



UNIVERSIDADE D
COIMBRA

Ana Rita da Costa Soares

THE MODERATOR ROLE OF INTERNAL
COMMUNICATION ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN EMOTIONAL DEMANDS AND
EMPLOYEES' WELL-BEING

Dissertação no âmbito do Mestrado em Gestão orientada pela
Professora Doutora Isabel Dórdio Dimas e apresentada à
Faculdade de Economia da Universidade de Coimbra.

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Resumo

O papel moderador da comunicação interna na relação entre as demandas emocionais e o bem-estar dos colaboradores

A pandemia de COVID-19 trouxe consigo efeitos devastadores para muitas organizações espalhadas pelo mundo e as consequências desta crise reuniram a atenção de muitos líderes que, até então, desvalorizavam o papel da comunicação interna como um aspecto de grande importância para o sucesso das organizações.

A presente dissertação tem como objetivo estudar a relação entre as exigências emocionais e o bem-estar negativo e positivo dos colaboradores, assumindo a comunicação interna como variável moderadora desta relação. São ainda estudadas as relações diretas entre estas variáveis. Para o efeito, foi realizada uma investigação empírica de natureza transversal, que incluiu 705 colaboradores de diferentes organizações e de vários setores de atividade. Os dados foram recolhidos através de questionários distribuídos por várias empresas portuguesas, analisados com o AMOS e, posteriormente, por via da análise da regressão, com recurso ao PROCESS.

Os resultados obtidos revelaram, não só, o papel moderador da comunicação interna na relação positiva entre as exigências emocionais e o bem-estar negativo, mas também a relação direta entre as exigências emocionais e o bem-estar negativo e positivo. Também a qualidade da comunicação interna mostrou estar diretamente relacionada com o bem-estar. Estas evidências contribuem para a literatura, sob o ponto de vista de que estas construções ainda não tinham sido avaliadas no contexto da crise pandémica da COVID-19, nem adaptadas à realidade portuguesa.

Palavras-chave: Demandas Emocionais, Bem-Estar Negativo, Bem-Estar Positivo, Comunicação interna, COVID-19

Abstract

The moderating role of internal communication in the relationship between emotional demands and well-being of employees

The pandemic of COVID-19 had devastating effects on many organizations around the world. The consequences of this crisis gathered the attention of many leaders who, until then, had devalued internal communication as an aspect of great importance on their organizations' success.

The present dissertation aimed to study the relationship between emotional demands and negative and positive well-being of employees, assuming internal communication as a moderating variable. The direct relationships between these variables are also studied. To this end, empirical research of transversal nature was carried out, which included 705 employees from different organizations and various sectors of activity. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed for many Portuguese companies and were subsequently analyzed with AMOS and the regression analysis, through the PROCESS macro.

The results obtained revealed not only the moderating role of internal communication in the positive relationship between emotional demands and negative well-being, but also the direct relationship between emotional demands and negative well-being. Internal communication quality was also shown to be directly related to well-being. This evidence contributes to the literature from the point of view that these constructs had not yet been assessed in the context of the pandemic crisis of COVID-19, nor adapted to the Portuguese reality. More specifically, the results contributed to understand the impact of internal communication on employee's emotional effort, describing how it can be a strategy to reduce the impact of emotional demands on well-being.

Keywords: Emotional Demands, Negative Well-Being, Positive Well-Being, Internal Communication, COVID-19

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the world still in the first quarter of 2020, installing an environment of fear and uncertainty in all sectors of activity. All organizations were forced to review many of their work dynamics and managers were forced to make decisions under conditions of great uncertainty.

Under many restrictions, many companies closed their facilities indefinitely and only essential services remained open. A new paradigm has emerged, whenever the working conditions allowed it, remote work became a reality and, in other cases, the lack of work the reality for others. People isolation sparked particular difficulties regarding communication with and between employees and companies were forced to adopt technology-driven solutions as a way to overcome this challenge (Sanders et al., 2020).

The challenges imposed by the pandemic have motivated companies to adopt and review their policies, adapting to the dynamism and competition that characterizes today's market (Zainun et al., 2020). Internal communication concept has gained prominence and is now seen as fundamental to the success of organizations and mandatory to sustain in competitive market (Ishtiaque & Habib, 2016).

In a context of crisis, essentially in the uncertainty that characterized the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges at work took on a different dimension and, if, on the one hand, managers were forced to demand unpredictable conditions, the employees also felt overwhelmed with the imposed demands and the changing nature of work. These demands require, most of the times, a sustained emotional effort (Van Vegchel et al., 2004) that impacts the health and well-being of individuals. During this period, many individuals experienced emotional exhaustion, feelings of not belonging and demotivation in daily tasks, leading them to experience feelings of unease (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

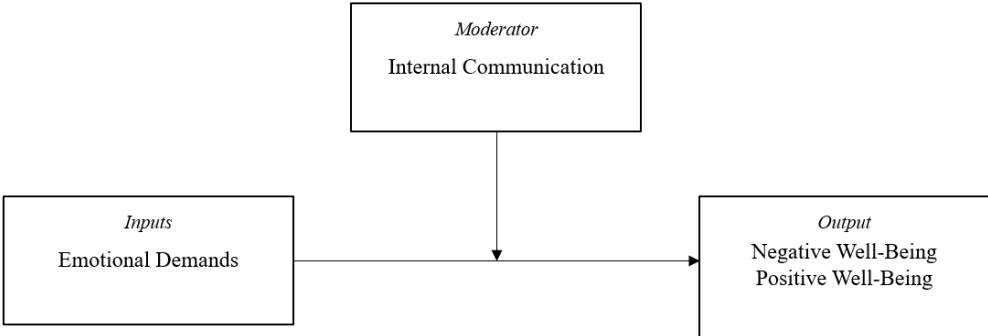
However, and despite the demands imposed by the crises, there are certain aspects that proved to have an important role on mitigating the impact of emotional demands on employees' well-being, acting with a buffer effect. We believe that internal communication can assume this role, by mitigating the effect of emotional demands on the positive well-being of employees, and exploring this effect will be our main objective in this research.

Accordingly, and based on the proposed literature, the present research intends to analyze the relationships between emotional demands, positive and negative well-being and internal communication, with the main purpose of determining the relationship between emotional demands and employee well-being, considering internal communication as a

moderator of this relationship. Thus, the hypothetical models represented in Figure 1 will be tested.

As far as the structure of the dissertation is concerned, it is divided into five chapters where, in a first moment, a conceptual framework of the variables under analysis and their respective relationships will be presented. Subsequently, we will present the collection method and measurement instruments used and then proceed to the presentation of results and their critical discussion. Finally, we conclude this study, presenting its contributions and identifying its limitations and suggestions for future research.

Figure 1
Diagrams of Conceptual Framework



I. Conceptual Framework

1. The JD-R Model

To address the limitations of existing models on employee well-being, Bakker and Demerouti developed a broader and more inclusive model that is now widely used as one of the leading models in the field of occupational health psychology (Schaufeli, 2015) – the Job Demands-Resources Model, also known as JD-R Model (Bakker et al., 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001).

This model introduces a theoretical framework that integrates two variables that had not been related in previous models: stress, and motivation (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The main assumption of JD-R is that, while each job is influenced by different factors related to job stress and burnout, these factors can be clustered into two main categories: job demands and job resources. The relationship between those two are key determinants on employee motivation and stress, where job demands are responsible for initiating a health impairment process and job resources for triggering the motivational process and, as a result, mitigating the impact and costs associated with job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

The concept of job demands includes physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects that require physical or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort. High pressure in the workplace and irregular working hours are some examples of job demands. Job resources, on the other hand, refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects that facilitate the achievement of goals, professional growth, personal development, such as performance feedback, social support and job autonomy, and are responsible for mitigating job demands and associated psychological and physiological costs (Bakker et al., 2005; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job resources are, therefore, “the hypothetical antecedents of motivation or engagement” (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010, p.153).

The JD-R Model has its grounds on the Job Characteristics Model, developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975), the Demand-Control Model, designed by Karasek(1979), and the Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (ERI Model) presented by Siegrist (1996). According to the Job Characteristics Model, there are five characteristics that directly affect employee motivation and productivity: skill variety; task identity; task significance; autonomy and feedback. According to this theory, by redesigning the organizational strategy, psychological states (i.e., experienced meaningfulness of the work, experienced responsibility for the outcomes of the work, and knowledge of the results of the work activities) and employee

performance are enhanced. On the other hand, the Demand-Control Theory defends the premise that employees who have control over their job demands do not experience job strain, showing that the combination between high job demands and low job control will lead to psychological strain (Karasek, 1979). Siegrist's model, in turn, emphasizes the importance of the reward instead of the job control, arguing that the negative effects of workers' effort can be minimized by introducing rewards to their work. ERI-Model's main assumption predicts that the lack of reciprocity between effort and reward leads to feelings of stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Siegrist et al., 2004).

However, the simplicity of these models may be seen as a weakness due to the complex working organizations. The JD-R Model considers that the job demands and job resources needed will depend on the different contexts and will differ on the different organizations and roles of the individuals (Bakker et al., 2005).

The JD-R Model also finds some support in Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Theory, also known as COR Theory. According to this theory, psychological stress is caused when individuals effectively lose resources; feel that they may be facing a possible loss of resources or fail to obtain them through their efforts (Hobfoll, 1998, 2001). Hobfoll highlights, through this theory, that when faced with the same number of losses and gains, the losses have an impact significantly higher (Hobfoll, 1989, 1998, 2001) giving us an interesting insight into the impact of assessment on emotions and performance by focusing on the resources of individuals and groups (Buchwald, 2003).

Given the importance of the concepts of burnout and engagement as mediating elements of the two processes supported by the JD-R Model, it seems important to define them according to what has been developed in the literature. Freudenberger and Richelson (1991) used the concept of burnout as a type of stress associated with a state of fatigue or frustration resulting from unmet expectations in the work environment. This is followed by a decrease in motivation and commitment to the organization, as well as a gradual emotional decline. So, burnout is therefore characterized by a combination of exhaustion and cynicism (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engagement, on the other hand, emerges in line with Positive Psychology, in which the traditional perspective of focusing on illness is replaced by a paradigm shift towards adopting well-being (Silva et al., 2015). This concept is defined as a positive, rewarding, work-related psychological state that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007) and is related to positive individual and organizational outcomes (Halbesleben, 2010).

As a second premise of the Job Demands-Resources Model, and in addition to the classification of factors into the categories of job demands and job resources, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) presented the development of job strain and motivation as a function of two different underlying psychological processes that interact with each other. The first process describes the exhaustion of mental and physical resources of employees that, consequently, leads to negative outcomes like the decrease of energy, health problems and low organizational commitment (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Muchinsky, 1977). These problems are caused by deteriorating health, poorly designed work, work overload, and emotional demands.

The second process that is proposed by this model refers to the motivational process. According to this process, the availability of resources enhances motivation, leading to improved engagement, low cynicism, and increased employee performance. Thus, while demands are related to stress, including high burnout, resources are related to motivation engagement, which means high energy and dedication towards work (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli, 2015). Briefly, job strain has a negative impact on employee performance, while motivation impacts it positively. The application of this dual process has been validated by several studies, who reinforced the mediating role of burnout and engagement in the stress and motivational process, respectively (Bakker et al., 2004; Schaufeli, 2015).

By combining both processes of burnout and motivation (see figure 2), Bakker and Demerouti conclude that when both demands and resources are high, employees expect that there will be an increase in their tension, but also in their motivation. When both job demands and resources are low, employees have low motivation and high tension. By pairing high demands and low resources, employees show high strain and low motivation and when confronted with low demands and big levels of resources, they show low strain and high motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Bakker et al. (2005) also reported that the combination of high job demands, and low job resources potentiated the effect of burnout on employees.

Figure 2

Predictions of the Job Demands-Resources model based on additive effects

Resources	High	Low strain High motivation	High strain High motivation
	Low	Low strain Low motivation	High strain Low motivation
		Low	High
		Demands	

From Bakker and Demerouti (2007)

Beyond the idea that the role of job demands trigger a stress process on employees and the lack of sufficient resources to do their job impairs their motivation, Bakker et al. (2005) has shown that when employees show higher levels of fatigue and demoralization, high job demands are associated with low job resources, thus leading on a unique proportion of variation in exhaustion and cynicism. In addition to this main point, autonomy, social support, feedback from superiors and quality relationship between them were pointed out as factors that minimize burnout, such as work overload and physical and emotional demands. We therefore conclude that job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout (Bakker et al., 2005, 2007).

The JD-R Model highlights the importance of the interaction and balance between job demands and job resources, reinforcing the introduction of job resources when facing demanding situations. Other studies have complemented the already validated information of the JD-R Model by bringing new and complementary ideas, such as the particular importance attached to the role of leaders in this process. Since it's their responsibility to balance the job demands and job resources of the followers, it's primordial to keep them healthy, motivated and productive (Schaufeli, 2015). Thus, this author identifies leadership

as a distinct characteristic that has an indirect effect on employee burnout and engagement by creating a more favorable environment for employee well-being.

Employees perform better at work and feel more engaged when employers give a greater access to job resources (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). This idea assumes that organizations should offer more resources to their employees, such as the introduction of feedback to the work performed, greater variety of skills, and support. Still, the ability of employees to be proactive and mobilize their own resources to achieve higher levels of satisfaction is a mechanism for employees to adapt to the challenges imposed at work, resulting in higher performance. This mechanism is known as job crafting (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

More recent studies in this area of psychology have contributed to the enrichment and extending of the JD-R Model, mainly through the introduction of the dimension of personal resources. Personal resources are defined as the “people’s mental health characteristics which reduce the negative impact of demands on psychological well-being” (Lorente et al., 2008, p.355). Similarly, Xanthopoulou et al. (2007), sought to predict tiredness and engagement at work through the analysis of three personal resources – self-efficacy, organization-based self-esteem, and optimism. The results showed that personal resources partially mediated the relationship between job resources and job demands, thus suggesting that job resources promote the development of personal resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). When employees are assigned a greater number of personal resources, there is a greater ability to handle more demanding challenges at work and improve their results (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

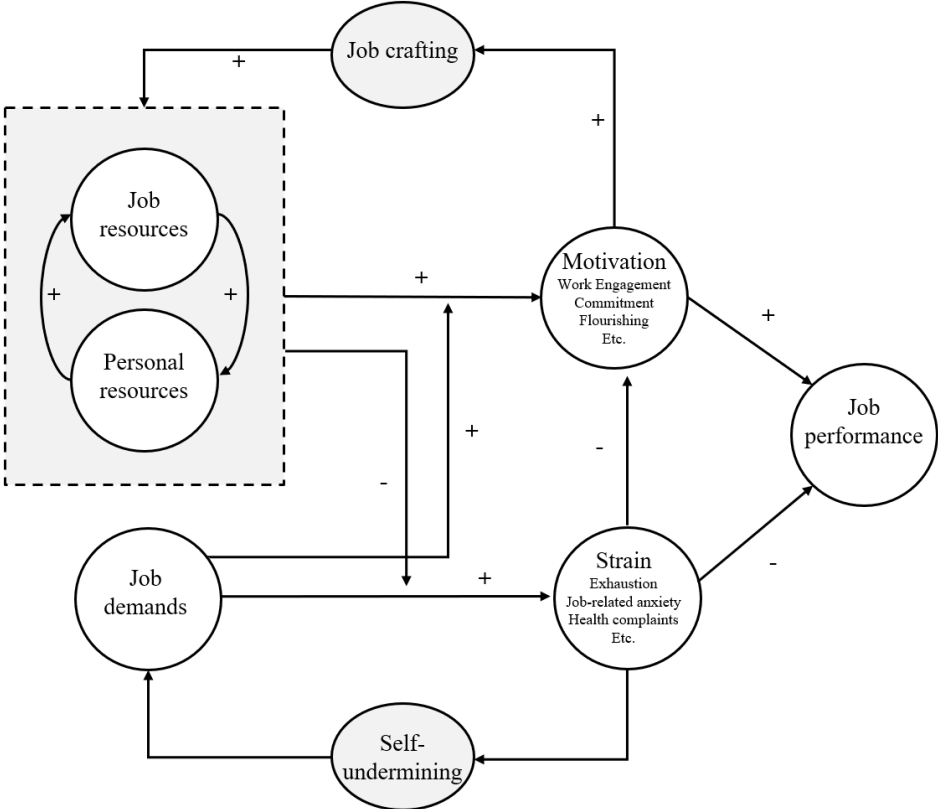
More recently, Bakker and Demerouti (2017) have taken a new approach to the role of employees in the workplace. Indeed, rather than assuming a passive role to workplace conditions, employees assume an active role in interpreting and modifying it (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Thus, according to these authors, employees who feel stressed and have self-undermining behaviors influence negatively the work environment, “inducing a loss cycle of job demands and strain” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018, p. 3); whereas employees who are engaged in their work, reflect a positive work environment, leading to gains of resources at work and greater engagement.

In a critical review of the model and given its wide use, Schaufeli and Taris (2014) present how it can be applied to the reality of organizations. The fact that it can be applied using a wide range of characteristics and outcomes, and considering both positive and negative outcomes and mechanisms, are some of the practical implications explored. Adding

to these two factors, it is also mentioned by the authors that it is useful in the sense that it establishes a bridge between two professional groups - occupational health professionals and human resources professionals. On the one hand, the first ones are responsible for the stress perspective addressed in the model, while the seconds are concerned with keeping their employees motivated and in retaining them in their organizations. It is further reinforced that this model complements previous theories that have been held in the occupational health spectrum.

Given the above, the JD-R Model can be represented schematically through the diagram below (see figure 3).

Figure 3
The Job Demands-Resources Model



From Bakker and Demerouti (2007)

2. Employee Well-Being

The recognition of the importance of people in the organizational context, has contributed to put, in recent years, a great focus on organizational and employee well-being (Bakker et al., 2008; Bennett et al., 2017). The employees' experiences at work will, inevitably, impact work and non-work domains on employee's well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999) and so, employers must identify, understand, and target the well-being aspects, in order to enhance motivation, productivity and company profitability (Prochaska et al., 2011).

Employee well-being is a complex construct that has been integrated into different theoretical frameworks from telic, top-down or bottom-up, cognitive, evolutionary or relative standards theories (Diener & Ryan, 2008) and can be recognized according to hedonic or eudemonic perspectives. From a hedonic perspective, subjective well-being has an affective and a cognitive component, while according to an eudaimonic perspective, the full functioning of individuals relates to their degree of self-realization and well-being (Courbalay et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2001). In a simpler way, well-being presupposes a healthy psychological state in different domains of life, such as the environment, food, financial stability, and even the feeling of security, and people feel the need to allocate different resources to those various domains toward an expected outcome. When this outcome is achieved or a path is taken towards its realization, individuals experience a sense of well-being. The concept should, therefore, be understood as process oriented (Bennett et al., 2017).

Going back to the roots of the concept of well-being, Warr (1999) stressed that it was often recognized as a single dimension, considering extreme feelings of a spectrum – the feeling “good” and feeling “bad”. But various approaches emerged to explain organizational well-being with more detail. One of the most important findings on work related affective well-being, introduced by the author, identified a two-dimensional framework, in which individual's well-being is redirected according to the content of feelings, and their intensity. The content is based on the two dimensions defined – pleasure and arousal –, and the intensity is measured by the distance to the center point (Warr, 1999, 2007). Added to the above, Warr (1990), who had already defined five dimensions for organizational well-being, suggested that three orthogonal axes should be considered: from anxiety to comfort, from displeasure to pleasure, and from depression to enthusiasm.

Van Horn et al. (2004), on the other hand, defined that organizational well-being presupposes a positive appraisal of the various characteristics and presented a five-component model of well-being at work, based on the work developed by Ryff and Keyes

(1995) and Warr (1994). Well-being thus works as a manifestation of employees' cognitions, motivations, behaviors, and physical health and must be considered as a multidimensional phenomenon.

Affective well-being proved to be the central component of mental health and psychological well-being at work and the most representative factor. In fact, the construct brings together, in its definition, the variables of affection, emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction and job engagement (Van Horn et al., 2004; Warr, 1990, 2007) and predicts individual happiness. Since the affection component contributes to a continuous basis with pleasant or unpleasant feelings, it has high impact on someone's personal experience of positive or negative well-being (Diener & Larsen, 1993).

Well-being has its own space in the JD-R Model as its ultimate end. As seen before, maximizing employee well-being is a challenge to the organizations. By predicting employee behaviors and organizational outcomes (such as absenteeism and productivity), the latest advances in the model have sought to explore the predictors and outcomes of occupational well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Employees can also take an important role in maximizing their own well-being and potentiate their performance, by defining strategies that facilitate and enhance individual's efficiency in a specific work context (Russell & Daniels, 2018). Job crafting assumes an important role in this context. When employees implement changes on cognitive, task and relational boundaries at the workplace, in order to fulfill their tasks, strengthen their interpersonal relationships or reframe the way they think about work, they are job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Evidence suggests that employees who feel more motivated and engaged at work, are more likely to use job crafting behaviors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), creating a more positive impact on job resources (Bakker & Costa, 2014).

On the other hand, when high levels of job strain are experienced, it results on higher job demands and even higher levels of strain, leading employees to show self-undermining behaviors and provoking negative effects on the JD-R Model motivational process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The importance of adopting behaviors that counteract job stress and negative well-being at the workplace has gained strength with the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. This public health crisis that broke out in late 2019 across the globe, spread a climate of fear and insecurity and forced the application of extreme measures by governments. The unprecedented circumstances affected employee's personal and professional well-being (Bojadjiev & Vaneva, 2021) because of the succession of changes that occurred in a short

period of time. Feelings of anxiety and fear in a repetitive pattern, led to intrusive ruminative thoughts and, consequently, to a negative well-being on employees (Bakker & van Wingerden, 2020). In this recent investigation conducted by these two authors, when employees distract themselves from the thoughts and worries, by redesigning their tasks and turn them into a dynamic and fun activity, there is a buffer impact on the rumination and, consequently, on individual's well-being.

Experiencing these kinds of negative feelings leads employees to experience a polar concept of the concept of well-being. In this study, we distinguish reactive and unhappy behaviors in the workplace from proactive and happy behaviors, through the concepts of negative well-being and positive well-being, respectively, and how they can be mitigated or intensified.

3. Emotional demands and well-being

The effects of the synergies between job demands and job resources in the JD-R Model have highlighted the growing importance of employee well-being and work-life balance. Among job demands, the role of emotional demands has been exalted and their correlation with employee well-being has been explored. Van Vegchel et al. (2004) has shown that emotional demands have a large impact and are even capable of becoming more important than psychological-quantitative demands on employee well-being, acting as a complement to the more general psychological demands.

The associated negative effects on psychological well-being cannot be ignored and, therefore, emotions at work should take a major place in the organizations' strategy (Zapf, 2002). Even though it has gained greater prominence among jobs with direct contact with the public, the concept of emotional demands has particular relevance in the field of organizational psychology, but it is still difficult to find a clear definition in the literature. Most studies in occupational well-being still assume that employees simply react to the working conditions they are exposed to, exploring a simple stimulus-response model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Introduced as a dimension of job demands, emotional demands are defined as "issues at work that affect the employee personally and are emotionally draining" (Bakker et al., 2011, p.172). Other refers to emotional demands as the stimuli that require sustained emotional effort (De Jonge & Dormann, 2006). Brotheridge & Lee (2002) have related the

emotional job demands with the frequency, intensity, and variety of interpersonal interactions required by a job.

Employees' investment in enhancing or minimizing emotions in the workplace causes the drain of their physical and psychological conditions. The energy expended to successfully accomplish the tasks makes them experience feelings of strain and a set of poor health symptoms is sparked (Sonnetag et al., 2010), leading to negative well-being. That's how the health impairment process of the JD-R Model can explain the relation between emotionally demanding conditions and employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Empirical evidence on emotions at work has demonstrated that emotional demands are related to emotional exhaustion and so there is a relation between emotion at work and burnout (Zapf, 2002). There's also been introduced an increased risk of depression and anxiety (Madsen et al., 2010; Santa Maria et al., 2018) and higher probability to take long-term sickness absence as a consequence of high emotional job demands (Lund et al., 2006).

In an intense and highly emotional situation, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the physical and mental well-being of employees is undermined (Marsen, 2020) and a range of emotions are triggered. To Jin et al. (2007), who tried to explain the role of emotions in crisis situations, feelings like anger, anxiety, fright and sadness originate that employees put barriers to their work conduct, destabilizing their levels of motivation and engagement (Bakker & Costa, 2014). The psychological state that harms the health and happiness of individuals is therefore designated as negative well-being. On the opposite, positive well-being is characterized by greater psychological satisfaction (Vázquez et al., 2009).

Even though there's a lack of recent support about the detrimental impact of emotional demands onto worker's health (Zapf, 2002), the latest research advances in this area show that it is possible to conclude that emotional demands have a direct and negative impact on work and employee negative well-being, such as low commitment and low job satisfaction (Duarte et al., 2020). De Jonge et al. (2008) and Van de Ven et al. (2013), have also determined that emotional demands have deleterious effects on employees' emotional well-being and so, the best way to minimize them, making them less stressful, is by introducing job resources. Consequently, there is a stimulation on positive well-being among them.

Given the above, a relationship between emotional demands and well-being is expected, where an increase on the emotional demands perceived by employees will negatively affect employee's well-being. Thus, we predict that:

H1: Emotional demands are positively related to negative well-being (H1a) and negatively related to positive well-being (H1b).

4. Organizational communication

The new economic and business paradigm imposed by globalization has brought new challenges to modern management. If, in the past, people management was associated with mere bureaucratic processes, nowadays strategies to enhance employee acquisition, development, and retention are meticulously studied, in order to adapt to the competitive conditions (Zehra, 2014). The human resources area has gained a new dimension and people and their quality have taken on a prominent role in the success and profitability of organizations (Dutta & Chaudhry, 2021).

The act of communicating is one of the fundamental forms of human existence, and it is through this act that human relationships are developed (Sharma, 2017). In an organizational context, communication is the key element for successful company external and internal relationships. Organizational communication should be used as a strategic tool, since it is through proper communication that the company guide all employees in the same direction and shows them the benefits of change (Cahen, 1990). For Chiavenato (1990), communication assumes, as the main purposes, the information and understanding necessary to define the employees' guidelines, as well as enhances motivation and cooperation in the workplace. According to Zainun et al. (2020) it is a process that involves both verbal and nonverbal interactions between two or more parties within an organization to exchange and convey information.

According to Robbins (2002) organizational communication has four basic functions. If the communication in the team presumes that any problem should be directly reported to the superior, or that employees should rigidly conform to company policies, we are talking about control communication. If, on the other hand, communication is used as a form of feedback to employees' work and, consequently, increases their motivation levels, we speak about motivational function. If we refer to communication that results from group interaction and reveals their satisfactions and frustrations, we refer to the emotional expression function. Finally, the last function of communication presented by the author concerns the transmission of information that facilitates decision making.

So, to ensure that all employees are involved with the organization's goals and strategies, trust and feel part of the group it is important that they understand them and are properly informed about the corporate life of their organization. Accordingly, the process of internal communication assumes a preponderant role in the effectiveness and quality of the work developed in organizations (Purol & Wosik, 2007). The authors defend that internal communication is not only to share information, but also to build a system of values, that motivate and educate employees". These are important to increase motivation, engagement, efficiency, and a positive internal and external image of the organization, which, therefore, leads to positive feelings from employees towards organization.

4.1. Communication in a Crisis Context

Crisis situations are defined as critical events that pressure the organizational system (Rodrigues et al., 2021), damaging organizations and their results and requiring an extra effort to mitigate the negative effects. An environment of ambiguity, uncertainty and struggle is installed, and employees may lose their sense of control and clarity (Kim, 2018), prejudicing their mental and physical well-being, due to the highly emotionally demanding situations (Marsen, 2020).

As expected, many challenges are raised and the already existing difficulties are intensified (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). Culturally, it has been found that companies tend to employ dated and already exploited solutions to new complex situations, leading to ineffective results. But recently, a worldwide public health crisis forced a rapid reorganization of corporate structures in different sectors, introducing new work models and new rules to ensure everyone's health and safety.

With COVID-19 pandemic, new ways of communicating were quickly explored, face-to-face and remotely, and many companies reevaluated the nature of work (Amis & Janz, 2020), imposing telecommuting as a mandatory work regime, every time working conditions allowed it. Many companies unable to work remotely were forced to close their facilities or to operate at a reduced capacity, but, depending on the industry sector, like retail and services for essential goods, some companies had to work even harder. Somehow, the

poorer members of society got more susceptible to the virus and to the consequences of this event (Amis & Janz, 2020).

The severe operational disruptions (Einwiller et al., 2021) and the unpredictable consequences of this crisis forced managers to review their communication plan with their employees, in an attempt to minimize the harmful effects of this crisis. A strategical communication plan proved to be a company's top priority (Penrose, 2000), to deal and prepare to a crisis scenario and contributing, among other results, to enhance positive relations among the different organizational actors (Tao & Kim, 2017).

Although much of the literature about communication in a crisis context is related to external communication and its impact on external stakeholders, in recent times, there is a growing attention to the role of internal communication on employees (Heide & Simonsson, 2021; Kim, 2018, 2021), developing a new understanding of its role and its complexity. The negative outcomes of the pandemic has forced companies to regulate organization's behavior before, during and after the disaster (Coombs & Holladay, 2010) but, at the beginning of the pandemic, efficient strategies on internal communication were lacking (Heide & Simonsson, 2021).

Described as a merge between crisis communication and changing communication (Heide & Simonsson, 2019), internal crisis communication was conceptualized as the quality of communication during a disruptive event in an organization, in which two-way communication with the internal stakeholders is applied to potentiate the trust among them (Adamu & Mohamad, 2019). This construct can be organized in three phases: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis that takes particular attention in each of them (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). To Penrose (2000), the perception that a company has about a crisis being as a threat or an opportunity, increase the willingness to engage in planning activities and getting well prepared for the worst. In a first moment, it is of particular importance the recognition of the potential threatening contingencies. That's where the company must start this process by planning, exploring new ways to respond, explaining, and justifying the event (Marsen, 2020). The efficiency, successfulness and performance oriented will be predicted by this organization's internal communication plan (Zaumane, 2017). In the case of a badly managed internal communication crisis, not only the organizational image is destroyed, but also trust and identification within the company (Yue et al., 2021).

Heide and Simonsson (2021) observed that employees are treated, internally, as passive receivers of information, but are expected to be senders and active communicators to the outside. Indeed, employees are a heterogeneous stakeholder group, different from

other stakeholders, due to the strong psychological relationship they have with the organization. This dimension is responsible for triggering emotional and cognitive reactions and feelings in and to the work environment, influencing how they act in the organization (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011) and, consequently, the way they must be treated.

Therefore, in a crisis scenario, it is important to encourage acceptance and to place trust in colleagues and superiors through the role of communication (Amis & Janz, 2020). Reducing uncertainty and increasing trust through an internal communication strategy is crucial for a more effective response from employees, and even for the crisis management image that is transmitted to the exterior, since employees are the main points of contact with the outside (Adamu & Mohamad, 2019; Heide & Simonsson, 2021). That's through a quality system of internal communication that the organization can detect, handle and make sense of crisis situation effectively (Adamu and Mohamad, 2019).

To communicate efficiently with employees, organizations must define a two-way communication program before the events to erupt (Kim, 2018), seeking to increase individual levels of satisfaction with their jobs and with the organization as a whole (Grunig et al., 2002). By sharing the crisis scenario companies are going through and making clear to employees the situation they are overcoming, a crisis awareness culture is potentiated (Adamu & Mohamad, 2019). This way, employees will get well prepared and act more effectively to the challenges they face (Jin et al., 2018), preventing resistance to change and, in turn, avoiding negative attitudes and behaviors (Elving, 2005). Also, in a study developed by Kim (2018), it was concluded that the quality of the internal crisis communication has a positive effect on creating a positive employee communication.

Accordingly, employees must be recognized as allies of the organization, ensuring they have access to clear and accurate information and participate in the decision-making process (Kim, 2021; Ridder, 2004). Like this, they will develop a feeling of social identity and commitment toward the organization, minimizing the ambiguity and uncertainty generated (Elving, 2005; Kim, 2021). With a higher perceived control of the situation, the levels of stress will reduce and, as a result, individuals well-being will increase (Einwiller et al., 2021).

Also, when a leader is particularly interested in employees' opinions, there is evidence suggesting they communicate better and closer to employees, in order to ensure their higher-order needs and well-being are met (Men, 2014). In a crisis scenario such as the pandemic crisis, organizations that are concerned with motivation, strengthening the

relationship between teams and their well-being, achieve a greater ability to face the problems raised and to get involved in the tasks (Rocha, Cavalcante e Souza, 2010).

Given the importance of quality internal communication and the notoriety that the concept of well-being has gained in recent years, enabling employees to have a positive experience, and fit into the organization is now highly valued. Thus, we can expect that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Internal communication quality in a context of crisis is negatively related to negative well-being (H2a) and positively related to positive well-being (H2b).

4.2. The buffering effect of internal communication in a context of crisis

During the COVID-19 pandemic, not only the informational resources were essential to engage and tranquilize employees, but also emotional resources assumed an important role. These resources require a relationship-oriented communication strategy based on the social exchange theory, which predicts sequential transactions between two or more parties (Cropanzano et al., 2017) and includes participatory and appreciative forms of communication (Einwiller et al., 2021). When demonstrating consideration and strengthening the emotional bond between the company and its employees, by providing enough emotional support and stronger feedback about the work they are developing, employees will get more motivated to deal with stress and anxiety.

Especially in a crisis context, at a time when both employees and the organizations have a greater dependence on each other, resources must be provided to generate this reciprocal support. This can be translated through the idea that employees are willing to give back to the employer the same amount of supportive resources that they have received, from informational and relational forms of internal communication (Einwiller et al., 2021).

These findings reflect the importance of resources on individual's health and well-being, (Sonnetag & Frese, 2012), demonstrating that job resources are expected to buffer the impact of job demands on employees exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001; Van de Ven et al., 2013), engagement and demotivation (Bakker et al., 2007; Van de Ven et al., 2013; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). When companies contribute to employee's motivation, there's a positive impact on performance and it helps to create a more goal-oriented and engaged attitude. This way, they will have the "energy and enthusiasm to perform well" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017, p. 275).

Resources like job control, potential for qualification, participation, task variety and social support, according to the JD-R Model, are responsible for buffering the impact of the negative demands on poor health (Demerouti et al., 2001). To the authors, adjusting the job design of the work environment by providing the right job demands and resources, can cause a potential impact on reducing exhaustion and disengagement, which are associated with poor well-being and poor health.

De Jonge and Dormann (2006) defined, based on the “Triple-Match Principle”, that job resources are more likely to buffer the impact of negative demands when they are related to the specific content of those demands. Thus, cognitive resources are more effective on buffering cognitive stressors, while emotional resources are more effective in buffering emotional stressors (Sonnentag & Frese, 2012). Van de Ven et al. (2013), We thus believe that increased job demands have a negative impact on employee well-being and it can be minimized by introducing job resources that are able to respond to employee needs.

In sum, there’s evidence in the literature that communicating strategically with employees, sharing and including them on the decision process by giving them the resources they need is essential to keep their well-being and healthy state of mind. This way, not only people’s emotions will be more constant, reducing the frequency and intensity of the exposure to emotional demands, but also employee’s well-being will gain (Duarte et al., 2020), due to the way they respond to the organization. We believe that involving employees in the company’s culture and process of decision-making has a huge impact on their success.

Based on the ideas presented above, we expect that internal communication will act as a moderator on the relationship between emotional demands and well-being:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Internal communication quality will act as a moderator of the relationship between emotional demands and well-being, buffering the positive relationship between emotional demands and negative well-being (H3a) and the negative relationship between emotional demands and positive well-being (H3b).

II. Materials and Methods

1. Data collection procedure

Data collection took place between March and June 2021¹. An initial informal contact was established with the organizations, via e-mail or telephone, to present the project and the team involved to members of management or human resources. After the first presentations, the project was sent via e-mail, describing its general lines, in order to understand which organizations could be interested in participating in the project. The organizations that showed interest in participating in the project were contacted again, by phone or electronically, in order to clarify in detail, the objectives of the research and how it would be applied to the organization - online or paper surveys, depending on the company's preferences. The application of the questionnaires was scheduled after the positive response of the organizations in the study and the questionnaires were delivered, as well as the instructions for filling them out, and were subsequently returned, always respecting the confidentiality of the data collected. All companies received detailed feedback regarding their results.

Throughout this data collection process, the research team complied with the ethical standards that legitimize research, thus ensuring a) confidentiality and anonymity of all data collected, b) non-analysis of all results that had been interrupted by the participants, c) non-disclosure of the results of the individual surveys under any circumstances, and d) data collection that caused as little disturbance as possible to the organization's participants and e) the results obtained in the research were returned to the participating companies. The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Coimbra.

¹ The data collection process was carried out as part of a larger project, in which I did not participate, but I must thank the research team that led this process, composed by Professor Isabel Dórdio Dimas, Professor Teresa Rebelo and PhD student Analice Valdman.

2. Sample

The present study covered a sample of 734 employees from different work groups and different activity areas, different organizations, and industry sectors in Portugal. 29 participants were excluded from the database as they had at least 10% of the responses missing (Bryman & Cramer, 2004). Thus, the sample for this study was reduced to 705 individuals from 11 organizations. Most of the surveys were replied online (i.e., 70%).

Among the organizations surveyed, the most represented class concerns large organizations, between 251 and 500 employees (48.2%), followed by smaller organizations, with a number of employees between 51 and 250 (23.4%). Regarding the most represented sectors, 70.8% of the answers concern the industrial sector, followed by the retail sector (22.3%).

The ages of the employees surveyed varied between 18 and 66 years ($M=38.49$; $SD=10.06$), with the female gender slightly more prominent in the responses (49.8%). As far as qualifications are concerned, the 12th grade is the most represented degree (49.6%). In what concerns tenure in the organization, it varies between 1 month and 42 years ($M = 9.96$; $SD = 9.96$) and, in terms of job tenure, we could also observe that it varied between 1 month and 42 years ($M = 7.80$; $SD = 8.45$).

The results showed that the vast majority of respondents (75.9%) were not telecommuting and, those who were, remained so until at least the delivery of the surveys (35.4%).

In order to determine whether the pandemic affected organizational activity, a scale of one to six was defined, where 1 corresponds to "not at all" and 6 to "very much". The results obtained showed that the pandemic affected the organizations' activity moderately ($M = 3.73$; $SD = 1.21$). It was also asked if the professional activity had been affected, according to an identical scale as the first, and the results showed, once again, that the pandemic has moderately affected the functioning of the organization ($M = 3.57$; $SD = 1.31$).

3. Measures

After collecting the questionnaires, we tested the convergent and discriminant validity of measures through Confirmatory Factor Analysis, using AMOS. In this way, we were able to test the degree in which the theoretical model presented fits the empirical data. The internal consistency of the scales was analyzed according to Cronbach's Alpha (Peterson, 1994).

An analysis of the correlations between the study variables and control variables (i.e., age, gender, influence of telecommuting and the pandemic on the organization and job) was also made. For this analysis and to calculate the descriptive statistics used to describe the sample, we used IBM SPSS Statistics Software version 28.

3.1. Emotional Demands

For the analysis of emotional job demands, we used a questionnaire originally from the Netherlands that seeks to measure, as reliably as possible, the psychosocial workload and stress at work, studying employees' experiences and evaluating the work adequately (Van Veldhoven et al., 2015). The Questionnaire on the Experience and Assessment of Work, or commonly referred to as the QEEW, has been applied in several countries and is composed of several components.

From the emotional load component, the 7 items were used and translated into Portuguese, after the approval from the authors. The participants were asked to score each item according to the demands they felt at work, on a scale of one to five, where one corresponds to "never" and five to "always". The time reference used was "from the beginning of the pandemic until the moment".

3.2. Internal Communication

To evaluate the quality of internal communication in organizations, we used a scale developed by Adamu and Mohamad (2019). With this scale, the authors sought to fill the gap in the literature in terms of scales reliable to assess internal communication during a crisis.

The scale is composed of 11 items (described in Appendix), that were adapted to the Portuguese language which, to date, had not been done, and the participants were asked to classify the items based on a scale of one to five, where one corresponds to "strongly disagree" and five to "strongly agree". Participants were asked to evaluate the internal

communication practices adopted by the organization from the beginning of the pandemic until the moment.

3.3. Employee well-being

For the analysis of employee well-being, we chose to apply short scales to the measurement of affective well-being with the Daniels' Five-Factor Measure (D-FAW) defined by Daniels (2000). This choice was made based on the fluctuation of the participants' emotions and aiming to decrease as much as possible the disruption associated with the assessment of these emotions (Russell & Daniels, 2018).

This way, the 10 items on this scale are: "happy", "at ease", "anxious", "annoyed", "motivated", "calm", "tired", "bored", "gloomy" and "active" and the participants were asked to classify the feelings experienced in the last month at work using a five-point scale, where one corresponds to "not at all" and five to "very much".

3.4. Control Variables

In this research we used as control variables, the gender (dichotomous variable) and age of the participants (quantitative variable), as well as whether or not the participants had been telecommuting (dichotomous variable) and the impact of the pandemic on the organization and on the activity (both ordinal variables).

All scales were used in the Portuguese version, translated using the back translation method, in which there is a re-translating of the translated text into the language in question (Tyupa, 2011).

Gender and Age

Age and gender are "two of the most basic individual attributes in terms of demographic identity" (Wilks & Neto, 2013, p. 1) and can be very impactful on the organization. In a study conducted by these authors, age took a more dominant role in the workplace than gender, showing that middle age is the most critical period in both affective well-being and job satisfaction, and it is older women who show the least well-being. As a result of the impact of COVID-19, it was concluded that women were more vulnerable to the consequences of the pandemic (Cotofan et al., 2021). Thus, well-being may have been affected by the pandemic (Zacher & Schmitt, 2016).

Teleworking influence

Remote or face-to-face work was included as a control variable in this research, given the evidence presented by previous studies that telecommuting positively affects productivity, commitment, job satisfaction, and employee retention (Richman et al., 2002). It has also been pointed out that working from home can reduce stress levels at work (Vega et al., 2015), as well as improve the quality of work-life balance (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Irawanto et al., 2021) and the work performed itself (Pinsonneault & Boisvert, 2001). On the other hand, when people work from home, there's a bigger tendency that work issues interfere with family time and also in communication and connections between colleagues and management (Richman et al., 2002). Also, it is more difficult to measure and compare employee's performance (Golden & Veiga, 2005).

Influence of the pandemic on the organization and on profession

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a forced change in the work environment, compelling management to seek new and adapted strategies to cope with the circumstances (Shamsi et al., 2021). Although the pandemic impacted the labor market globally, this impact was also very uneven in different sectors and professional activities (Cotofan et al., 2021). Aviation (International Labour Organization, 2020), accommodation and food services were the economic sectors with a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19, in contrast, for example, to sectors such as information and communication technology (Papadimitriou & Blaskó, 2020). Also, employees with vulnerable health conditions, younger employees, women and unprotected workers got to be more exposed to the risks of the pandemic (Organization, 2020). For this reason, we introduce the influence of the pandemic not only on the organization, but also on the profession as control variables.

4. Validity analysis

The data were submitted to a confirmatory factor analysis using the IBM SPSS AMOS (Analysis of Moments Structures) version 28. In this way, we were able to assess the relationships of the items with their latent variable as well as the relationships between the latent variables.

The uni and multivariate normality of the variables was assessed by the skewness (sk) (<1.5) and kurtosis (ku) (<4) coefficients, to ensure compliance with the assumptions of the Structural Equation Analysis. In order to assess the adjustment of the model assumed by the literature, we used the following adjustment indexes: chi-square (χ^2), that must be less than 2; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and comparative fit index (CFI), that must show values superior to .90; root mean square error the approximation (RMSEA), which should be less than .05 and p-value not significant, ($p > .05$). All the values are taking into account the reference values established by Marôco (2014).

The preliminary analysis revealed that no variable presented problems in terms of asymmetry ($sk < 3$) and kurtosis ($ku < 10$), indicating that there are no severe violations of the normal distribution (Marôco, 2010). Considering the values of the indicators presented, the measurement model showed problems in terms of adjustment ($\chi^2 (344) = 2144.924$, $p = 0.000$; $\chi^2 / gl = 6.235$; IFI = 0.839; TLI = 0.822; CFI = 0.838; RMSEA = 0.086 (IC 90% 0.083 - 0.090, $p = 0.000$).

By analyzing the standardized loadings of the different items on their respective factor, some of the items revealed loadings below .50, compromising model's fit. Therefore, they were sequentially eliminated, namely two items of internal communication and one item from emotional demands. The measurement model without those three eliminated items, presented an acceptable fit with the data ($\chi^2 (269) = 1173.716$, $p = 0.000$; $\chi^2 / gl = 4.363$; IFI = 0.905; TLI = 0.894; CFI = 0.905; RMSEA = 0.069 (IC 90% 0.065 - 0.073, $p = 0.000$).

At this point, all the standardized loadings of the different items on their respective factors were significant ($p < .001$), with the majority above .50 and only one slightly below that number. Since the overall values are good, we chose to keep this last item. Table 1 presents Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliabilities and Average Variance Extracted.

Table 1

Standardized loadings and individual item reliabilities, Composite Reliabilities, Cronbach's Alpha and Average Variance Extracted

Variables and item	Item N.	λ^2	CR	α	AVE
Internal Communication					
I feel like my management is prepared for how to communicate with employees in times of crisis	2	.589	.924	.923	.579
My management effective internal communication during crisis motivates me to serve as an ambassador by communicating positive opinion about my organization with external stakeholders.	3	.780			
I have been well informed by management during crisis compared to normal situation	4	.810			
In my opinion our management tried to reduce employee's anxiety during crisis.	5	.778			
My management tries to defend us from external criticism during crisis.	6	.769			
My management inspires me to the extent that I contribute by putting more efforts in the promotion of products, satisfying customers and other stakeholders during an economic crisis.	7	.848			
I have been frequently informed by my management about its operational and financial situation during crisis.	8	.644			
My management communicates to employees its commitment to protect their welfare and well-being.	9	.789			
Communication with employees is very important for our management during crises.	11	.803			
Emotional Demands					
Does your work demand a lot from you emotionally?	1	.657	.860	.859	.508
Are you confronted with things that affect you personally in your work?	2	.789			
Do others call on you personally in your work?	3	.665			
Do you feel personally attacked or threatened in your work?	4	.699			
In your work, do you have to be able to convince or persuade people?	6	.641			
Does your work put you in emotionally upsetting situations?	7	.804			
Positive Well-Being					
At Ease	1	.678	.841	.833	.523
Happy	2	.884			
Motivated	5	.845			

Calm	6	.519			
Active	10	.617			
Negative Well-Being					
Anxious	3	.452	.798	.797	.453
Annoyed	4	.697			
Tired	7	.541			
Bored	8	.769			
Gloomy	9	.833			

Notes: λ = loadings; λ^2 = Standardized loadings; SD=Standard Deviation; CR= Composite Reliability; diagonal is Cronbach alpha; AVE=Average Variance Extracted

The scales used show high internal consistency, as shown in Table 1, through the values of composite reliability (Marôco, 2010) and Cronbach's alpha (Field, 2018) greater than .7 in all constructs.

Once the reliability of the scales had been checked, it was considered necessary to understand whether the theoretical model measures what it proposes to measure through the validity (convergent and discriminant) of the constructs. Through the average variance extracted, which is higher than .5 in almost all factors, with the exception of negative well-being, which is the only one slightly lower than this value, we were able to demonstrate the convergent validity of the constructs (Marôco, 2010).

The discriminant validity of the factors, which means the degree a measure does not correlate excessively with other measures we are studying (Sánchez & Sarabia, 1999), was assessed as proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), by comparing the AVEs with the squares of the correlation between the factors. Being $AVE_{ED} = .508$ and $AVE_{IC} = .579$ lower than $r^2_{ED,IC} = (-0.268)^2 = 0.072$, we can assume that the two factors have discriminant validity. Similarly, we can demonstrate the discriminant validity of the factors “Emotional Demands and Negative Well-Being” and “Internal Communication and Negative Well-Being”, whose square correlations, $r^2_{ED,NWB} = 0.213$ and $r^2_{IC,NWB} = 0.142$, are, respectively, considerably lower than AVE values of each factors. Regarding Positive Well-Being, the same happens. The factors “Emotional Demands and Positive Well-Being” and “Internal Communication and Positive Well-Being”, whose square correlations, $r^2_{ED,PWB} = 0.067$ and $r^2_{IC,PWB} = 0.214$ are, respectively, one more time, considerably lower than AVE values of each factor, demonstrating the discriminant validity of the factors. Last but not least, also for negative and positive well-being, the square of the correlations proved to be lower than the AVE, as $r^2 = .368$, since $AVE_{NWB} = .453$ and $AVE_{PWB} = .523$. We therefore conclude that we can distinguish positive from negative well-being and that, in general, all factors demonstrate discriminant validity.

III – Hypotheses testing and discussion of results

The next step aimed to test the previously proposed hypotheses. Table 2 presents the correlations between the variables under study to assess the direction and strengthen of the relationships among them, as well as the means and the standard deviations of the dependent variables (positive and negative well-being), independent variable (emotional demands and internal communication) and control variables (age, gender, teleworking, and influence of the pandemic on the organization and on the profession). First, the control variables gender and both influence of the pandemic on the organization and on the profession have a statistically significant correlation with positive well-being. This means that being a man brings more probabilities of revealing positive well-being, however, the negative relationship between the remaining control variables indicates that the greater the impact of the pandemic, the lower the well-being felt. In the case of negative well-being, the control variable of teleworking also presented a negative significant correlation, which means that teleworking decreases the uneasiness of workers when compared to face-to-face work. The variable age did not reveal any significant correlation and was therefore excluded from further analysis.

Table 2

Average, Standard deviation and correlation matrix

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	M	SD
Age (X1)										38.49	10.062
Gender (X2)	-.033										
Teleworking (X3)	.119**	.030									
Influence on organization (X4)	.050	-.136**	.092*							3.73	1.208
Influence on profession (X5)	.060	-.123**	.024	.637**						3.57	1.314
Internal Communication (X6)	.126**	.047	.098*	-.030	-.123**					4.00	.738
Emotional Demands (X7)	-.062	-.035	-.062	.057	.171**	-.268**				2.28	.890
Positive Well-Being (X8)	.048	.128**	.038	-.077*	-.105**	.463**	-.258**			3.70	.704
Negative Well-Being (X9)	-.036	-.122**	-.102**	.079*	.126**	-.377**	.461**	-.607**		2.58	.752

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ Diagonal Entries=Correlations between items; M=Average; SD=Standard Deviation.

Through the analysis of the correlations, we can conclude that the correlation between emotional demands and negative well-being is positive and statistically significant ($r=.461$; $p<.01$), while the emotional demands with positive well-being are negatively correlated and statistically significant ($r=-.258$; $p<.01$).

As far as the correlation between internal communication quality and negative well-being is concerned, it proves to be negative and statistically significant ($r=-.377$; $p<.01$) and the relationship between internal communication quality and positive well-being is positive and statistically significant ($r=.463$; $p<.01$).

To test our hypotheses, we performed a multiple regression analysis using PROCESS to investigate the direct effect of emotional demands and internal communication on well-being as well as the moderator effect of internal communication between the variables of emotional demands and positive and negative well-being. This method, developed by Hayes (2022), determines if a relationship between an independent and a dependent variable is affected by the direction or strength of another variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Process uses a method named bootstrapping, in which we can create a 95% confidence interval.

Table 3
Results of Hypothesis Testing for Negative Well-Being

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>LI</i>	<i>UI</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
					<i>R²</i>
					0.31***
<i>Negative Well-Being</i>					
<i>Emotional Demands</i>	.32***	.03	.26	.38	
<i>Internal Communication</i>	-.26***	.04	-.17	-.19	
<i>Interaction - Emotional Demands and Internal Communication</i>	-.10**	.03	-.17	-.03	
<i>Gender</i>	-0.15**	.05	-0.24	-.05	
<i>Tele1</i>	-.11	.06	-.22	.01	
<i>Orgpan</i>	.04	.03	-.01	.09	
<i>Profpan</i>	-.02	.02	-.06	.03	

Nota: N = 670. DV = dependent variable. b = non-standardized regression coefficient. SE = standard error. CI = confidence interval. LI = lower limit. UI = upper limit. Tele1 = teleworked. Orgpan = organization affected by the pandemic. Profpan = profession affected by the pandemic. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Regarding negative well-being, the predictors jointly explain 31% of this variable ($R^2 = .31$, $p < .001$). Emotional demands presented a positive significant relationship with negative well-being ($b = .32$, $p < .01$), while internal communication presented a positive relationship ($b = -.26$, $p < .01$). These results supported Hypothesis 1_a and 2_a, respectively. Additionally, the results reveal the interaction between emotional demands and internal communication on the prediction of negative well-being was significant, supporting Hypothesis 3_a. To better understand the nature of the interaction, the relationship between emotional demands and negative well-being is presented at three levels of the moderator: when internal communication is low (Mean-1SD), when is medium (Mean) and when is high (Mean+1SD). As can be seen, internal communication diminishes the impact of emotional demands on negative well-being, since the slope is more accentuated for low levels of the moderator compared to high levels.

We can see the effects of the moderation function on negative well-being on the graphic 1 below. When confronting the same emotional demands and high quality of internal communication, we can observe the reduce of the levels of negative well-being. The opposite happens when the quality of the internal communication is low, since the negative well-being is at much higher levels when compared to the same levels of emotional demands. We can therefore conclude that the quality of internal communication acts as a buffer effect on this relationship.

Figure 4

The moderator effect of internal communication on emotional demands and negative well-being

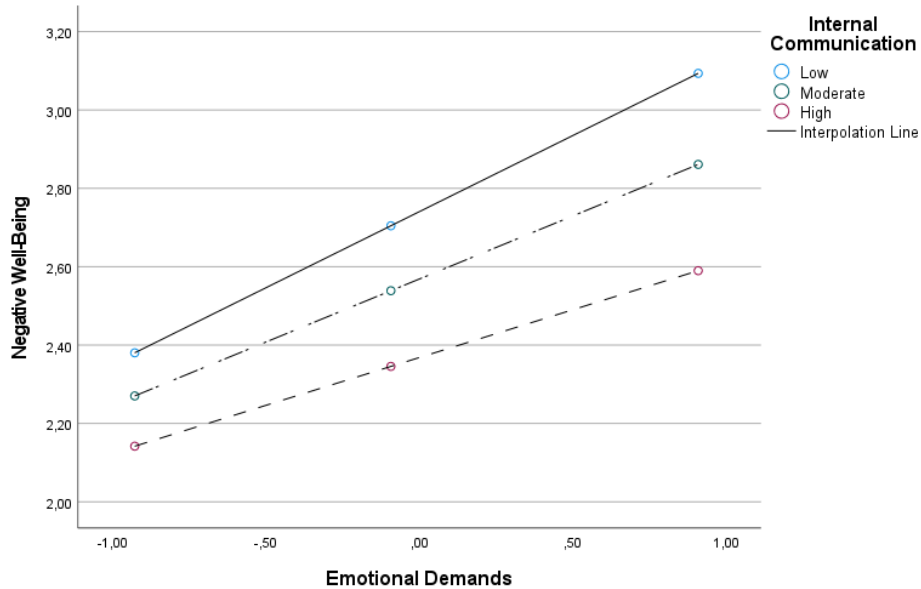


Table 4

Results of Hypothesis Testing for Positive Well-Being

Predictor / DV	b	SE	LI	UI	95% CI
					R ²
<i>Positive Well-Being</i>					0.24***
<i>Emotional Demands</i>	-.10***	.03	-.15	-.05	
<i>Internal Communication</i>	.40***	.03	.33	.47	
<i>Interaction – Emotional Demands and Internal Communication</i>	.01	.03	-.06	.07	
<i>Gender</i>	.14**	.05	-0.05	.24	
<i>Orgpan</i>	-.04	.03	-.09	.01	
<i>Profpan</i>	.02	.02	-.03	.06	

Note: N = 678. DV = dependent variable. b = non-standardized regression coefficient. SE = standard error. CI = confidence interval. LI = lower limit. UI = upper limit. Orgpan = organization affected by the pandemic. Profpan = profession affected by the pandemic. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Concerning positive well-being, the results showed that the predictors explain 24% of this variable ($R^2 = .24$, $p < .001$). We found that there is a significant negative relationship between emotional demands and well-being ($b = -.10$, $p < .001$), whereas internal communication showed a positive and significant relationship with this variable ($b = .40$, $p < .001$). These results supported Hypothesis 1_b and 2_b, respectively. Adding to these data, the results also revealed that the interaction between emotional demands and internal communication on the prediction positive well-being is not significant, which does not allow us to support Hypothesis 3_b.

IV – Discussion

The main objective of this investigation was to study the impact of internal communication as a moderator variable in the relationship between emotional demands and negative (H_{3a}) and positive (H_{3b}) well-being. Additionally, it was also intended to study the relationship between emotional demands and employees' negative (H_{1a}) and positive (H_{1b}) well-being, and the relationship between the quality of internal communication and employees' negative (H_{2a}) and positive (H_{2b}) well-being.

The results suggest that emotional demands have a positive relationship with negative well-being, thus supporting hypothesis 1_a (H_{1a}) and we can also support hypothesis 1_b (H_{1b}), since emotional demands and positive well-being are characterized by a negative relationship between them. In this sense, the results obtained show that facing situations that demand greater emotional effort from employees has a negative impact on their well-being.

This evidence is in line with previous studies that have shown that exposure to high levels of emotional job demands trigger poor health symptoms, and so, harms employee well-being at work (De Jonge & Dormann, 2006; Deng et al., 2021; Duarte et al., 2020). When in face of emotionally demanding conditions, employees' tend to invest more energy in their tasks, which can provoke feelings of exhaustion and potentiate their vulnerability, triggering low levels of well-being (Xanthopoulou et al., 2013).

Concerning the relationship between the quality of internal communication and negative well-being, the results showed a negative relationship, supporting hypothesis 2_a (H_{2a}). On the other hand, the relationship between internal communication and positive well-being is positive, supporting, as expected, hypothesis 2_b (H_{2b}). In this way, the quality of communication maintained internally, impacts how employees feel and we can say the results are aligned with what has been supported in the literature. In times of crisis, employees look after their leaders for information that can possibly minimize their concerns. This attitude results in a more complex task for the leaders, who need to learn how to communicate effectively to keep teams together and motivated (Sanders et al., 2020). Employee commitment and satisfaction, seen as a dimension of employee well-being (Shamsi et al., 2021) are enhanced by internal communication (Ishtiaque & Habib, 2016).

Employees expect understanding and care for their well-being from employers, and when it is not seen as a priority, it may cause serious and negative consequences in the long term and for the organization itself (Guzzo et al., 2021). Also, and even though the results

have not identified a direct relationship between the variables, Qin and Men (2022) have proven the importance of internal communication in developing organizational trust, since when employees identify with and feel respected by their organization, they demonstrate a positive psychological state. We were therefore able to understand that the lack of communication within the organization, namely in times of crisis, negatively impacts the health and well-being of employees.

The results obtained to explain hypothesis 3_a (H_{3a}), once again supported the hypothesis by proving that the positive relationship between emotional demands and negative well-being is moderated by the quality of internal communication. Thus, when employees are confronted with high emotional demands, negative feelings of well-being are triggered, which can be mitigated through the organizations' interaction with employees via communication. Although to our knowledge there are no previous investigations that consider the interaction between the two variables, these results are in line with the existent literature, since there are reports that those employees who are facing emotional difficulties and do not feel the chance to share it or do not feel connected to the company due to the lack of internal communication, see their well-being affected (Donoso et al., 2015). The companies who are able to promote employee organization trust and giving mechanisms to reduce emotional demands and space to feel heard (Yue et al., 2021), have a clear impact on employees well-being (Qin & Men, 2022; Wilks & Neto, 2013; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). We can conclude that internal communication is a fundamental practice in times of crisis.

However, the results of the intervention of internal communication as a moderator in the negative relationship between emotional demands and positive well-being, does not allow us to support hypothesis 3_b (H_{3b}). Indeed, internal communication did not present a buffering effect on the relationship between emotional demands and positive well-being, although a significant effect was found regarding negative well-being. It seems communicating with employees in times of crisis is more effective to reduce the impact of demands on negative emotions than on positive ones.

Considering the results obtained, this dissertation meets the objective of enriching the understanding about the importance of internal communication and its impact on the emotional demands of employees and, consequently, on the well-being of each one of those.

V – Conclusion

The unpredictable pandemic of COVID-19 has brought many challenges to businesses, requiring a rapid response from organizations (Qin & Men, 2022). The climate of fear and instability caused by the pandemic forced organizations to review their communication plans and to monitor their employees, further reinforcing the increased importance of their psychological well-being. We therefore analyzed the impact of emotional demands on employee negative and positive well-being, considering the internal communication as a moderator variable of the relationship.

The results obtained allow us to confirm that internal communication, essentially in a crisis context, plays a preponderant role on organizations by helping them to adapt their function to new realities and being able to mitigate emotional demands on employees' well-being. Thus, adopting a strategic communication plan to deal with a crisis under the goal of prioritizing employees in organizations, have a profound effect on individuals' perception and can increase or diminish the way crises affect companies and how they respond to these changes. This reinforces the results obtained in previous research (Kim, 2021; Qin & Men, 2022; Yue et al., 2021). Accordingly, the present investigation has contributed to the literature about the relations between the variables analyzed (i.e., emotional demands, positive and negative well-being, and internal communication), filling the gap in research about the role of these variables in a COVID-19 crisis context. In line with previous literature, emotional demanding conditions have deleterious effects on employees' emotional well-being. By being a transparent company and motivate employees to participate in decision-making processes, giving them the possibility to share their feelings and adopt behaviors that reduce the emotional load caused by work, can have a huge impact on their well-being. In terms of contributions, it is also important to highlight that this research contributed to provide researchers and team managers with instruments adapted to the Portuguese language, since the scales had not been adapted and validated previously.

The results demonstrate, from a practical point of view, that promoting clear and inclusive communication within an organization is able to foster a working environment that is more conducive to the exchange of ideas and feelings and, in turn, is easier to address employees' needs and concerns. Thus, by strengthening relationships and motivating them to identify with the organization, there is a greater likelihood of reducing their demands, increasing their well-being.

While the research brings important findings to organizations and their leaders, it reveals some limitations. Firstly, the fact that this theme is still very recent and relates to a very specific moment in time, it is translated into few studies, which is a limitation in the argumentation of this topic. Secondly, it is important to mention that the fact that the research was conducted during a critical period of the COVID-19 pandemic in Portugal made it difficult to contact potential companies and, precisely because it only refers to national organizations it may somehow prevent the generalization of the results with another countries and cultures. We can also mention as a drawback the fact that some of the questionnaires were answered digitally, in a computer platform for this purpose, but with which the participants could be unfamiliar with.

Finally, it is important to highlight that this research contributes, not only to the enrichment of the literature, essentially in a crisis scenario and in the Portuguese context, and to the organizations that are seeking to buffer the impact of emotional demands to contribute to the well-being of their employees, through internal communication, but also to trigger future research opportunities that deepen what has already been established and address some of the identified limitations. A good example for future investigations would be the adoption of a longitudinal design, in order to support causality between variables, assessing and comparing results over time.

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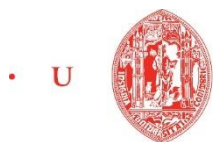
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Appendix



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FEUC FACULDADE DE ECONOMIA
UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA

Questionário Colaboradores (PT)

O presente questionário insere-se num estudo sobre a gestão individual e grupal de crise. As questões que se seguem têm como objetivo conhecer a perceção dos colaboradores sobre as características do trabalho e seus resultados.

Todas as respostas que lhe solicitamos são rigorosamente anónimas e confidenciais. Responda sempre de acordo com aquilo que pensa, na medida em que não existem respostas certas ou erradas.

Pedimos para que seja feita uma leitura atenta das instruções antes do preenchimento das questões e que se certifique de que respondeu a todos os itens propostos.

Muito obrigado pela colaboração!

Declaração de consentimento informado (Participante)

Declaro que tomei conhecimento e fui devidamente esclarecido/a quanto aos objetivos e procedimentos da investigação a realizar. Foi-me garantida a possibilidade de, em qualquer altura, recusar participar neste estudo sem qualquer tipo de consequências. Desta forma, aceito participar neste estudo e permito a utilização dos dados que, de forma voluntária, forneço, confiando nas garantias de confidencialidade e anonimato que me são asseguradas pela equipa de investigação, bem como na informação de que não serão tratados de forma individual e de que apenas serão utilizados para fins de investigação.

Confirmo

_____, ____ de _____ 202_

Para fins de investigação, necessitamos que atribua um código ao seu questionário, devendo proceder da seguinte forma: utilize a sigla que corresponde à primeira letra do seu primeiro nome juntamente com as primeiras letras dos seus sobrenomes (por exemplo, Leonor Miranda - LM).

SIGLA: _____

PARTE 1

(Dados demográficos - para fins exclusivamente estatísticos)

Idade: _____

Atividade principal da equipa: produção

Sexo:

Feminino Masculino Outro: _____

Antiguidade na organização. Indique, por favor, o número de anos e meses ou de meses caso seja inferior a 1 ano (por exemplo: 1 ano e 3 meses): _____

Antiguidade no cargo. Indique, por favor, o número de anos e meses ou de meses caso seja inferior a 1 ano (por exemplo: 1 ano e 3 meses): _____

Formação académica (ex. mestrado): _____

Pertence ao grupo considerado de risco para a COVID-19?

(Pessoas com mais de 60 anos, com doenças crónicas, como diabetes, hipertensão e asma, ou outros)

Sim Não

Durante o período de pandemia, esteve na modalidade de teletrabalho? Sim Não Outra situação: _____

Se na questão anterior a sua resposta foi “Sim”:

- Estive por um tempo, mas voltei a trabalhar presencialmente em tempo integral
- Estive por um tempo, mas voltei a trabalhar presencialmente com redução de carga horária/dias de trabalho
- Estive por um tempo, mas voltei a trabalhar presencialmente num sistema rotativo com os colegas do meu setor.
- Continuo em teletrabalho em tempo integral ou quase integral

Quem mora consigo na sua residência? É possível assinalar mais de uma opção.

- Esposa(o) / Companheira(o) Filho(s) menor(es) de 18 anos Filho(s) maior(es) de 18 anos
- Pai/mãe/madrasta/padrasto Irmão/Irmã Outros familiares (avô/avó, sogro(a), tio(a), neto(a))
- Amigos Moro sozinho

Alguém que mora consigo pertence ao grupo de risco? Sim Não

Você ou alguém muito próximo a si foi diagnosticado com COVID-19? Sim Não

Em que medida considera que a atividade da sua organização foi afetada pela situação de pandemia?

Nada Quase nada Pouco Moderadamente Muito MUITÍSSIMO

Em que medida considera que a sua atividade profissional foi afetada pela situação de pandemia?

Nada Quase nada Pouco Moderadamente Muito MUITÍSSIMO

PARTE 2

Em março de 2020 teve início uma pandemia que teve impactos sociais e económicos diversificados. Nesta parte do questionário, é-lhe solicitado que avalie um conjunto de aspetos relacionadas com este período. Lembre-se que deve responder sempre tendo em consideração o período de pandemia.

As seguintes afirmações referem-se à forma como a sua organização reagiu à situação pandémica. Pedimos-lhe que indique o seu grau de acordo/desacordo com cada uma das afirmações apresentadas, considerando para tal a seguinte escala:

1	2	3	4	5
Discordo totalmente	Discordo parcialmente	Não concordo, nem discordo	Concordo parcialmente	Concordo Totalmente

	1	2	3	4	5
Tenho sido internamente informado pela gestão relativamente às respostas externas que têm sido adotadas pela organização durante o período pandémico.					
Considero que a gestão estava preparada para comunicar com os colaboradores em tempos de crise.					
A forma eficaz como a organização tem estado a comunicar internamente durante este período motivou-me a servir de “embaixador” transmitindo uma opinião positiva da minha organização para o exterior.					

Comparando com uma situação de normalidade, considero que tenho sido bem informado pela gestão da organização durante o período de pandemia.					
A gestão tem procurado reduzir a ansiedade dos colaboradores durante o período de pandemia.					
A gestão tem tentado defender a organização e os seus colaboradores de eventuais críticas externas durante o período de pandemia.					
Durante este período, a gestão tem-me inspirado a realizar o meu trabalho da melhor forma possível.					
Tenho sido informado pela gestão relativamente à situação operacional e financeira da organização durante o período de pandemia.					
A gestão tem comunicado aos colaboradores o seu compromisso em proteger a sua saúde e bem-estar durante este período.					
A gestão tem envolvido representantes dos colaboradores na equipa de gestão da situação de pandemia.					
A gestão tem encarado como muito importante a comunicação estabelecida com os colaboradores durante este período.					

Pedimos-lhe agora que pense nas exigências do seu trabalho durante o período da pandemia do coronavírus (março/2020 - presente). Para cada afirmação apresentada indique a frequência com que a situação descrita aconteceu durante o período pandémico, utilizando para tal a seguinte escala:

1 Nunca	2 Poucas vezes	3 Algumas vezes	4 Muitas vezes	5 Sempre
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	1	2	3	4	5
O seu trabalho foi emocionalmente exigente?					
No seu trabalho, foi confrontado com coisas que o afetaram pessoalmente?					
Foi interrompido por outras pessoas no seu trabalho?					
Sentiu-se pessoalmente atacado ou ameaçado no seu trabalho?					
Teve contacto com clientes/utentes difíceis no seu trabalho?					
Teve de ser capaz de convencer ou persuadir as pessoas no seu trabalho?					
O seu trabalho colocou-o em situações difíceis?					

PARTE 3

Nesta última secção do questionário, pedimos-lhe que tenha em consideração nas suas respostas o último mês de trabalho até ao presente momento.

Pensando nas últimas semanas de trabalho, em que medida o seu trabalho o fez sentir-se:

1	2	3	4	5
Nada	Pouco	Moderadamente	Muito	Muitíssimo

	1	2	3	4	5
1. À vontade					
2. Feliz					
3. Ansioso					
4. Irritado					
5. Motivado					
6. Calmo					
7. Cansado					
8. Aborrecido					
9. Triste					
10. Ativo					