in 10 of these interruptions are taken by respondents aged 35 years or more. By contrast, 54% of travel motivated breaks were reported by the 18-34-year-old group. Educational leave is age neutral, splitting equally across the age groups, and health related breaks are distributed almost perfectly 50 - 50.

The career stage presents different results. More than half (53.8%) of family-related breaks occur in the advanced stage, compared with 34.6% mid-career and only 11.5% early. Career breaks taken for educational purposes show the opposite pattern, with 38.9% of such breaks taken in early career and just 27.8% in the advanced phase. Personal development sabbaticals focus 42.9% on late career. Travel is shown both in early (35.7%) and late (42.9%) but less so in the middle years (21.4%).

When it comes to the number of dependents, it can be said that four fifths of family related breaks (80%) come from respondents with caregiving duties, although four fifths of health motivated pauses (also 80%) come from those without. Around 67% of education related breaks and 58.8% of career change breaks likewise originate from the “no dependent” group.

When it comes to activity and professional sectors, Consulting and Professional Services companies are represented across six of the seven motive categories, accounting for one quarter to almost half of the breaks in each. Technology, Media and Telecommunications typically provide the second largest contribution, especially for family, health, development, travel and career change motives. Notably, only three of the 28 health related breaks (10%) originate in the Health and Pharmaceutical sector itself, indicating that the need for medical or burnout leave is more common outside that industry.

3.1.3 Respondents Without a Break

One hundred and one professionals (58.7% of the full sample) did not take a career break until today. This group is evidently younger: 69 individuals (68.2%) are aged 18 to 34 years old, and 32 (31.8%) are 35 or older. Consulting, again, leads to sector representation (30 respondents; 30%), followed by Commerce and Retail ($n = 14$; 14%) and Infrastructure, Transport and Logistics ($n = 13$; 13%).

Financial viability is the principal barrier. Sixty one non-leavers (60%) cite economic constraints, and within this subgroup only 17 (27.9%) are sole household providers. Perceptions of timing and momentum are considered second. 37 respondents (37%) feel they are too early in their career to pause, 30 (30%) worry about the possibility of missing opportunities at work, and 29 (29%) fear insecure re-entry in the workforce after the break. Around 26% point to general future uncertainty, and one fifth (20%) mention a sense of obligation and compromise to their employer. Social stigma is less reported in this sample (13%).

When asked to specify conditions under which they might take a break, non-leavers prioritized the following: family obligations (26.6%), health (22.7%), travel (18%) and education (13.7%) are at the top the list, followed by career change (9.9%) and personal development (8.6%). Looking forward, one third (33.7%) express clear intent to pause their career at some point, 42.6% remain undecided, and only 23.8% do not consider doing so.

3.2. Impacts

The impacts of career breaks were identified by the group of people who have done at least one career break. As mentioned earlier, this group involves 72 people (41.3% of the total respondents).

A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine whether the impact of a career break differed across three dimensions: happiness, health and productivity, using ratings from 61 respondents on a five-point scale. Mauchly's test confirmed the sphericity assumption ($W = 0.97$, $\chi^2 (2) = 1.59$, $p = 0.45$), so no correction was required. Overall, participants reported good levels of happiness ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.84$) and health ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.93$), whereas productivity was rated close to the middle point of the scale at $M = 3.74$ ($SD = 1.02$). The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the dimension, $F (2, 120) = 9.60$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.14$. Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons showed no difference between happiness and health ($\Delta = 0.02$, $p = 1.00$), but both were rated about half a point higher than productivity (happiness vs. productivity $\Delta = 0.53$, $p = 0.002$; health vs. productivity $\Delta = 0.51$, $p = 0.002$). A trend analysis supported this pattern, with a strong linear decline from happiness to health to productivity ($F (1, 60) = 13.39$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.18$) and a smaller quadratic effect reflecting the sharper drop at the productivity end ($F (1,60) = 4.88$, $p = 0.03$, $\eta^2_p = 0.08$). In summary, career breaks generate clear well-being benefits, participants feel equally happier and healthier, but translate into less productivity.

3.2.1 Consistency Across Subgroups

To test the robustness of this finding, impacts by age, years of experience, job function, number of dependents and career stage were studied. In every subgroup, happiness and health remain at or above 4.0, while productivity never exceeded 4.0, confirming that the primary benefits of a career break are emotional and physical rather than professional.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Independent-Samples t-Test by Age Group

Variable	Age	n	Mean	SD	Levene's F	p-Lev	t	df	p	d
Happiness	18–34 yrs	31	4.35	0.8	0.012	0.914	0.55	55	0.585	0.15
	35+ yrs	26	4.23	0.91						
	Model									
Health	18–34 yrs	30	4.4	0.68	3.685	0.06	1.43	54	0.159	0.38
	35+ yrs	26	4.04	1.18						
	Model									

Productivity	18–34 yrs	31	3.87	0.99						
	35+ yrs	26	3.58	1.07						
Model					1.639	0.206	1.08	55	0.286	0.29

Note. d = Cohen's d ; Levene's $p > 0.05$, equal-variances t -test reported.

As shown in Table 1, none of the three variables differed significantly by age group (all Levene's $p > 0.05$, all t 's $p > 0.05$). Happiness: $t(55) = 0.55$, $p = 0.585$, $d = 0.15$; Health: $t(54) = 1.43$, $p = 0.079$, $d = 0.38$; Productivity: $t(55) = 1.08$, $p = 0.286$, $d = 0.29$.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Independent-Samples t -Test by Dependents

Variable	Dependents	n	Mean	SD	Levene's F	p -Lev	t	df	p	d
Happiness	No dependents	36	4.33	0.793						
	With dependents	22	4.09	0.921						
Model					0.361	0.55	1.062	56	0.293	0.287
Health	No dependents	35	4.37	0.877						
	With dependents	22	4.05	0.999						
Model					0.005	0.943	1.294	55	0.201	0.352
Productivity	No dependents	36	3.72	1.085						
	With dependents	22	3.73	0.935						
Model					0.101	0.751	−0.018	56	0.986	−0.005

Note. d = Cohen's d ; Levene's $p > 0.05$, equal-variances t test reported.

As seen in table 2, no significant differences by dependents were found in Happiness ($t(56) = 1.06$, $p = 0.293$, $d = 0.29$), Health ($t(55) = 1.29$, $p = 0.201$, $d = 0.35$) or Productivity ($t(56) = 0.02$, $p = 0.986$, $d = 0.01$).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA by Years of Experience

Variable	Years of Experience	n	Mean	SD	F	df	p	η^2
Happiness	≤ 2 yrs	8	4.13	0.99				
	3–5 yrs	8	4.25	0.71				
	6–10 yrs	15	4.4	0.74				
	11–15 yrs	6	4.33	0.82				
	> 15 yrs	21	4.24	0.94				
	Anova				0.159	4, 53	0.958	0.012
Health	≤ 2 yrs	8	4.38	0.74				
	3–5 yrs	8	4.5	0.76				
	6–10 yrs	14	4.21	0.7				
	11–15 yrs	6	3.67	1.37				
	> 15 yrs	21	4.24	1.04				

	Anova				0.762	4, 52	0.555	0.055
	≤ 2 yrs	8	3.5	1.31				
	3–5 yrs	8	4	0.54				
Productivity	6–10 yrs	15	3.87	1.06				
	11–15 yrs	6	3.83	0.75				
	> 15 yrs	21	3.48	1.08				
	Anova				0.619	4, 53	0.651	0.045

Note. η^2 = fixed-effect eta-squared; Levene's test $p > 0.05$ for all models, so equal-variances ANOVA was used.

A one-way ANOVA, as shown on table 3, found no significant differences among the five experience categories on happiness, $F(4, 53) = 0.16, p = .958, \eta^2 = 0.012$; on health, $F(4, 52) = 0.76, p = 0.555, \eta^2 = 0.055$; or on productivity, $F(4, 53) = 0.62, p = 0.651, \eta^2 = 0.045$. Post-hoc Tukey HSD comparisons likewise revealed no pairwise differences (all $p > 0.90$).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA by Job Function

Variable	Job Function	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Happiness	HR & Consulting	20	4.25	1.02	0.202	5, 55	0.96	0.018
	Management & Direction	16	4.25	0.683				
	Marketing & Commercial	7	4.14	1.069				
	Projects, Product & Tech	4	4.25	0.957				
	Education, Research & Social Area	7	4.57	0.535				
	Others	7	4.29	0.756				
	Anova							
Health	HR & Consulting	19	4.42	0.769	1.05	5, 54	0.398	0.089
	Management & Direction	16	4	1.095				
	Marketing & Commercial	7	4.43	0.535				
	Projects, Product & Tech	4	4.25	0.957				
	Education, Research & Social Area	7	4.57	0.535				
	Others	7	3.71	1.38				
	Anova							
Productivity	HR & Consulting	20	4	0.858	0.895	5, 55	0.491	0.075
	Management & Direction	16	3.69	0.946				
	Marketing & Commercial	7	3.29	1.38				
	Projects, Product & Tech	4	4	0.816				
	Education, Research & Social Area	7	3.86	0.9				
	Others	7	3.29	1.38				
	Anova							

Note. η^2 = fixed-effect eta-squared; Levene's $p > 0.23$, equal-variances ANOVA used.

A one-way ANOVA (table 4) revealed no significant effect of type of job on Happiness, $F(5, 55) = 0.20, p = 0.960, \eta^2 = 0.018$; on Health, $F(5, 54) = 1.05, p = 0.398, \eta^2 = 0.089$; or on

Productivity, $F(5, 55) = 0.90$, $p = 0.491$, $\eta^2 = 0.075$. Post-hoc Tukey HSD comparisons confirmed that no pairwise differences were significant (all $p > 0.90$).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA by Career Stage

Variable	Career Stage	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Happiness	Initial stage	26	4.31	0.84	0.054	2, 59	0.947	0.002
	Mid-career	18	4.22	1.06				
	Advanced/final stage	18	4.28	0.58				
Health	Initial stage	25	4.36	0.7	0.379	2, 58	0.686	0.013
	Mid-career	18	4.22	0.88				
	Advanced/final stage	18	4.11	1.23				
Productivity	Initial stage	26	3.81	0.98	0.213	2, 59	0.809	0.007
	Mid-career	18	3.78	1.06				
	Advanced/final stage	18	3.61	1.04				

Note. η^2 = fixed-effect eta-squared; Levene's $p > 0.19$, equal-variances ANOVA used.

A one-way ANOVA (table 5) showed no significant effect of career stage on any impact: Happiness, $F(2, 59) = 0.05$, $p = 0.947$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$; Health, $F(2, 58) = 0.38$, $p = 0.686$, $\eta^2 = 0.013$; Productivity, $F(2, 59) = 0.21$, $p = 0.809$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$. Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons likewise found no pairwise differences (all $p > 0.88$).

CHAPTER 4

Data Discussion

In this chapter, the findings are interpreted considering existing research and theory, with a focus on the two dimensions that have been studied: Motives and Impacts of Career Breaks. In each section, the study's results are compared with prior literature to highlight consistencies, divergences, and possible explanations. Then, the contributions, limitations and recommendations section focus on synthesizing the study's main empirical and theoretical contributions, examining its methodological and contextual constraints, and outlining concrete recommendations for future researchers.

4.1. Motives

The respondents selected several motives for taking career breaks. This diversity of motives aligns with the view in contemporary literature that career breaks are not uniform pauses, but intentional strategies adapted to individual circumstances. Gwal (2016), for example, emphasizes that a career break is typically taken on for specific personal, familiar, or professional reasons, rather than being a random interruption. Similarly, non-traditional career models highlight that stepping off the traditional path is normalized as a career management strategy.

In line with Arthur's (1994) concept of boundaryless careers, many workers today move through roles and even take planned breaks, viewing these pauses as part of a long-term sustainable trajectory rather than a derailment. The findings strongly reflect this perspective. Participants approached their breaks, aiming to fulfill goals (for example, caregiving, self-care, re-skilling), an approach consistent with seeing career breaks as intentional career management strategies that help realign one's professional and personal goals.

Family-care responsibilities emerged as the most frequently cited reason for interrupting work. This mirrors Gwal's (2016) observation that parental or elder-care needs are the primary drivers of voluntary breaks and this is consistent with O'Neil and Bilimoria's (2005) representation of many women's career trajectories as including intentional pauses to accommodate caregiving responsibilities. Although gender was considered in the study, the unbalanced number of respondents across gender categories prevents drawing firm conclusions about its relative importance. However, descriptive data show that 70% of the individuals who took career breaks were women, and four in five family-related breaks were reported by

respondents with dependents, figures that align with the gender-asymmetric caregiving patterns described in the literature. This pattern may also reflect cultural expectations. In environments where affordable childcare or eldercare is limited, individuals may feel they have little choice but to temporarily exit the workforce to support their families.

Health was the second most selected among motives. Kinnunen et al. (2011) argue that detachment, relaxation and resource restoration are essential once the balance of demands and resources leans towards exhaustion. The current sample suggests that nearly one in five breaks was taken for this recovery purpose. Ramalho et al. (2023) and Atanackovic et al. (2025) document a post-pandemic rise in self-reported mental-health struggles. The high percentage of health-related breaks in the present data reflects that tendency. As the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model assumes, these individuals likely reached a point where job demands outweighed their resources, risking serious exhaustion.

As results show, 80% of those who took a health-related break had no dependents. This suggests that professionals without caregiving obligations might feel more able or willing to prioritize their own health by taking time off, while those supporting families may hesitate to do so (perhaps due to financial constraints). It also underlines the persistent stigma around career breaks for mental health reasons (Amanawa, 2024). Even in a climate of growing awareness, some employees may use a burnout break as personal time or family time rather than openly mention mental health, fearing negative career effects. Culturally, there remains work to do to normalize taking a break for one's mental health (Atanackovic et al., 2025)

Further education-related breaks were reported across age groups, representing 15% of career break motives. While the specific motivations were not deeply explored, it is plausible that younger individuals might engage in postgraduate education early in their careers, whereas mid- or late-career workers may seek upskilling or reskilling opportunities to adapt to growing professional demands. This aligns with the broader notion of lifelong learning as a key component of sustainable career development. Mikulec (2025) observes that lifelong learning has shifted from a purely personal development ideal to an economic perspective. Workers are now expected to reskill to remain competitive technological and market changes. In this context, taking a career break to gain new skills can be framed as a strategic move rather than a risky break.

Career change motives were closely related, including 14% of mentions, and involved individuals pausing work to analyze their career direction. This study found that such career-change breaks were most common among mid-life and older workers. 70% of breaks motivated by a career change were taken by those aged 35 or above. This can be explained by mid-career

professionals increasingly embracing boundaryless or sustainable career orientations, which encourage re-evaluation and change based on evolving personal and professional values. A career break can provide the opportunity to redefine one's professional path (Gwal, 2016). Arthur (1994) has discussed the rise of boundaryless careers, where individuals, rather than focusing on a single occupation, make lateral moves and reinventions guided by their own values and goals. A calculated break can be a part of this boundaryless career mindset, an accepted interval to reorientate and pursue a more fulfilling trajectory.

Travel and personal-development breaks each represented 12% of selections. Their age distribution, over half of travel breaks by the 18-34 group and more than 40% of personal-development leaves in late career, matches the lifespan pattern outlined by Van der Heijden et al. (2020), where early stages oriented to exploration later stages to renewal. Robles (2012) reports that extended travel cultivates adaptability and intercultural competence. This suggests that respondents who took travel breaks might have endorsed new competencies and soft skills that will possibly prepare them for better reintegration in the workforce after the break.

Across all motives, respondents typically selected more than one reason, supporting literature's content that breaks satisfy overlapping personal, social and professional goals rather than a single need (Gwal, 2016). This is an especially interesting finding, as it highlights how career breaks are rarely driven by just one reason. Instead, they often reflect a combination of personal, social, and professional factors, showing how people make these decisions in response to different areas of their lives at once.

4.2. Impacts

Three dimensions were assessed when analyzing the impacts of career breaks: happiness, health and productivity. Mean post-break scores were high for happiness and health but lower for productivity. The same results appeared in every subgroup analyzed, with gaps between well-being and productivity ratings.

Prior studies (e.g., Kinnunen et al., 2011) have often noted that one of the most salient benefits of a career break is relief from stress and rejuvenation of mental health. By temporarily removing work pressures, individuals can recover from burnout, get more sleep or exercise, and tend to prioritize personal needs. The survey findings provide clear evidence of this: participants reported feeling better, both emotionally and physically, after taking time off. This aligns perfectly with the Job Demands-Resources model and the concept of recovery experiences discussed earlier (Kinnunen et al., 2011). When job demands had drained their energy, a break allowed our respondents to detach from work, relax, and restore their resources, returning to

their careers re-energized. In essence, the career break functioned as it is intended in an ideal scenario, as a reset button for well-being. Van der Heijden et al. (2020) argue that such recovery phases support long-term career sustainability. The consistently high happiness and health scores in this sample reinforce that point.

The more modest productivity outcome is compatible with Kossek and Ollier-Malaterre's (2019) and Weisshaar's (2018) observations that weaken skill, reduced networks and employer skepticism can reduce performance after a break. In highly dynamic industries, even a short absence can mean coming back to new tools, new client needs, or having to rebuild contacts, all of which can make one feel less productive initially. Respondents' productivity ratings therefore represent a pattern noted in earlier empirical work. No subgroup (by age, dependents, job function, or career stage) reported a mean productivity score equal to or higher than their well-being scores, supporting the generality of this effect across demographic categories.

Contextual differences noted in prior research were partially reflected here. Break-takers from sectors familiar to continuous learning, for example, consulting and technology, which dominated the sample, might come from organizations that offer an easier re-entry process or informal support for career breaks. Such practices correspond to Barakat et al.'s (2024) evidence that supportive Human Resource Management practices can moderate the productivity decline typically observed after a career break. Conversely, in more traditional industries, respondents seemed to encounter longer adjustment periods following their return, consistent with Arthur's (1994) view that occupational cultures significantly influence the outcomes of career breaks.

Overall, the results replicate the two-sided pattern frequently observed in earlier research: career breaks improve personal well-being, yet their immediate influence on job performance is uncertain. This evidence reinforces Van der Heijden et al. (2020) argument that a career break's value depends on the context, is shaped by each individual's circumstances and depends on the support they receive.

In conclusion, this study's insights argue for a reframing of career breaks in both theory and practice. Rather than viewing breaks as mere pauses, they should be seen as active components of a sustainable career, periods of growth, healing, and recalibration that can enhance an individual's contributions over a lifetime (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2019). The key is to ensure that all institutions, personal, organizational, and societal, are ready to support these transitions. By acknowledging the motives for career breaks and addressing the challenges of reintegration, organizations can join the full value of career breaks: a happier, healthier workforce that is prepared for the growing demands of the modern professional world.

4.3. Contributions of the Study

The research makes several theoretical and practical contributions. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first dataset on career breaks in Portugal, mapping motives, difficulties and perceived outcomes among 172 professionals.

By interpreting the findings through the dual lenses of the sustainable career framework and the Job Demands–Resources (JDR) model, this study offers two key theoretical contributions. First, it supports the idea that career breaks can function as intentional, proactive strategies that promote career sustainability over time, particularly through skill renewal and realignment with personal values. Second, applying the JDR model, the results suggest that breaks can act as resources that foster health and motivation by reducing strain and enabling recovery, especially in the face of prolonged job demands. However, it is important to note that the contribution of breaks to performance outcomes may be more limited or delayed, particularly in the short term.

On the other hand, non-leavers in the sample noted three main obstacles to stepping away from work: doubts about financial viability, a sense that, at the moment, is not the right time, and anxiety that their careers might stall. Translating these concerns into action points, Human Resources teams could implement structured re-entry programs to support employees in reintegrating after a break, including phased returns or personalized development plans. Additionally, offering partial pay or flexible-benefit schemes could reduce financial uncertainty and make breaks more accessible. Pairing potential leavers with internal mentors who have previously taken a break may also help clarify the process and reduce stigma. These strategies not only address employees' concerns but also position career breaks as legitimate tools for long-term talent development and retention within HR policy. These initiatives could be integrated into broader talent management strategies, helping organizations foster a more flexible and sustainable work culture.

At the same time, the strong interest in taking a break, combined with the well-being benefits reported in this study, contributes to normalizing career breaks as intentional and constructive choices, rather than signs of instability or failure. By documenting the motives, outcomes, and patterns of those who have successfully taken breaks, this research offers an evidence-based narrative that can help reduce stigma and uncertainty at the individual level. In doing so, it empowers professionals to consider breaks as a viable part of career self-management, particularly in moments of transition, burnout, or reorientation.

4.4. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this research provides the first national representation of why Portuguese employees pause their careers and what follows, its insights are still framed by methodological and contextual constraints, these boundaries should be extended in future studies of this nature.

First, the sample size and composition impose clear limits. Only 172 questionnaires were usable out of 277 returns. The resulting sample is strongly female (70%), highly educated and clustered in Human Resources/Consulting professional functions. Such sampling restricts statistical power and limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other genders, sectors or educational levels. Future studies should adopt probability or the use of quota sampling to secure gender balance and sectoral diversity.

A related issue is the presence of very small analytical sub-groups. For several occupational clusters, for example, Product and Technology, the number of respondents was below five, making inferential tests unreliable. Researchers are encouraged either to oversample these profiles or to aggregate categories more cautiously in order to obtain stable results.

The study also confronted a fragmented theoretical landscape. Because the experience of planned career breaks is only now developing as an independent topic of scholarly interest, the available literature is still fragmentated. The study focused on adjacent frameworks, mostly focusing on sustainable careers and some other theoretical studies, such as the Job Demands-Resources Model. One of the priorities for this field is the expansion of conceptual work that addresses career breaks.

Also, the phenomenon itself is rapidly evolving. Corporate practice and public discussion around career breaks have accelerated over the last few years (Economic Times News, 2025). Some patterns documented here may change quickly. Continuous monitoring studies are needed to track this phenomenon's evolution and its long-term consequences.

Contextual factors introduce another constraint. Because the analyzed sample consisted exclusively of professionals working in Portugal, the findings are necessarily shaped by national cultural norms. In particular, Portugal's strong presenteeism culture, where being physically present at work is closely tied to perceptions of commitment and value, may discourage individuals from stepping away, regardless of the potential benefits of a break. A multi-country research design would help test whether the patterns identified here hold across different cultural and institutional settings.

In addition, because the phenomenon is rapidly evolving, longitudinal studies are needed to monitor how motives, barriers, and perceived outcomes shift over time. Tracking these dynamics would help clarify how career breaks relate to long-term career development and

sustainability. Complementary qualitative work, particularly through semi-structured interviews, would also allow participants to elaborate on their personal experiences, decision-making processes, and reflections after the break. Combining both approaches could provide a more holistic understanding of how breaks unfold across different life stages and work contexts.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the motives and impacts of those who took career breaks, as well as the reasons given by those who did not. Anchored in the sustainable-career context, it addressed two questions: what motives lead Portuguese employees to take a career break, and what personal and organizational consequences follow those decisions.

Based on a survey of 172 professionals, the results show that career breaks are typically motivated by personal or family considerations, such as caregiving responsibilities, health needs, further education, or personal development goals. The findings also reveal a clear pattern in outcomes. Taking time off improves individuals' well-being (greater happiness and better health), while the impact on productivity or immediate career progression is comparatively modest. In essence, a break contributes more to long-term personal growth than to instant performance wins.

These findings advance sustainable-career theory by demonstrating empirically that strategic pauses work as a resource-building mechanism alongside job crafting and lifelong learning, so enriching employees' adaptability and employability over time. Put this way, a break is not a damaging interruption but a planned phase in a dynamic, non-linear career.

From a practical perspective, the findings call for organizational openness and support for career breaks. Employers should treat career breaks as a reasonable strategy and facilitate employees stepping away when needed, while also addressing barriers reported by non-leavers, such as financial constraints or fears of stalled advancement. By normalizing career breaks and smoothing re-entry, organizations can cultivate a healthier, more resilient workforce better equipped to meet today's challenges.

In conclusion, when employers treat a career break not as a setback but as a planned investment, they foster a workforce that remains robust today and sustainably employable for the future.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Survey applied

The survey is displayed with the original language it was applied.

Consentimento Informado

O presente estudo surge no âmbito de um projeto de investigação a decorrer no Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. O estudo tem por objetivo explorar as experiências, perspetivas e expectativas dos indivíduos em relação a pausas na carreira.

O estudo é realizado por Margarida Belmar Mendonça (mdcbc@iscte-iul.pt), que poderá contactar caso pretenda esclarecer uma dúvida ou partilhar algum comentário, sendo supervisionado pela Professora Inês C. Sousa.

A sua participação no estudo, que será muito valorizada pois irá contribuir para o avanço do conhecimento neste domínio da ciência, consiste em responder a um questionário de aproximadamente 6 minutos.

Não existem riscos significativos expectáveis associados à participação no estudo.

A participação no estudo é estritamente voluntária: pode escolher livremente participar ou não participar. Se tiver escolhido participar, pode interromper a participação em qualquer momento sem ter de prestar qualquer justificação.

Para além de voluntária, a participação é também anónima e confidencial. Os dados obtidos destinam-se apenas a tratamento estatístico e nenhuma resposta será analisada ou reportada individualmente. Em nenhum momento do estudo precisa de se identificar.

Declaro ter compreendido os objetivos do que me foi proposto pelo que aceito participar. (Obrigatório)

Sim, aceito participar

Não aceito participar

Secção 1 – Pausas na Carreira

Instruções iniciais:

O conceito de “Pausa na Carreira” refere-se à interrupção temporária e voluntária da trajetória profissional de um indivíduo. Este período pode variar em duração, mas, para este efeito, considera-se uma pausa na carreira qualquer interrupção com um mínimo de um mês. Exemplos: licenças sem vencimento, licença de maternidade/paternidade e licenças sabáticas.

1. Numa escala de 0 a 10, sendo 0 muito negativo e 10 muito positivo, qual a sua opinião sobre fazer pausas na carreira?

0 _____ 10

2. Considerando a definição acima apresentada, alguma vez realizou ou está atualmente a realizar uma pausa na carreira?

Sim

Não

3. Se “sim” em 2. foi selecionada - Atualmente, está a realizar uma pausa na carreira?

Sim

Não

4. Há quanto tempo está nesta pausa na carreira (em meses)?

[Campo de resposta numérico]

5. Quantas pausas na carreira realizou ao longo da sua vida?

[Campo de resposta numérico]

6. Quanto tempo durou a sua primeira pausa na carreira (em meses)?

[Campo de resposta numérico]

7. Se fez mais do que uma pausa, complete abaixo quais as durações das mesmas (em meses):

2ª pausa na carreira: [Campo de resposta]

3ª pausa na carreira: [Campo de resposta]

4ª pausa na carreira: [Campo de resposta]

8. Quais as principais razões para fazer a(s) mesma(s)? (Selecione todas as opções que se aplicam)

Apoio à família (ex. licença maternidade, assistência a dependente)

Saúde e Bem-estar (ex. baixa por razões psicológicas)

Educação e/ou Formação (ex. ingresso num curso)

Desenvolvimento pessoal (ex. retiro espiritual)

Viagens e/ou outras experiências (ex. atividade voluntária)

Mudança de carreira/ocupação (ex. desempenho de cargo político)

Outros motivos: [Campo de texto livre]

9. Considero que as pausas na carreira contribuíram para: (1 = Discordo totalmente; 5 = Concordo totalmente)

Impacts	1	2	3	4	5
A minha felicidade (incluindo mais satisfação e sucesso na carreira)					
A minha saúde (incluindo mais bem-estar e saúde física e menos stress)					
A minha produtividade (incluindo melhor desempenho e mais empregabilidade)					

10. Voltaria a realizar uma pausa na carreira?

Sim

Não

Talvez

11. Se “não” em 2. foi selecionado - Qual/quais a(s) razão/razões para nunca ter realizado uma pausa na carreira? Selecione todas as opções que se aplicam.

Por ter segurança no emprego

Por receio em perder oportunidades de progressão de carreira

Por fatores económicos

Por estar comprometido com a organização

Pela incerteza no futuro

Por estigma relativamente ao conceito de “pausa na carreira”

Por estar numa fase inicial da carreira

Outros motivos: [Campo de texto livre]

12. Considera fazer uma pausa na carreira no futuro?

Sim

Não

Não sei

13. Que motivos poderiam influenciar a decisão de realizar uma pausa na carreira?
Selecione todas as opções que se aplicam.

Apoio à família (ex. licença maternidade, assistência a dependente)
Saúde e Bem-estar (ex. baixa por razões psicológicas)
Educação e/ou Formação (ex. ingresso num curso)
Desenvolvimento pessoal (ex. retiro espiritual)
Viagens e/ou outras experiências (ex. atividade voluntária)
Mudança de carreira/ocupação (ex. desempenho de cargo político)
Outros motivos: [Campo de texto livre]

14. Qual o seu género?

Feminino

Masculino

Prefiro não dizer

15. Qual a sua idade?

[Campo de resposta numérico]

16. Qual o seu nível de escolaridade?

Ensino básico (9º ano ou inferior)

Ensino secundário

Licenciatura ou equivalente

Mestrado

Doutoramento

17. Qual o país onde trabalha?

[Campo de resposta texto livre]

18. Qual a sua função?

[Campo de resposta texto livre]

19. Qual o setor de atividade em que trabalha?

Banca, Seguros e Serviços Financeiros

Consultoria e Serviços Profissionais

Educação, Desporto e Serviços Comunitários

Hotelaria e Turismo

Indústria, Construção e Atividades Produtivas

Infraestruturas, Transporte e Logística

Retalho e Comércio

Saúde e Farmacêuticas

Tecnologia, Media e Telecomunicações

20. Quantos anos de experiência profissional tem?

[Campo de resposta numérico]

21. Em que fase da carreira considera que se encontra?

Fase inicial da carreira

Mid-career

Fase avançada da carreira

Fase final da carreira

22. Quantas pessoas tem o seu agregado familiar?

[Campo de resposta numérico]

23. Como é distribuída a responsabilidade financeira no seu agregado familiar?

Sou o único responsável

Sou o principal responsável

Responsabilidade partilhada igualmente

Outra pessoa é o principal responsável

24. Quantos dependentes tem?

[Campo de resposta numérico]

25. Após a realização deste questionário, e considerando uma escala de 0 a 10, sendo 0 muito negativo e 10 muito positivo, qual a sua opinião relativamente a fazer pausas na carreira?

0 _____ 10

Thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.