

## Study of the Mediating Effect of Social Support and Interpersonal Conflicts in the Relationship between Work Overload and Work-Life Conflict

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**Abstract:** In today's dynamic organizational landscape, constant changes have heightened pressure on businesses, exposing workers to a multitude of psychosocial risk factors that can detrimentally affect their professional and personal well-being. Among these factors, work overload has emerged as a significant concern, driven by the competitive demands placed on organizations. This study investigates the role of social factors within the organizational context as potential buffers or amplifiers of the effects of work overload, specifically focusing on social support from peers and levels of interpersonal conflict. Our sample comprises 203 workers, predominantly women (81.8%), with an average age of 40.05 years, representing diverse sectors. Findings reveal that work overload contributes to increased work-life conflict levels. Social support acts as a protective factor in this relationship, and interpersonal conflicts exacerbate this relationship. These insights hold theoretical and practical significance, offering organizations guidance on leveraging the social climate to mitigate the adverse effects of stressors like work overload.

**Keywords:** Work Overload, Work-life Conflict, Peer Social Support, Interpersonal Conflict.

## Estudo do Efeito mediador do Suporte Social e dos Conflitos Interpessoais na Relação entre a Sobrecarga de Trabalho e o Conflito Trabalho-Vida Pessoal

**Resumo:** No atual panorama dinâmico das organizações, as mudanças constantes aumentaram a pressão sobre as empresas, expondo os trabalhadores a diversos fatores de risco psicossocial que podem afetar negativamente o seu bem-estar profissional e pessoal. Entre esses fatores, a sobrecarga de trabalho tem-se destacado como uma preocupação significativa, impulsionada pelas exigências competitivas colocadas sobre as organizações. Este estudo analisa o papel dos fatores sociais no contexto organizacional como possíveis atenuadores ou amplificadores dos efeitos da sobrecarga de trabalho, com um foco específico no apoio social dos colegas e nos níveis de conflito interpessoal. A amostra é composta por 203 trabalhadores, maioritariamente mulheres (81.8%), com uma média de idade de 40.05 anos, representando diversos setores. Os resultados revelam que a sobrecarga de trabalho contribui para o aumento dos níveis de conflito trabalho-vida pessoal. O apoio social atua como um fator de proteção nesta relação, enquanto os conflitos interpessoais agravam essa relação. Estes resultados possuem relevância teórica e prática, oferecendo às organizações orientações sobre como aproveitar o clima social para mitigar os efeitos adversos de stressores como a sobrecarga de trabalho.

**Palavras-chave:** Sobrecarga de Trabalho, Conflito Trabalho-Vida Pessoal, Suporte Social, Conflitos Interpessoais.

## 1. Introduction

The rapid evolution of the world of work poses increased challenges for workers, organizations, and society. In recent decades we have witnessed an unparalleled technological leap in the various sectors of society, providing new possibilities to workers and organizations. However, this new paradigm that emerges requires an effort of adaptation on the part of all the actors involved in these processes of transformation of labor relations (Ingusci et al., 2021).

These constant changes lead organizations to feel the pressure to be increasingly competitive. This climate of competitiveness also extends to the job market. Organizations are subject to greater demands and expect more from their employees, distinguishing them based on their performance. Workers feel compelled to give more of themselves, working harder and dedicating long hours to meet as many challenges as possible (Keller et al., 2016; Pitacho & Cordeiro, 2023).

In this context, a myriad of possibilities emerges that facilitate the proliferation of psychosocial risks, deeply intricate with the effort required of workers in the execution of their tasks. The result is painful for the worker regarding quantitative, cognitive, and emotional demands. Workplace tension has increased significantly in recent years, with internal stress factors adding to external ones, such as the ability to adapt in a work-family context, family support, and vulnerability in dealing with all stress factors (Manetti & Marziale, 2007).

The World Health Organization (2022) estimates that 15% of working-age adults may experience mental health issues. Poor mental health affects cognitive, behavioral, emotional, social, and relational well-being, as well as physical health and work identity. It can hinder work participation, resulting in decreased productivity, performance and safety, and difficulties in retaining or obtaining employment. Common mental health conditions result in substantial costs for the global economy, primarily due to productivity losses. The estimated value of this loss is around US \$1 trillion each year. The agency emphasizes that work is a social determinant of mental health, and adverse working conditions can significantly worsen mental health. Certain risk factors, or psychosocial risks, in the workplace, have consequences for individuals and organizations. The report emphasizes the risks of workload, interpersonal relationships, and work-home interface.

One of the eminent risk factors in these contexts is the excessive work overload that employees are subjected to and undergo in order to meet expectations and their career ambitions (Morkevičiūtė & Endriulaitienė, 2021). This overload often compels employees to sacrifice their personal lives in pursuit of meeting expectations and career ambitions. Consequently, work-life balance deteriorates, leading to conflicts between work and personal life. That is, work-life balance is compromised because it evolves in reverse. Sacrificing one's personal life for the sake of life at work invariably leads to work-life conflicts that may or may not be attenuated by the quality of interpersonal relationships established between colleagues in an organizational context (social support and interpersonal conflict) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work-life conflict can have significant consequences for individuals, affecting various aspects of their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life.

This study builds upon the well-established association between work overload and work-life conflict (e.g., Lee et al., 2021), aiming to explore the mediating influence of social support and interpersonal conflicts in this dynamic. To face the challenges posed by work overload, individuals mobilize resources. Investing resources in work sometimes reduces

the availability of resources for personal life, a consequence of the exhaustion of resources. The scarcity of resources can lead to tension between personal and professional life, namely work-life conflict (Tabassum, Farooq & Fatima, 2017). The significance of this investigation is underscored by the relentless nature of the competitive business environment, where work overload remains a pervasive challenge within organizations. Recognizing the detrimental outcomes for both individuals and the organization itself, it becomes imperative for organizations to reassess their strategies to alleviate these effects.

This research suggests that prioritizing investments in the social well-being of the organization can function as a protective mechanism against the adverse impacts of work overload on work-life conflict, which, left unaddressed, may contribute to burnout or turnover (Bodendieck et al., 2022; Powell, 2017). The proposed framework aligns with existing literature on work-related stressors, emphasizing the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture to enhance employee resilience and well-being.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Work Overload

Organizations today face the effects of globalization, rapid socioeconomic changes, new technologies, and increased competition. These factors have led to the need for constant and rapid changes within organizations, resulting in an increase employee workload (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2019). Employees who experience work overload are forced to work faster, respond more quickly, take shorter breaks, and multitask more often (Paškvan & Kubicek, 2017).

According to Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) job demands-resource model (JD-R Model), job characteristics can be divided into two categories: demands and resources. Work overload, as defined by Triplett et al. (1999), occurs when employees are assigned tasks and responsibilities without the necessary resources to complete them. Work overload is a situation where an individual is faced with excessive or undesirable constraints that make it difficult for them to achieve their goals. This situation can hamper job performance and be a hindrance to job demand. However, a challenging demand like workload is usually manageable. The difference between workload and work overload lies in an individual's perception of whether they have enough time and resources to cope with the demands. Workload is often viewed as a challenge, and as the amount of work increases, so does the challenge. However, there comes a point where the workload becomes excessive, and it becomes impossible to complete the work within the given deadline. At this point, the person becomes overwhelmed, and work becomes an obstacle to successful work and achieving goals (O'Brien & Beehr, 2019). Work overload may be seen as quantitative or qualitative (cognitive and emotional). Quantitative overload is having too much work to do in the available time. Quantitative overload is related to the balance between the number of tasks and the time available to perform them. When an individual realizes that the time for work is insufficient to correctly perform all the tasks assigned to him, he becomes overloaded (Kirch, 2008). On the other hand, qualitative overload is related to the amount of cognitive and emotional resources that are required for the correct execution of tasks. The present work will only focus on the quantitative dimension of work overload. In sum, work overload is when an individual is given more tasks or responsibilities than they can handle effectively within a given time frame. It is a condition where the demands on a person's time and energy exceed their capacity to

perform the required tasks. Work overload can adversely affect various aspects of an individual's life and well-being. Research has consistently shown that work overload decreases job satisfaction and commitment to one's career (Mazerolle et al., 2015; Pradana & Salehudin, 2015). Additionally, it has been found that work overload is positively associated with increased levels of stress, fatigue, physical and emotional exhaustion, and burnout, all of which hurt performance, productivity, individual well-being, and the balance between personal and professional life (Abdulaziz et al., 2022).

## 2.2. Work-Life Conflict

For several decades, work-life conflict, also known as work-family conflict, has been the subject of academic research. One of the first definitions was developed by Greenhaus and Beutell in the mid-1980s. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) proposed the concept of work-family conflict, which is defined as a type of inter-role conflict that occurs when the pressures of one's work and family roles are incompatible with each other in some way. The conflict can occur in two directions: work-to-family conflict (WFC), which is characterized by work demands interfering with family life, and family-to-work conflict (FWC), which is characterized by family demands interfering with work responsibilities.

Achieving balance between work and personal life is a complex concept that has been thoroughly studied in organizational psychology and related fields. In recent times, the focus has shifted towards the perspective of balance rather than conflict. This involves effectively managing responsibilities in all aspects of an individual's life, including family, professional and personal domains. The existence of balance is not determined by the actual workload in any of these domains, but rather by an individual's perception of the interaction between them, which varies based on their personal values (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Despite being a long-standing issue, the conflict between work and personal life remains a relevant topic due to its numerous negative consequences for individuals and organizations. It has been associated with higher levels of stress and mental distress, which can negatively affect mental health. According to Netemeyer et al. (1996), individuals who struggle to balance work and personal life tend to have lower job satisfaction. This conflict has also been linked to decreased job performance, as people may find it difficult to concentrate on work tasks due to personal or family-related stressors (Huo & Jiang, 2023; Wu et al., 2018). Those experiencing work-life conflict may be more likely to consider leaving their current job, leading to higher turnover intentions (Shakoor et al., 2023). Moreover, work-life conflict can spill over into the family domain, affecting family relationships and overall family functioning (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Adverse physical health outcomes have also been associated with work-life conflict, contributing to overall psychological distress (Major et al., 2002).

The literature provides valuable insights into the various factors that contribute to work-life conflict, along with the complexity of challenges that individuals face in maintaining a balance between work and personal life. Individual, organizational, and societal factors influence the antecedents of work-life conflict. High job demands, such as excessive workload and time pressure, And long working hours and inflexible schedules (Lee et al., 2021; Ko, 2022; Pas et al., 2016), unclear job roles and responsibilities (Alblihed & Alzghaibi, 2022), inadequate organizational support, such as a lack of flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies, (McCarthy et al., 2013), family structures, such as the number of dependents and caregiving responsibilities (Byron, 2005), individual

characteristics, such as personality traits and coping mechanisms (Allen et al., 2000), higher job autonomy (Voydanoff, 2004), and cultural expectations regarding work and family roles (Allen & Kiburz, 2012) can influence work-life conflict.

More specifically, in terms of the relationship between work overload and work-life balance, excessive demands at work can cause employees to transfer resources from their personal life to their professional life. This means that when workers feel that they have too much work and not enough time to do it, they may use resources such as their own time or emotional availability from their personal life to complete their work tasks. This shift of resources from personal life to work life can quickly deplete personal resources, leading to a rapid exhaustion of personal resources and increasing the conflict between work and personal life. Overloading professional roles can lead to negative effects such as anxiety, fatigue, and exhaustion, ultimately impacting the balance between work and personal life negatively (Huo & Jiang, 2023).

### 2.3. Interpersonal Conflicts

Interpersonal conflicts within an organization refer to disagreements, tensions, or disputes that occur among individuals. These conflicts can arise at different levels, such as between colleagues, supervisors, subordinates, or team members. They can be caused by differences in opinions, values, goals, or working styles, and can significantly impact relationships, team dynamics, and overall workplace harmony.

Interpersonal conflict happens when two parties have incompatible goals, limited resources, and interference from others, resulting in a struggle (Hocker & Wilmot, 2017). According to Rahim (2011), interpersonal conflict in organizations is a state of discord caused by actual or perceived opposition of needs, values, and interests between people working together. These definitions emphasize some common aspects, such as opposing needs or goals, interdependence between parties, and potential interference with goal achievement. If interpersonal conflicts are not resolved properly, they can lead to negative outcomes, including decreased productivity, strained relationships, and a challenging work environment.

Conflicts between individuals or teams in the workplace can contribute to a heightened sense of work overload, leading to increased stress levels and a feeling of being overwhelmed by job demands. Jaramillo et al. (2011) argue that there is a positive relationship between work overload and interpersonal conflict. Their study suggests that salespersons' role stress is positively related to work overload, which can ultimately result in higher levels of interpersonal conflict.

Interpersonal conflicts in the workplace can have a significant impact on employees' work-life balance, affecting both their professional and personal lives. Work-life balance refers to the equilibrium individuals seek between their professional roles and their personal lives, including family, leisure, and personal well-being. Interpersonal conflicts in the workplace can have far-reaching consequences, not only on work-related outcomes but also on individuals' overall work-life balance. The literature consistently shows the complex relationship between workplace dynamics and personal life (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009).

### 2.4. Social Support

Social support in the organizational context can be categorized into two main types: instrumental support, which involves practical help to solve problems, and emotional

support, which is related to empathy and care (McIlroy et al., 2021). This article mainly focuses on peer social support.

The concept of peer social support refers to the mutual exchange of resources among colleagues, such as emotional support, advice, and tangible assistance. This positive social interaction contributes to developing a healthy work environment (Viswesvaran et al., 1999). In work-related literature, peer social support is commonly defined as the provision of assistance, encouragement, and understanding by co-workers to alleviate stress, overcome work-related challenges, and enhance overall well-being.

Paukstat et al. (2021) demonstrated that work overload negatively correlates with emotional peer support. Recovering the JD-R Model, emotional support from colleagues is seen as a social resource used to reduce the psychological costs of successive and excessive work demands. Continued use of the resource may lead to its reduction and exhaustion (Ingusci et al., 2021).

Additionally, Pluut et al. (2018) showed that social support at work and at home - as volatile resources - buffered the daily work-family conflict process within their respective domains. Additionally, the authors enacting a dual social support system can effectively reduce the adverse effects of excessive job demands on exhaustion and work-family conflict. Social support can be seen as a crucial coping resource in determining how employees respond to potentially stressful situations, again consistent with the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti 2007). However, buffering effects are highly dependent on the timely availability of social support. There is a lot of evidence in the literature that shows how peer social support can help reduce the negative effects of work overload. Organizations can play a crucial role in improving employee well-being and effectively managing the difficulties of excessive job demands by promoting a collaborative work environment and recognizing the value of supportive relationships between colleagues.

### 3. Analytical model used

The literature has consistently demonstrated that work overload is the strongest predictor of work-life conflict among full-time employees. perceived work overload can lead to work-life conflict, particularly when workers have limited control over their work (Tam et al., 2020). This is particularly true for individuals with compressed work schedules, for those experiencing depletion after work, and in dual-career families (Brasdovich, 2016). Recent studies have provided clear evidence of this relationship. For example, Dodanwala et al. (2022) both found that work overload perception mediates the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict and between role overload and job stress, respectively. This suggests that high work demands can lead to increased conflict between work and family responsibilities. Andrade and Petiz Lousã (2021) adds that role overload, after-hours work-related technology use, and low job autonomy can predict work-family conflict, highlighting the role of job-related factors in this relationship. Work overload impacts work-life conflict, but the dysfunction it causes also influences workplace interpersonal conflicts. Excessive work can damage relationships between colleagues and team members due to heightened stress, miscommunication, and increased tension, ultimately leading to interpersonal conflicts in the workplace. Research consistently shows that work overload is a significant predictor of interpersonal conflict in the workplace, and this is further exacerbated by the presence of role stress, emotional exhaustion, and job attitudes and behaviors (Jaramillo et al., 2011). The impact of work overload on employee

work stress is also significant, with both work overload and stress contributing to interpersonal conflicts (Anggraeni et al., 2021). By another side, although it is difficult to find studies that directly present the effect of work overload on peer social support, some indicators allow us to propose that this relationship is negative. In other words, as work overload increases, peer social support decreases. For example, Bonaiuto et al. (2022) state that perceived social support has a negative relationship with job strain. Recently, in a study with teachers, the authors found that work overload has a negative relationship with the perception of social support (Oyarzún-Maldonado & Cornejo-Chávez, 2023). Thus, the first three research hypotheses are proposed as follows (figure 1):

H1: Work overload has a significant positive relationship with work-life conflict.

H2: Work overload significantly correlates positively with workplace interpersonal conflicts.

H3: Work overload has a significant negative relationship with Peer social support from colleagues.

Additionally, interpersonal conflict at work increases work-life conflict. Martinez-Corts et al. (2015) extended the Job-Demands (JD-R) theory by delving into the repercussions of interpersonal conflicts within the workplace, specifically task and relationship conflicts, on daily life outside of work. The research reveals that these conflicts spill over into the nonwork domain, significantly heightening strain-based work-life conflict experiences. This expansion of the JD-R theory sheds light on the detrimental impact of daily interpersonal conflicts in the workplace, emphasizing how they escalate work-family conflicts.

H4: Interpersonal conflicts at work have a significant positive relationship with work-life conflict.

Contrary to interpersonal conflicts, social support has a positive relationship with work life conflict. Pisarski et al. (2008) identified organizational factors, such as support from supervisors and colleagues, team identity, and control over the working environment, as key in reducing work-life conflict and improving health. Workplace social support can also play a crucial role in reducing work-to-family conflict, with supportive contexts being associated with more beneficial appraisals of boundary-spanning demands (Glavin & Schieman, 2010).

H5: Peer social support has a significant negative relationship with work-life conflict.

Given these relationships, it is proposed that social support can function as a buffer between work overload and work-life conflict, and interpersonal conflicts may emerge as an amplifier in this same relationship.

H6: Interpersonal conflicts at work and peer social support mediate the relationship between work overload and work-life conflict.

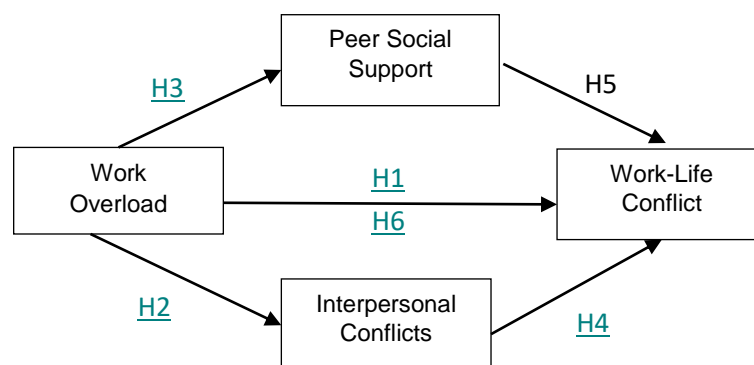


Figure 1: Proposed analysis model

#### 4. Method

This research uses a quantitative and correlational methodology (Field, 2009) to analyze the relationship between work overload, work-life conflicts, and the mediating effect of social support and interpersonal conflicts.

##### 4.1. Procedures

The data was collected online through a questionnaire developed by Google Forms and distributed through its link between February 2023 and April 2023. This questionnaire was intended for professionals of specific companies in the industry and services sector and professionals of IPSS (private institutions of social solidarity) operating in Portugal. The questionnaire link was delivered to the companies and distributed to their employees on a voluntary basis. At the time of distribution, the companies had 524 employees. Of these, 272 responded (51.91%), but only 203 (38.74%) were eligible. Subsequently, the data were exported and analyzed using the SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive and correlational analysis, simple and multiple linear regression tests, and analysis of the mediation model (M4) through Hayes' Process were used. Participants were briefed on the study's objectives, and their confidentiality was assured. The research adheres to the Declaration of Helsinki standards, ensuring voluntary and anonymous participation, with no compensation provided.

##### 4.2. Sample

The study included 203 workers in the national territory, distributed by different sectors of activity, namely industry (29%), services (26%), and social (45%). Of the 203 participants, 81.8% were female, and 18.2% were male, with a mean age of 46.05 years (SD=11.15). Regarding the participants' marital status, 24% are single, 60.5% are married or living in a partnership, 12.8% are divorced or separated, and 2.5% are widowed. At the level of educational qualifications, the sample has little differentiated training; 9.5% has only the first cycle, 15.6% has the second cycle, and 25.6% completed the third cycle. In comparison, 22.6% have completed secondary education, 18.9% have higher technical professional courses, and only 8% have higher education (bachelor's or master's degree). It should also be noted that only 9.4% of respondents hold leadership positions in their institutions.

As an inclusion criterion, all participants work in Portugal and be native or fluent in Portuguese and have a legal work contract, excluding volunteers and interns. All participants gave their informed consent to the data collection.

##### 4.3. Instruments

The questionnaire used included sociodemographic and professional questions and four scales. All four scales were answered on a 7-point Likert scale, in which 1 Strongly Disagree and 7 Strongly Agree. They were exclusively developed for this study.

A scale of quantitative work requirements (Work Overload) composed of 3 items ( $\alpha$ -cronbach= .70) focuses on quantitative overload. A one-factor confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to check this tool's reliability. The obtained adjustment indices are appropriate (KMO = 0.606;  $\chi^2$  (3) = 41.030;  $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, this scale has a 59.3% explained variance. The three items of this scale are: "The amount of daily work is excessive for a regular working schedule" (factor loading=.78), "There is accumulated work because there is not enough time to complete it" (factor loading= .69), and "The amount of

daily work is excessive for the time available in a regular work schedule" (factor loading = .81).

The scale of social support from colleagues is composed of three items ( $\alpha$ -cronbach= .80), "My colleagues provide me with support when I need it" (factor loading=.84), "My colleagues are available to listen to my concerns" (factor loading=.79), and "I feel like I am part of a true team" (factor loading= .69). A one-factor confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the validity of this instrument. The adjustment indices obtained are adequate (KMO = 0.754;  $\chi^2$  (6) = 227.237;  $p < .001$ ). In addition, this scale has an explained variance of 60.5%.

The scale of interpersonal conflicts was composed of 4 items ( $\alpha$ -cronbach= .75), "There is often disagreement about how tasks should be carried out" (factor loading=.70), "There are often arguments or disagreements about non-work-related issues" (factor loading=.65), "Disagreements among organization members affect their relationships" (factor loading= .77), and "Disagreements among organization members affect the workflow" (factor loading= .81). A one-factor confirmatory factor analysis was performed to test this instrument's validity. The adjustment indices obtained are adequate (KMO = 0.757;  $\chi^2$  (3) = 175.116;  $p < .001$ ). This scale has an explained variance of 71.4%.

A work-life conflict scale with four items ( $\alpha$ -cronbach= .77). These items are: "I feel that I do not have enough time for my household tasks because of the time I spend working" (factor loading= .89), "My job leaves me so exhausted that I cannot properly enjoy my free time with friends and family" (factor loading= .75), "My job takes me away from activities I really enjoy" (factor loading= .67), and "My job is so demanding that I cannot fully disconnect even during my leisure time" (factor loading=.72). To assess the validity of this instrument, one-factor confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The fit indices obtained are adequate, with KMO = 0.693,  $\chi^2$  (3) = 183.745, and  $p < .001$ . This scale has an explained variance of 59.17%.

## 5. Results

The analysis was divided into two steps: descriptive and multivariate. From the descriptive point of view (Table 1), we can verify that, in general, the sample of workers presents a perception of work overload significantly above the midpoint of the scale (4) ( $t(189)=3,983$ ;  $p<.001$ ), this means that the participants exhibit moderate levels of work overload. Also, significantly above the midpoint of the scale (4), we can find the peer social support ( $t(193)=11,221$ ;  $p<.001$ ). This means that the participants perceive moderately high levels of peer social support. The variables interpersonal conflicts ( $t(174)=-4.705$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and Work-Life Conflict ( $t(193)=-.6420$ ;  $p<.001$ ) are significantly below the midpoint of the scale (4). This means that for both variables, participants perceive moderately low levels. Except for work overload, this can be considered a positive sample characterization.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the variables under study

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Work Overload	1.33	7.00	4.37	1.29
Social Support	1.33	7.00	5.09	1.35
Interpersonal Conflict	1.00	6.25	3.51	1.38
Work-life Conflict	1.00	7.00	3.34	1.43

A descriptive analysis was carried out based on sociodemographic variables to understand better the risk factors present in this sample (Table 2). To test the influence of sociodemographic variables on the variables under study, non-parametric comparison tests were carried out, namely the Wilcoxon-Mann Withney Test or the Kruskal-Wallis Test. The data allow us to verify that work overload only differs in the shift work variable ( $U=3080.000$ ;  $W=14708.000$ ;  $p=.007$ ). Workers who work in shifts have less work overload. The values of the social support variable vary depending on the night work variable. Participants who work night shifts have significantly higher social support values than participants who do not work night shifts ( $U=736.500$ ;  $W=5786.500$ ;  $p=.015$ ). Additionally, the participants' age and seniority are also correlated with the perception of social support. Older workers ( $r=-.211$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and those with greater seniority ( $r=-.224$ ;  $p<.001$ ) perceive lower levels of social support. Any other sociodemographic variable does not influence social support. Any sociodemographic variable under study does not influence the perception of interpersonal and work-family conflict.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of variables under study by demographic variables

		Work Overload (Quantitative)		Social Support of Colleagues		Work-Life Conflict		Interpersonal Conflict	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Gender	Feminine	4.23	1.34	5.28	1.05	2.96	1.40	3.18	1.13
	Masculine	4.40	1.28	5.08	1.41	3.43	1.44	3.58	1.44
Marital Statuses	Single	4.41	1.43	5.45	1.12	3.32	1.39	3.48	1.58
	Married	4.33	1.17	4.88	1.42	3.35	1.34	3.50	1.26
	Divorce	5.00	1.35	4.48	1.82	4.00	2.22	3.64	1.90
	Widower	4.07	.89	5.93	1.04	3.05	1.43	3.35	.80
Academic Qualification	Primary school	3.79	1.09	4.88	1.08	3.05	1.53	3.78	1.30
	Basic School	4.49	1.30	5.08	1.50	3.34	1.56	3.61	1.48
	High School	4.35	1.21	4.76	1.40	3.44	1.39	3.64	1.28
	Graduation	4.61	1.24	5.47	1.45	3.96	1.66	2.89	1.55
Leader Position	Master's Degree	6.00	1.19	6.00	.98	3.94	1.46	4.56	.52
	Leader	4.28	1.13	4.91	1.49	3.31	1.33	3.38	1.27
Work-Shifts	Not Leader	4.15	1.35	4.96	1.31	3.16	1.55	3.44	1.39
	Yes	3.74	1.26	5.14	1.35	3.13	1.55	3.55	1.46
Rotational Clearances	No	4.50	1.27	5.09	1.37	3.42	1.38	3.51	1.36
	Yes	4.55	1.17	5.32	1.46	3.45	1.30	3.43	1.40
Nigh Work	No	4.35	1.34	4.99	1.32	3.33	1.47	3.56	1.41
	Yes	3.88	1.23	5.70	1.28	3.14	1.51	3.35	1.54
	No	4.50	1.36	4.91	1.35	3.30	1.47	3.47	1.37

The correlational analysis in Table 3 shows that all studied variables are significantly correlated. Work overload is found to have a negative and significant correlation with peer social support ( $r=-.175$ ;  $p<.05$ ), meaning that as work demands increase, peer social support decreases. Additionally, work overload is positively correlated to interpersonal conflict ( $r=.253$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and work-life conflict ( $r=.507$ ;  $p<.01$ ). This means that higher levels of work overload are associated with greater levels of perceived conflict, whether it is interpersonal conflict at work or conflict between work and personal life. As expected, peer

social support has a significant and negative correlation with interpersonal conflict ( $r=-.270$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and work and with work-life conflict too ( $r=-.271$ ;  $p<.01$ ), that is, when peer social support increases, interpersonal conflict and work-life conflict decrease.

Table 3: Bivariate correlations between the variables under study (Pearson's correlation)

	Work Overload	Social Support	Interpersonal Conflicts	Work-Life Conflict
Work Overload	1	-,175*	,253**	,507**
Social Support	-,175*	1	-,270**	-,271**
Interpersonal Conflicts	,253**	-,270**	1	,345**
Work-Life Conflict	,507**	-,271**	,345**	1

\*. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 ends).

\*\* The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 ends).

The results of the Pearson Correlation test results guarantee the conditions for carrying out linear, simple and multiple regressions. In the first step, a linear regression test tested H1 (Work overload has a significant positive relationship with work-life conflict). Linear regression showed that work overload positively affects work-life conflict ( $\beta = 0.563$ ;  $t(188) = 8.036$ ;  $p_{\text{value}}<.001$ ). High values of work overload explain 25.7% of the work-life conflict values (Table 4). This mean that H1 (Work overload has a significant positive relationship with work-life conflict) has been corroborated.

Table 4: Linear regression (Enter method) for the effect of work overload on Work-life conflict

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Z	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	p-Value
Work Overload	Work-Life Conflict	64.573	0.257	0.563	8.036	<0.001

The same test was performed to test H2 (Work overload significantly correlates positively with workplace interpersonal conflicts) (Table 5). The linear regression showed that work overload positively affects interpersonal conflicts ( $\beta = 0.253$ ;  $t(171) = 3.416$ ;  $p_{\text{value}}<.001$ ). That is, high values of work overload explain 6.7% of the interpersonal conflict values. H2 (Work overload significantly correlates positively with workplace interpersonal conflicts) has been confirmed.

Table 5: Linear regression (Enter method) for the effect of work overload on interpersonal conflicts

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Z	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	p-Value
Work Overload	Interpersonal Conflicts	11.668	0.067	0.253	3.416	<0.001

The analysis continued using the same test to validate the hypothesis 4 (Work overload has a significant negative relationship with peer social support). The results of linear regression corroborated H3 (Work overload has a significant negative relationship with Peer social support from colleagues.) ( $\beta = -0.175$ ;  $t(174) = -2.432$ ;  $p_{\text{value}}=.016$ ),

showed that work overload negatively affect peer social support. Despite being positive, this effect is weak and work overload only explains 3.1% of the peer social support (Table 6). H3 was corroborated too.

Table 6: Linear regression (Enter method) for the effect of work overload on peer social support

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Z	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	p-Value
Work Overload	Peer Social Support	5.917	0.031	-0.175	-2.432	0.016

Hypothesis 4 (Interpersonal conflicts at work have a significant positive relationship with work-life conflict) was also tested using the same test. The linear regression showed that work overload positively affects interpersonal conflicts ( $\beta = 0.345$ ;  $t(174) = 4.835$ ;  $p_{value} < .001$ ). That is, high values of interpersonal conflict explain 11.9% of the work-life conflict values (Table 7). H4 (Interpersonal conflicts at work have a significant positive relationship with work-life conflict) was corroborated.

Table 7: Linear regression (Enter method) for the effect of interpersonal conflicts on work-life conflict

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Z	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	p-Value
Interpersonal Conflicts	Work-Life Conflict	23.375	0.119	0.345	4.835	<0.001

A linear regression was performed regarding H5 (Peer social support has a significant negative relationship with work-life conflict). The results ( $\beta = -0.271$ ;  $t(202) = -3.890$ ;  $p_{value} < .001$ ) showed that peer social support negatively affects work-life conflict; that is, peer social support diminishes work-life conflict perception. Peer social support explains 7.3% of the work-life conflict values (Table 8).

Table 8: Linear regression (Enter method) for the effect of peer social support on work-life conflict

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Z	R <sup>2</sup>	B	T	p-Value
Peer Support	SocialWork-Life Conflict	15.132	0.073	-0.271	-3.890	<0.001

Subsequently, the simultaneous effect of work overload, peer social support, and interpersonal conflict on work-life conflict was tested using multiple linear regression (Table 9). Multiple linear regression was used with the stepwise method ( $\alpha = 0.05$  to “Entry” and  $\alpha = 0.10$  to “Removal”), and the assumptions of independence and multicollinearity were checked through the Durbin–Watson Statistic and VIF. The result shows that the three conjugated variables explain 34.5% of the work-life conflict.

Table 9: Multiple linear regression (Stepwise method) for the effect of work overload, peer social support, and interpersonal conflicts on work-life conflict

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Z	R <sup>2</sup>	β	T-Test	p-Value
Work Overload	Work Life Conflict	29.509	0.345	0.439	6.766	<0.001
Peer Social Support				-183	-2.798	<0.001
Interpersonal Conflict				0.180	2.707	0.007

Finally, the Model 4 test of Haye’s Process Macro 4.1 (Figure 1) was performed to test H6 (Interpersonal conflicts at work and peer social support mediate the relationship between work overload and work-life conflict). The mediating effect is considered significant if the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (cls) (lower limit and upper limit) for the indirect effect (IE) based on 5000 bootstrapped samples are not equal to 0.

Before introducing the mediators in a relationship, the significant effect of work overload on work-life balance is evident ( $C=\beta=0.5599$ ;  $p_{value}<.001$ ). In the presence of mediators, the direct effect of work overload on work-life balance is small but significant, too ( $C'=\beta=0.4756$ ;  $p_{value}<.001$ ). The indirect effect is significant ( $\beta=0.0844$ ; [LLCI=0.0286 – ULCI=0.1435]). This means that peer social support and interpersonal conflicts partially mediate the relationship between work overload and work-life conflict. As expected, the global model explains 34.5% of work-life conflict variance, and H6 (Interpersonal conflicts at work and peer social support mediate the relationship between work overload and work-life conflict) was corroborated.

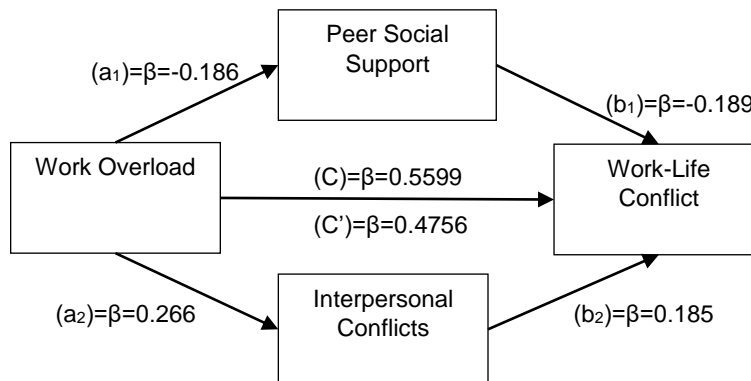


Figure 2: Mediation Model was tested using Hayes Macro Process Model 4

### 6. Results discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to examine how social support and interpersonal conflicts affect the relationship between work overload and work-life conflict. The study successfully confirmed all the previously proposed research hypotheses, which provides valuable insights for both theoretical and practical applications.

The investigation results shed light on the significant relationship between work overload and work-life conflict. This reinforces the literature that highlights the impact of professional demands on individuals' personal lives. Work-life conflict has been studied in organizational psychology since 1985 when Greenhaus and Beutell conceptualized it as

the delicate juggling act between job demands and personal life. According to the theoretical framework of this research, the study's results align with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti in 2007. The model suggests that work-related factors such as work overload act as job demands that may lead to burnout when they exceed job resources.

This study adds a nuanced layer to the model by highlighting the role of work overload in tilting the delicate balance between work and life. The impact of work overload on work-life balance is central to the fragmented nature of contemporary existence. People struggle to balance professional demands with the desire for a fulfilling personal life, making it crucial for organizations to ensure their employees' well-being.

Moreover, this study shows that peer social support acts as a buffer between work overload and work-life conflict, adding a nuanced layer to our understanding of coping mechanisms in the face of occupational challenges. Work overload or job demand in this model can lead to adverse outcomes such as work-life conflict when not counterbalanced by adequate resources, namely social resources such as peer social support and good interpersonal relationships at work. The current findings contribute empirical evidence to this model, showcasing how peer social support functions as a vital resource, mitigating the adverse effects of work overload on the delicate equilibrium between work and personal life.

Furthermore, the study aligns with the broader literature on social support and stress-buffering (Bekiros et al., 2022; Margolis et al., 2019). In the organizational context, the supportive network provided by peers emerges as a significant factor influencing employees' ability to navigate the challenges posed by work overload without compromising their work-life balance.

Finally, this study's results showed that interpersonal conflict accelerates the relationship between work overload and work-life conflict, adding a layer of complexity to our understanding of the psychosocial dynamics within the organizational realm. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, as proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), provides a theoretical lens through which to interpret these results. Work overload, a significant job demand, triggers stress, and when coupled with interpersonal conflict, it heightens the intensity of this stress. This aligns with the broader literature on occupational stress, where interpersonal conflict is recognized as a potent contributor to workplace strain (Jaramillo et al., 2011). This result also resonates with the work of Rahim (2011) and Cordeiro and Pitacho (2023), who delved into the intricacies of managing conflict in organizations. Conflict management styles theory emphasizes the role of interpersonal conflict in organizational life, with the potential to escalate stress and disrupt the delicate balance between work and personal spheres.

### 6.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The results of this research have theoretical implications, but above all, implications for practice and organizational management. From a theoretical perspective, this study provides relevant information for the literature on psychosocial risks and working conditions. It unequivocally contributes relevant data to the literature on work overload and work-life conflict, presenting a buffer and an accelerator of this relationship. Demonstrating that while high levels of conflict within the organization magnify the impact of workload on work-life conflict, peer social support mitigates this effect. In other words, social well-being enhances the mental well-being of workers, contributing to a better reconciliation or

integration of personal and professional life into a single and harmonious continuum (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009).

This study provides empirical evidence supporting the theoretical ideas proposed by eminent scholars. From a practical perspective, it emphasizes the need for organizations to explore interventions and strategies that can help employees manage work overload. By doing so, organizations can promote a healthier and more sustainable work environment, which ultimately improves workers' work-life balance (Shakoor et al., 2023). That is, these results have practical implications for workplace interventions.

These results are even more relevant considering that 45% of the participants in this study come from the social sector. Previous studies have shown that social workers experience high levels of work overload, leading to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and stress (Turpin et al., 2020). This study reinforces the idea with one more negative consequence, namely work-life conflict. According to Carnes (2023), unrealistic workloads and limited resources contribute to the perception of work overload and burnout.

The conclusions are important for managers, and for human resources management, in particular, as they give managers a vision to take on the various human resources functions, considering that the right combination of work overload and work-life conflict and personal, mediated by social support and interpersonal conflicts, can lead to positive management strategies and practices in the organization (Cordeiro & Pitacho, 2023).

Organizations that are aware of the protective influence of peer social support and the catalyzing effect of interpersonal conflict in the work overload-work-life conflict relationship may consider fostering a positive and supportive workplace culture (Pluut et al. (2018). In other words, once the relationship between work overload and work-life conflict is understood and which variables affect this relationship, policies, and practices must be designed to ensure a pleasant work environment and enthusiastic work environment. This can not only help promote a positive and harmonious work culture, but also build a strong employer brand (Cordeiro & Pitacho, 2023).

This could involve implementing strategies to enhance team cohesion, communication, and collaboration, ultimately contributing to employees' resilience in the face of work overload. Therefore, the study prompts a call for targeted interventions in conflict resolution, team dynamics, and communication strategies within the workplace.

## 7. Conclusion

This study confirms that work overload can lead to an increase in work-life conflict, as described in previous research. However, the size of this impact can be affected by the social well-being of the organization. If workers feel supported by their colleagues and there is effective conflict management within the organization, the impact will be smaller.

The consequences of work-life conflict can vary among individuals, depending on factors such as coping strategies, support systems, and organizational culture. Interventions and policies that support employees can play a crucial role in mitigating negative consequences. To foster a positive work environment and promote work-life balance, organizations must address conflicts and implement supportive workplace policies.

The impact of interpersonal conflicts on work-life balance highlights the importance of proactive conflict resolution strategies and organizational initiatives that prioritize the cohesion and well-being of their workforce.

Despite this, this study had two main limitations. Firstly, this study was supported by only one technique of collecting information, and the sample size is small, which reduces the scope of the findings and makes it difficult to generalize the results and the obtained conclusions to other populations. Secondly, the participants were not categorized by function or the size of their work organization, and this information is relevant to understanding similarities and differences between sectors and drawing more accurate conclusions.

Given the relevance and complexity of this topic, to consolidate the knowledge on the relationship between work overload and work-life conflict, and the mediating effect of social support and interpersonal conflicts, it is suggested to carry out further studies of some particular sectors, with different methods and with other data collection techniques, which should bring a robustness perception of this relationship of the constructs under analysis.

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