



# UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

WHY AND WHEN IS MEANINGFUL WORK IMPORTANT FOR  
PERFORMANCE? THE ROLES OF PSYCAP AND WORKLOAD

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a  
Master's Degree in Psychology in Business and Economics

By

Filipa Duarte do Cortinhal

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

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## I. Abstract

*“It is impossible to have a great life unless it is a meaningful life. And it is very difficult to have a meaningful life without meaningful work.”*

James C. Collins

The alignment and balanced development of mental health and economics and business are crucial for the well-being of individuals and the global community. The subject of happiness and the perception of meaningful work has garnered significant attention in academic research, particularly in the field of human resources management. However, despite the growing body of literature on this topic, a comprehensive understanding of the impact of meaningful work on job performance remains difficult to determine. In light of the significance and growing attention surrounding these subjects, a research investigation was conducted to explore the correlation between meaningful work and job performance, with PsyCap acting as a potential mediating factor and workload acting as a potential moderating factor. The present study involved a sample of 204 Portuguese employees hailing from various companies and sectors. As hypothesised, a significant indirect relationship was observed between meaningful work, PsyCap and job performance. However, contrary to initial estimations, the moderating influence of workload was not observed.

**Keywords:** Moderated mediation; Meaningful work; PsyCap; Task performance; Organisational Citizenship Behaviour; Workload.

## II. Resumo

*"É impossível ter uma vida ótima se não for uma vida com significado. E é muito difícil ter uma vida com sentido sem um trabalho com sentido."*

James C. Collins

O alinhamento e o desenvolvimento equilibrado da saúde mental e da economia e negócios são cruciais para o bem-estar dos indivíduos e da comunidade global. O tema da felicidade e da percepção de um trabalho com significado tem merecido uma atenção significativa na investigação académica, em particular no domínio da gestão de recursos humanos. No entanto, apesar do crescente volume de literatura sobre este tema, continua a ser difícil determinar o impacto do trabalho com significado no desempenho profissional. Tendo em conta a importância e a crescente atenção em torno destes temas, foi realizada uma investigação para explorar a correlação entre o trabalho com significado e o desempenho profissional, com o Psycap como potencial fator mediador e o volume do trabalho como potencial fator moderador. O presente estudo envolveu uma amostra de 204 trabalhadores portugueses de várias empresas e sectores. De acordo com as hipóteses formuladas, foi observada uma relação indireta significativa entre o trabalho com significado, o PsyCap e o desempenho profissional. No entanto, contrariamente às estimativas iniciais, a influência moderadora do volume do trabalho não foi observada.

**Palavras-chave:** Mediação moderada; Trabalho com significado; PsyCap; Task Performance; Organisational Citizenship Behaviour; Volume do trabalho.

### **III. Acknowledgements**

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“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”

-Nelson Mandela

## Table of Contents

I.	Abstract .....	III
II.	Resumo .....	IV
1.	Introduction .....	1
2.	Literature Review .....	4
2.1.	Meaningful Work .....	4
2.2.	Job Performance .....	6
2.2.1.	Task Performance .....	6
2.2.2.	Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).....	6
2.3.	Psychological Capital (PsyCap) .....	8
2.4.	Workload .....	9
2.5.	Overarching theories .....	10
2.5.1.	Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) .....	11
2.5.2.	Self-Efficacy Theory .....	12
3.	Hypotheses Development.....	15
3.1.	The relationship between meaningful work and job performance.....	15
3.2.	The mediation role of PsyCap .....	16
3.3.	The moderation role of workload.....	17
4.	Methodology .....	20
4.1.	Research Design .....	20
4.2.	Instrument.....	20

4.3. Sample and Procedures .....	21
4.4. Data Analysis Strategy .....	23
5. Results .....	24
6. Discussion .....	30
6.1. Practical Implications .....	32
7. Limitations and Future Recommendations .....	34
8. Conclusion.....	35
9. Bibliography.....	36
10. Appendices.....	XI

## **Figures Index**

Figure 1 - Research Model .....	3
Figure 2 - Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).....	12
Figure 3 - Self-Efficacy Framework (Bandura, 1986) .....	14
Figure 4 - Conceptual framework and hypotheses .....	19

## **Tables Index**

Table 1 - Reliability of the Scales .....	24
Table 2 - Normality of the Variables .....	25
Table 3 - Correlations of the Variables .....	26
Table 4 - Moderator Mediation of task performance .....	27
Table 5 - Moderated Mediation of OCB .....	28
Table 6 – Mediation’s effects of the meaningful work and task performance via PsyCap	29
Table 7 - Mediation's effects of the meaningful work and OCB via PsyCap .....	29

## **Appendix Index**

Appendix A - Questionnaire .....	XI
Appendix B - Informed consent .....	XXII
Appendix C - Overview of sample characteristics .....	XXIII
Appendix D - Overview of the study hypothesis .....	XXV

#### **IV. List of Abbreviations**

<b>JD-R</b>	Job-Demands - Resources
<b>OCB</b>	Organisational Citizenship Behaviour
<b>PsyCap</b>	Psychological Capital

## 1. Introduction

Employment is defined as “the regular work that a person does to earn money” (Cambridge, n.d.). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in September 2022, the unemployment rate stood at just 4.9% among the entire population of working-age individuals, meaning that only a small percentage were without a job. In addition to the initial goal of financial compensation, there exist further factors that progressively motivate individuals to seek employment (OECD, 2022). These include the pursuit of personal motivations, the desire to cultivate a sense of purpose in life, and the aspiration for fulfilment through engaging in meaningful work. Nevertheless, the concept of job satisfaction, which is intrinsically linked to the notion of meaningful work, has not been comprehensively developed or implemented within organisations. In 2021, a study revealed that the level of job satisfaction among employees in the European Union (EU) stood at a modest 43.8%. Notably, Portugal reported a comparatively lower satisfaction rate of 21.6% (Pereirinha, 2023).

Given the data mentioned above, it is imperative to engage in a field that is intricately connected to both psychology and economics and is currently being practised in current work environments. From an economic point of view, firms that are driven by motivation tend to generate higher levels of outcomes and profitability (George, Haas, McGahan, Schillebeeckx, & Tracey, 2023). Motivated employees are inclined to exhibit higher levels of productivity, creativity, and engagement, thereby potentially resulting in enhanced business outcomes. On the other hand, companies that face high rates of employee turnover are confronted with increased expenses and demonstrate reduced levels of performance. The rationale behind this statement is that employee turnover has the potential to result in diminished productivity, escalated expenses for training, and a deterioration of morale among the remaining workforce. Employee motivation holds significant importance for individual well-being when viewed from a psychological perspective. Statistics indicate that employees who hold high levels of motivation tend to exhibit increased levels of happiness and overall well-being. Additionally, these motivated individuals are more inclined to exhibit higher rates of job retention. This aspect holds significance for both employees and employers, as it has the potential to enhance productivity, reduce absenteeism, and decrease turnover expenses. The field of employee motivation is experiencing significant growth,

with an increasing body of research indicating that meaningful work plays an important part in motivating employees (Baldoni, 2013). Meaningful work refers to tasks or responsibilities that present a level of difficulty, captivate individuals, and provide them with the opportunity to apply their abilities and aptitudes in order to effect positive change within society (Bailey, Lips-Wiersma, et al., 2019). When employees perceive their work as having significance, there is a higher probability of them being motivated, engaged, and productive. This study holds significance as it contributes to the progression of research associated with enhancing employee motivation. Organisations can enhance their ability to motivate employees and enhance performance by comprehending the various factors that contribute to meaningful work and its impact. This understanding enables the development of more efficacious strategies (Bailey, Lips-Wiersma, et al., 2019).

Accordingly, the purpose of the current thesis is to understand why and when meaningful work might be related to job performance. This thesis proposes that psychological capital is one of the psychological mechanisms responsible for the relationship between meaningful work and job performance and that higher versus lower workload might be a boundary condition for this relationship. Thus, the current study aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there a positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance?
2. Does PsyCap mediate the relationship between meaningful work and job performance?
3. Does workload moderate the relationship between meaningful work and job performance?
4. Does workload moderate the relationship between meaningful work and PsyCap?

The corresponding research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

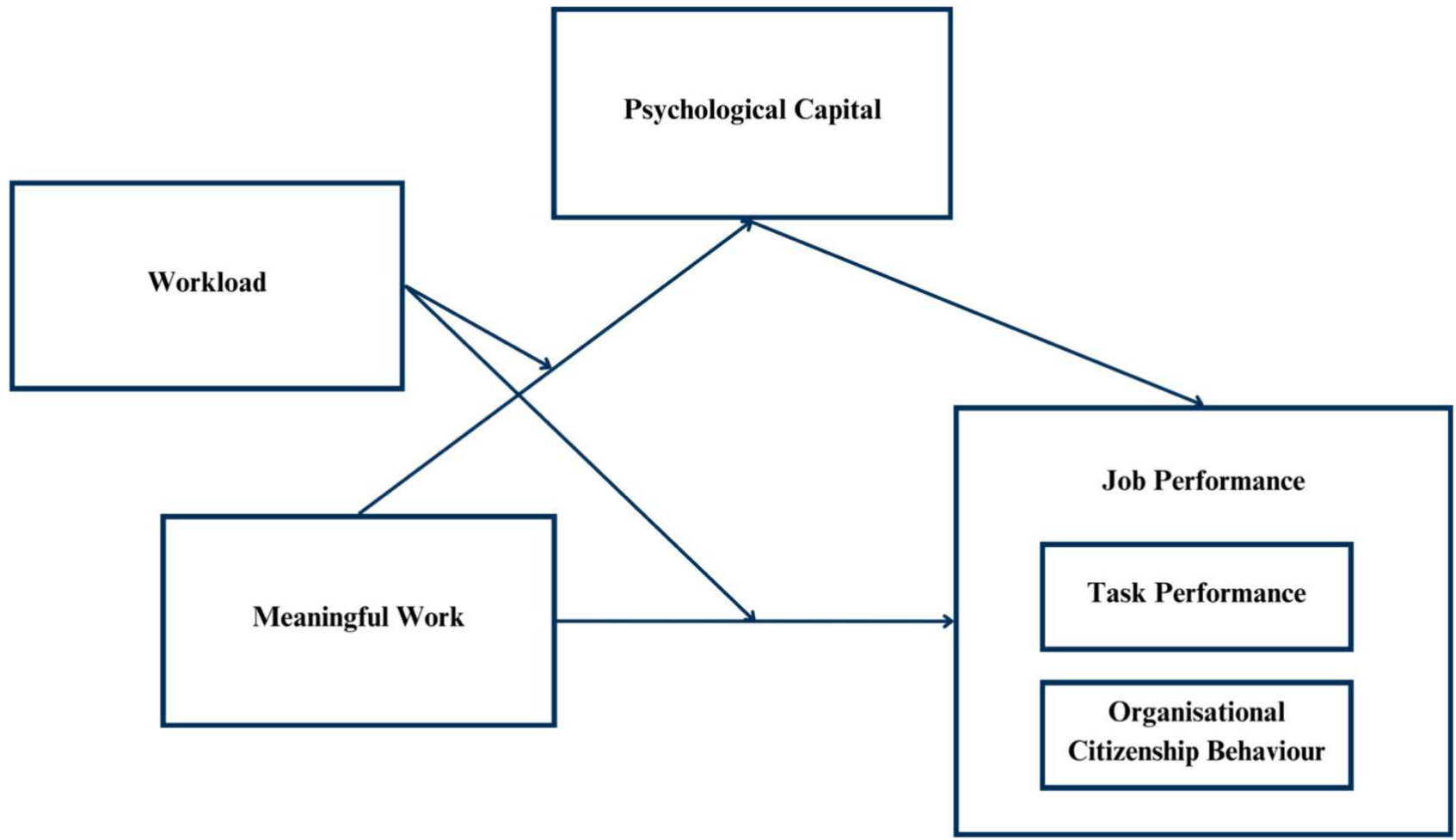


Figure 1 - Research Model

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Meaningful Work

The concept of meaningful work has garnered significant attention in academic research, with well-known psychologists such as McGregor and Maslow contributing to its growing significance (Bailey, Yeoman, Madden, Thompson, & Kerridge, 2019; Fairlie, 2011). McGregor's description from 1960, which highlighted imagination, ingenuity, and creativity as integral components of meaningful work, emphasises the significance of self-expression and personal fulfilment in one's job (McGregor, 1960). Maslow (1965) and Alderfer (1972) elaborated on this idea by linking the concept of work to self-actualization, implying that certain categories of work can contribute to an individual's overall progress and development (Alderfer, 1972; Maslow, 1965). Hackman and Oldman's (1975) inclusion of this concept as a component of the Job Characteristics Model demonstrates its significance for comprehending job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). By recognising that certain employment characteristics can contribute to a sense of fulfilment, these researchers have provided valuable insights into how organisations can design roles to improve employee well-being. Finally, Locke (1976) stated that job satisfaction is linked to doing what is personally valued supporting the notion that individuals are more likely to find satisfaction in their work when it correlates with their own beliefs, interests, and values (Locke, 1976). Overall, these contributions emphasise the evolving comprehension of meaningful work as a venue for personal development, self-expression, and fulfilment in addition to monetary gain (Fairlie, 2011).

Despite the existence of various definitions and the growing interest from scholars, a definitive consensus regarding the precise definition of this concept remains indefinable. According to the findings of Bailey, Yeoman, et al. (2019), six primary perspectives have been identified in the attempt to conceptualise this specific construct: (1) Meaningfulness derived from the job characteristics model; (2) Meaningfulness within the workplace spirituality literature; (3) Meaningfulness within the humanities tradition; (4) Meaningfulness as a multifaceted eudaimonic psychological state; (5) Meaningfulness as occupation-specific; (6) other definitions and conceptualisations. In the following discourse, I will attempt to explain each of the mentioned perspectives. First, this perspective examines how job characteristics like skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback lead to three

psychological states, like experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results affect an employee's sense of work meaning, such as job satisfaction, motivation, and performance. Second, this perspective examines how spirituality, such as the search for meaning and a sense of purpose affects workplace meaning. It examines labour, values, and beliefs, and suggests that this meaning is something high like a community or cause. Third, this approach examines existential and philosophical elements of life and works through philosophy, literature, and art. It examines purpose, values, and personal fulfilment and defends that meaningful work is branded by a sense of purpose and fulfilment. Fourthly, this approach defines meaningfulness as a psychological condition that includes self-actualization, personal progress, and fulfilment. It supports eudaimonia, which emphasises personal excellence and well-being. In fifth place, this view acknowledges that jobs may affect meaningfulness. It emphasises finding meaning and fulfilment in one's work, for example, individuals working in jobs like health jobs where you can easily see outcomes tend to perceive more the job as more meaningful. To conclude, a few research employed separate definitions of meaningful labour such that meaningfulness occurs when personal identity and organisational role are integrated or that it comes from self-perception matching job position (Bailey, Yeoman, et al., 2019).

A prominent field of investigation relates to the study of work behaviour. Scholars have conducted investigations into the effects of meaningful work on both job satisfaction and engagement. When individuals experience a sense of purpose in their tasks, there is a higher likelihood of job satisfaction and active engagement in their responsibilities (Cardador, Grant, & Bruno, 2019). Research has indicated that individuals who perceive their work as meaningful exhibit higher levels of motivation, thereby demonstrating a greater propensity to excel in their professional endeavours (Van Wingerden & Van Der Stoep, 2018). Additionally, scholarly investigations have also directed their attention towards examining the influence of meaningful employment on various individual aspects, including well-being and the attainment of a harmonious equilibrium between work and personal life. When individuals hold the perception that their tasks possess purpose and value, they tend to encounter enhanced levels of psychological well-being and job satisfaction (Kundi, Aboramadan, Elhamalawi, & Shahid, 2020). In general, the existing body of research pertaining to meaningful work offers significant contributions to understanding how organisations can establish a conducive setting that fosters the professional and personal growth of their employees (Bailey, Yeoman, et al., 2019).

## **2.2. Job Performance**

Job performance refers to “the effectiveness with which job incumbents perform activities that contribute to the organisation’s technical core” (W. Borman & Motowidlo, 1997: 99). Therefore, according to Borman and Motowidlo (1993), job performance can be seen as multidimensional. It can be stated that there are two ways to understand this level through performance, these are called in-role performance - or task performance - and extra-role performance - or contextual performance as OCB (W. C. Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Ford, Cerasoli, Higgins, & Decesare, 2011). These two types of performance are distinguished by levels of intensity, positive effects on the organisation and whether they are part of formal job expectations (Santos, 2018).

### *2.2.1. Task Performance*

Task performance refers to the behaviour of an employee according to the requirements and responsibilities that contribute to a function or job, it is also known as in-role prescribed behaviour (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010; Koopmans et al., 2011).

The literature suggests that task performance is influenced by various factors, including individual abilities and organisational culture. A research study has shown that individual abilities, such as cognitive ability and personality traits have a significant impact on task performance (Ramsey, 1995). It is well acknowledged that the establishment of explicit goals and the establishment of a robust organisational culture may significantly increase employee performance levels. When employees possess a well-defined comprehension of their objectives and understand the underlying values and principles that guide their tasks, their motivation and determination to achieve success are enhanced (Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021).

### *2.2.2. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)*

The terminology Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) was initially employed in the early 1980s by Organ and colleagues (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Nevertheless, scholarly attention towards this concept has significantly increased since

the onset of the 21st century. In 1988, Organ defined OCB as " individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation" (Organ, 1988: 4). This model comprised five factors: altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. Following the initial definition, subsequent definitions surfaced along with revisions made by the author, asserting that OCB encompasses "performance that supports the social and psychological environment in which task performance takes place" (Organ, 1997: 95). Alongside this revised definition, the author introduced two additional concepts to the model, namely peacekeeping and cheerleading. This alteration yielded favourable consequences, specifically in terms of its enhanced ability to differentiate between two concepts, namely OCB and task performance (N. P. Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009).

The proposition of a novel concept in response to the prior proposal by Organ and colleagues was put forth by Williams and Anderson in 1991. In contrast to Organ's perspective, Williams and Anderson propose a categorization of OCB into two distinct subcategories, namely OCB-O and OCB-I. This classification was based on the target or direction of the behaviour, precisely, whether the behaviour was aimed at benefiting the organisation (OCB-O) or benefiting other individuals (OCB-I) (Kanat-Maymon, Yaakobi, & Roth, 2018; Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Although there are clear disparities among the models proposed by various authors (Coleman & Borman, 2000; Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, & Woehr, 2007; LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996), it is noteworthy that Williams and Anderson's model predominantly drew inspiration from Organ's model and other comparable frameworks. Consequently, Williams and Anderson's model integrates each factor proposed by Organ. Specifically, OCB-I encompasses elements such as altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, and cheerleading, which were originally introduced by Organ. Similarly, OCB-O encompasses factors such as compliance, civic virtue, and sportsmanship derived from Organ's model (N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009).

Studies on effectiveness, such as productivity and efficiency, and studies on the influence of this construct on personality qualities, such as leadership and fairness, have been the focus of the majority of the research that has been conducted on this concept (N. P. Podsakoff et al., 2009).

### **2.3. Psychological Capital (PsyCap)**

The construct of psychological capital, also known as PsyCap, was born out of the movement known as Positive Psychology, introduced by Martin Seligman in 2000. Unlike the theories of that time that referred to psychology as a concept focused on mental illness and pathology, Positive Psychology encouraged an emphasis on people's traits, virtues and talents (Nolzen, 2021; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Therefore, based on this movement, Luthans and Youssef (2004) introduced the concept of PsyCap as part of this movement, describing PsyCap as an individual's psychological capacity that can be measured, developed, and managed for performance improvement and this concept is composed of the four best inclusion criteria defined in the Positive Psychology movement, also known as the four HERO: hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Nolzen, 2021). The concept of hope is rooted in the theoretical framework proposed by Snyder et al. (1996), according to their theory, hope consists of two fundamental components: agency and pathways. Agency refers to the individual's motivation and determination to achieve a particular goal or task. Pathways, on the other hand, pertain to the strategies and means employed by individuals to navigate and attain their desired objectives (Snyder et al., 1996). Regarding efficacy, it was derived from Bandura's social cognitive theory and pertains to the capacity to effectively utilise resources and motivation to attain elevated levels of performance (Bandura, 1997, 2012). Resilience, based on Luthans' theory, pertains to the capacity to effectively manage and navigate through situations characterised by unpredictability, potential dangers, or challenges, while also demonstrating the capability to adjust to varying circumstances and endure stress (Luthans, 2002). Optimism, rooted in Seligman's theoretical framework, can be defined as the cognitive and emotional desire towards preparing favourable results (Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu, & Hirst, 2014; Seligman, 1998; Sridevi & Srinivasan, 2012).

A meta-analysis has yielded diverse findings, encompassing both trait-specific investigations within the construct of PsyCap and broader examinations of PsyCap as a whole. Overall, the aforementioned studies have demonstrated a significant correlation between PsyCap and performance, indicating that higher levels of PsyCap are associated with higher levels of performance (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011). The strength of this relationship was found to be greater when considering the construct as a whole, known as

PsyCap, and comparatively weaker when examining individual traits such as hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. This variable has also been employed in research studies that have demonstrated its role as a mediator between organisational climate and performance. Previous studies conducted by various authors have made attempts to comprehend whether this particular variable exerts any influence on the types of organisational performance that were investigated in the present study. These studies have provided evidence suggesting that the variable in question has a significant impact on OCB and further supports the notion that it acts as a mediator for performance, specifically in the domains of task performance and OCB (Avey et al., 2011).

## **2.4. Workload**

In recent years, some authors have attempted to establish a comprehensive definition of workload. However, a universally accepted definition has yet to be established. Still, the majority of definitions commonly attribute workload to one or more of three distinct aspects: There are three key factors to consider: (1) the workload or tasks that need to be completed, (2) the duration of time spent on these tasks, particularly the time spent under stressful conditions, and (3) the psychological impact experienced by the individual (Bowling & Kirkendall, 2012; Cain, 2007).

Despite these factors, the scholarly literature also conceptualises workload as a construct that can be delineated along two distinct dimensions: a quantitative-qualitative axis and a mental-physical axis (Bowling & Kirkendall, 2012). Concerning the continuum between quantitative and qualitative workload, quantitative workload refers to the quantity or volume of work assigned to an individual. In contrast, qualitative workload pertains to the level of complexity or difficulty associated with the tasks assigned to the individual. Hence, this dimension posits that an individual's perception of workload can be influenced by the perception of excessive demands in a single division (LaRocco, Tetrick, & Meder, 1989; Parasuraman & Purohit, 2000). About the additional dimension delineated in scholarly works, mental workload pertains to the cognitive exhaustion experienced by individuals, encompassing factors that contribute to psychological disorders like anxiety and depression. In contrast,

physical workload is regarded as a source of physical fatigue, which can lead to physical ailments such as fatigue or dizziness (Dwyer & Ganster, 1991).

According to Tomic and Tomic (2010), workload refers to a “perceived pressure due to the amount of work and task heaviness” (Tomic & Tomic, 2010: 3). It is therefore a measure of how demanding a job is in terms of mental effort, complexity and time to complete a task (Amoo & Adam, 2022; Tomic & Tomic, 2010).

Previous studies have shown that when work demands are too low, individuals may become bored and restless. They may not be challenged enough and may not feel like they are making a difference. On the other hand, when work demands are too high, individuals may feel overwhelmed and stressed. They may not be able to cope with the workload and may start to avoid their work. The same principle applies to employees' abilities. When employees' abilities are too high for the job demands, they may become bored and unchallenged. They may not be motivated to work hard and may start to look for other opportunities. On the other hand, when employees' abilities are too low for the job demands, they may feel overwhelmed and stressed. They may not be able to perform their job effectively and may start to make mistakes. The optimal level of work demands and abilities is different for everyone. It depends on the individual's personality, skills, and experience (Sari & Ali, 2022).

## **2.5.Overarching theories**

This thesis employs two theories associated with job characteristics to establish an empirical foundation for this study's model: the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory and the Self-Efficacy Theory. In essence, the JD-R posits that the overall performance and effectiveness of an employee are dependent on the interaction between the demands placed on employees and the resources available to them within their respective job roles. The next justification is provided by the Self-Efficacy theory, which posits that performance is determined by levels of self-efficacy. However, this is contingent upon various factors, including past experiences and psychological states such as PsyCap.

### *2.5.1. Job Demands-Resources (JD-R)*

The JD-R theory, developed by Bakker and Demerouti in 2017, represents a significant advancement in the field of occupational psychology. However, it is important to note that this theory has its roots in an earlier publication by Demerouti et al. in 2001. This evolution of ideas demonstrates the ongoing commitment to research and understanding the complex relationship between job demands and resources. By building upon the foundations laid by Demerouti et al., Bakker and Demerouti have refined and expanded our understanding of how individuals navigate their work environments. The JD-R theory provides a comprehensive framework for examining both the detrimental aspects of job demands and the beneficial effects of job resources on employee well-being and performance (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2023).

This theory suggests that job demands, encompassing physical, psychological, and social aspects, alongside job resources of a similar nature, directly impact two significant outcomes: strain and motivation. Job demands refer to the various pressures employees face at work. The demands can manifest in physical forms, such as engaging in tasks that require heavy lifting or repetitive actions, they can also manifest in psychological forms, such as experiencing a high workload or time pressure or in social demands, such as encountering interpersonal conflicts or lacking support from colleagues. On the other hand, job resources pertain to the resources available to employees to effectively manage these demands. The resources encompassed in this context can be classified into three categories: physical resources, which include suitable tools and equipment; psychological resources, such as autonomy and opportunities for personal and professional development; and social support, which is derived from supervisors and co-workers. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, it is claimed that when the demands of a job exceed the available resources, individuals tend to encounter strain. This particular strain presents itself in diverse manifestations, encompassing burnout, emotional depletion, decreased job satisfaction and potentially even physical health complications (Bakker et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, in cases where there is a suitable balance between the demands of a job and the available resources, with resources either meeting or exceeding the demands, individuals are more likely to encounter elevated levels of motivation. Through the implementation of effective strategies, organisations have the potential to decrease strain within

their workforce, while also creating a sense of motivation. Ultimately, this phenomenon results in the improvement of employee well-being, increased levels of productivity, and a resulting enhancement of overall organisational success (Bakker et al., 2023). The primary aim of this theory was to provide an explanation for burnout and engagement.

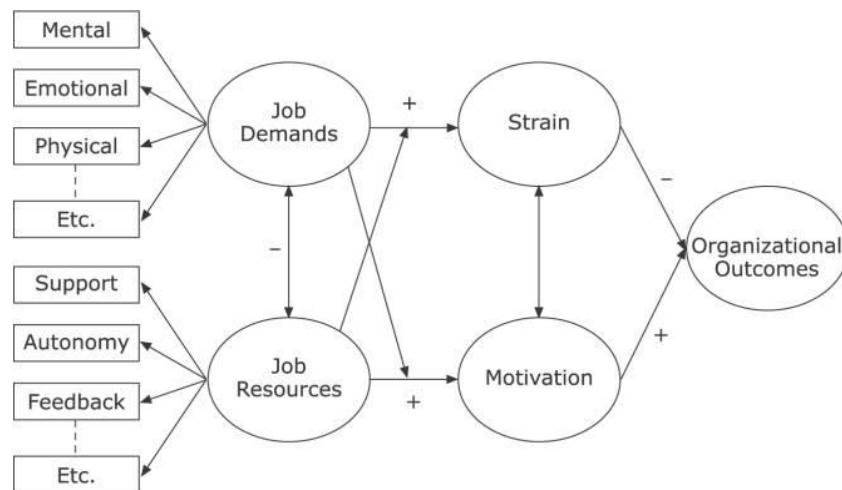


Figure 2 - Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)

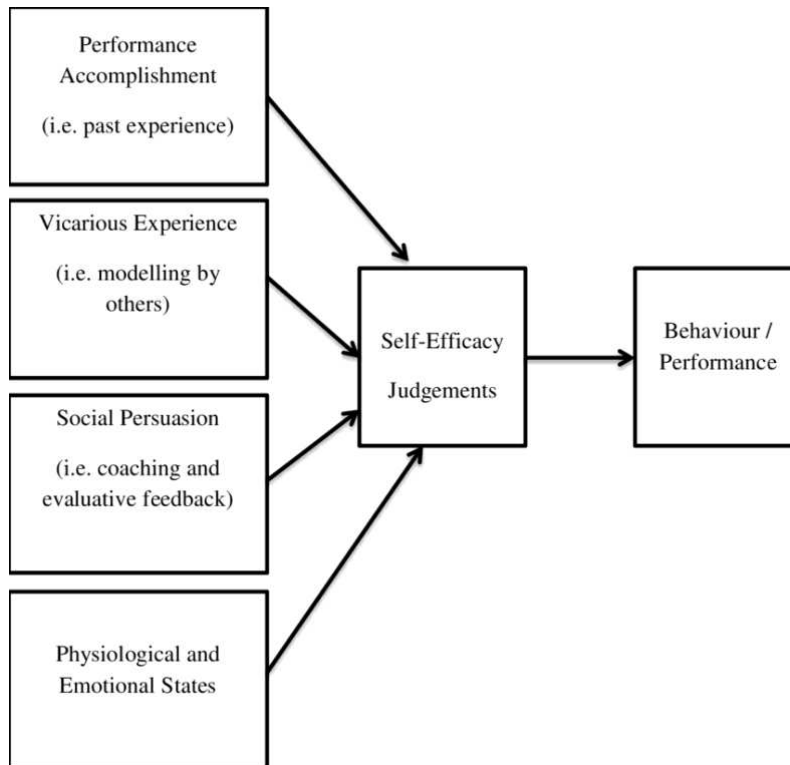
### 2.5.2. Self-Efficacy Theory

The theory of self-efficacy, formulated by Bandura in 1977, is a significant theoretical framework that provides insight into the ways in which individuals' personal beliefs regarding their abilities influence their actions and psychological state (Bandura, 1977). According to the mentioned theory, the key element of inducing behavioural and psychological transformations resides in the alteration of an individual's perception of their self-efficacy. According to Bandura, self-efficacy refers to individuals' perceptions of their capacity to effectively coordinate and execute the necessary steps for attaining certain objectives. In short, self-efficacy pertains to an individual's conviction in their ability to achieve desired outcomes. The importance of self-efficacy extends beyond its influence on individual accomplishments, encompassing one's comprehensive emotional welfare. Individuals who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy demonstrate a tendency to approach challenges with a sense of assurance and

perceive obstacles as occasions for personal development rather than obstacles that cannot be overcome (Bandura, 1986; Maddux & Stanley, 1986).

Based on the theoretical framework, it is stated that there exist four vital factors that generate significant influence on the development of an individual's self-efficacy. Firstly, performance accomplishment refers to an individual's previous experiences and achievements. Additionally, vicarious experience refers to the process of gaining knowledge by observing our colleagues succeed in their tasks. Furthermore, the impact of social persuasion on our motivation and confidence is significant, as it is shaped by the feedback we receive from our peers. Finally, it is important to note that the physiological and emotional states play a significant role in influencing performance and overall well-being within the organisational context (Bandura, 1986).

Bandura's argument presents a comprehensive analysis of the concept of self-efficacy, emphasising three essential aspects: generality, strength, and magnitude. Generality refers to how much an experience impacts one's overall belief in their own capabilities, whether it applies to a range of behaviours or is limited to a specific one. In other words, it determines the extent of influence that experience has on one's self-efficacy expectations. The notion of 'strength' is centred on an individual's constant trust in their capacity to effectively perform a specific action. The strong conviction held by individuals empowers them to face challenges and achieve success. At last, the "magnitude" can be considered the degree to which individuals perceive their ability to effectively execute a set of behavioural decisions. This concept emphasises the significance of self-belief and establishes a framework for achieving notable accomplishments (Maddux & Stanley, 1986).



*Figure 3 - Self-Efficacy Framework (Bandura, 1986)*

### **3. Hypotheses Development**

#### **3.1. The relationship between meaningful work and job performance**

Several studies relate meaningful work to job performance, but it has also been shown that OCB positively affects individuals' job performance (Allan, Batz-Barbarich, Sterling, & Tay, 2019; Bailey, Lips-Wiersma, et al., 2019; Van Wingerden & Van Der Stoep, 2018).

Research centred on "the motivational potential of meaningful work" further demonstrated that meaningful work exhibits a correlation with performance in diverse and interconnected ways, including factors such as strength and work engagement. The study consisted of a total of 459 participants who were employed as professionals in a global operational organisation specialising in health technology. The majority of the participants were male and possessed a higher level of professional education completed or university training in technology. The mentioned study exclusively utilised questionnaires, which focus on the Positive Meaning subscale of the Work And Meaning Inventory (Van Wingerden & Van Der Stoep, 2018).

Therefore, the relationship between meaningful work and OCB has been recently studied (Safitri & Sulistiyorini, 2022). Hence, prior research has demonstrated this relationship through a meta-analysis (Allan et al., 2019), a two-wave survey (De Boeck, Dries, & Tierens, 2019), interview-based investigations (Oelberger, 2019), participant videos and interviews (Florian, Costas, & Kärreman, 2019), two ethnographic studies involving participant observation and interviews (Laura Toraldo, Islam, & Mangia, 2019), and an interview-based study (Symon & Whiting, 2019). The sample for these studies comprised employee groups, volunteers, aid employees, social entrepreneurs, and academics. The findings of these studies indicate a statistically and positive significant relationship between meaningful work and OCB (Bailey, Lips-Wiersma, et al., 2019; Selamat, Nordin, & Fook, 2017).

The findings of another meta-analysis, which encompassed studies sourced from multiple databases including Humanities International Complete, Military and Government Collection, PsycINFO, Vocational and Career Collection, MEDLINE, and others, demonstrated that there exists a significant positive relationship between meaningful work and both self-assessment of professional performance and organisational citizenship behaviours (Allan et al., 2019). This theory can also be supported by the Job Demands-Resources Theory, which posits

that the dimensions of work contribute to crucial psychological states, namely meaningful work, ultimately leading to favourable outcomes such as job performance (Allan et al., 2019).

Based on these empirical findings, it is presented as a first hypothesis:

*H1: There's a positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance so that the higher the perception of meaningful work, the higher the job performance.*

### **3.2.The mediation role of PsyCap**

Previous studies have shown that PsyCap has several antecedents and outcomes, varying according to the levels of analysis (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). According to Luthans & Youssef-Morgan (2017), the antecedents of PsyCap are demographics, personality, job characteristics, organisational climate, and leadership. On the other hand, the outcomes are productivity, attitudes, behaviour, health, relationships, and well-being (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Other authors have found that PsyCap positively affects work-related variables, such as satisfaction, commitment, performance, and well-being. They also state that individuals with higher PsyCap characteristics perceive more control and more satisfaction (López-Núñez, Rubio-Valdehita, Diaz-Ramiro, & Aparicio-García, 2020).

Various research has presented empirical data that supports the existence of a favourable association between meaningful work and PsyCap. A meta-analysis has provided evidence supporting the notion that engaging in meaningful work may contribute to the development of good relationships within the field of positive psychology. This field encompasses several branches, including PsyCap, which plays a crucial role in this context. These findings highlight the need to create a sense of meaning and purpose within the professional environment. When people see their jobs as meaningful and compatible with their values, there is a greater likelihood of them demonstrating elevated levels of PsyCap (Tan, 2018).

Empirical research has established a positive correlation between PsyCap and job performance. The findings of a meta-analysis indicate a significant association between PsyCap and both job performance and OCB. Furthermore, the strength of this association was found to be influenced by the methodology employed, with surveys yielding the most robust relationship. The present meta-analysis utilised a range of databases, including PsycINFO, Old

Ovid Medline, ProQuest Digital Dissertations, and ProQuest Advanced, among others. The study sample consisted of a total of 12,567 participants (Avey et al., 2011).

The theories mentioned above provide a basis for justifying these arguments. Based on the JD-R theory, meaningful work can be classified as a job resource, PsyCap (hope, optimism, resilience and efficacy) can be classified as personal resources and job performance is classified as an outcome. The relationship between meaningful work and PsyCap can be also explained through Self-Efficacy theory. PsyCap is regarded as a psychological and emotional state, while meaningful work is recognised as a crucial element in attaining self-efficacy. Consequently, it is plausible to suggest that a connection exists between meaningful work and PsyCap, which subsequently influences job performance (Bandura, 1986).

Given the above, the following hypothesis was formulated for this study:

*H2: PsyCap mediates the positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance, such that the higher the meaningful work, the higher PsyCap, and the higher job performance.*

### **3.3.The moderation role of workload**

Prior research has shown a relationship between workload, performance, and PsyCap. In order to have an influence, the workload must be either too high or excessively low (Health and Safety Executive, 2007). The impact under consideration refers to the influence exerted by the workload on other variables, and its effects might vary depending on the levels of effort. An example of this is that people with high levels of PsyCap perceive a higher control over the job demands (workload) and so also perceive a higher control over their satisfaction and work settings (López-Núñez et al., 2020). The idea in consideration can be clarified through the lens of the JD-R theory. According to this theoretical framework, personal resources possess the capacity to impact job demands, including factors such as workload. Additionally, job demands have the potential to exhibit a negative correlation with job resources, such as the presence of meaningful work. Furthermore, these job demands can also manifest a negative association with organisational outcomes, specifically job performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2023). Another example of this is: if the workload is too low, individuals tend to behave better at work, but if individuals have a higher pressure at work, and therefore a higher workload, they tend to run away from problems (Sari & Ali, 2022).

With this, it is possible to formulate the following hypotheses:

*H3a: Workload moderates the positive relationship between meaningful work and PsyCap, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals who have a low workload.*

*H3b: Workload moderates the positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals who have a low workload.*

Figure 4 depicts the conceptual framework for the current thesis that emerges from the offered hypotheses.

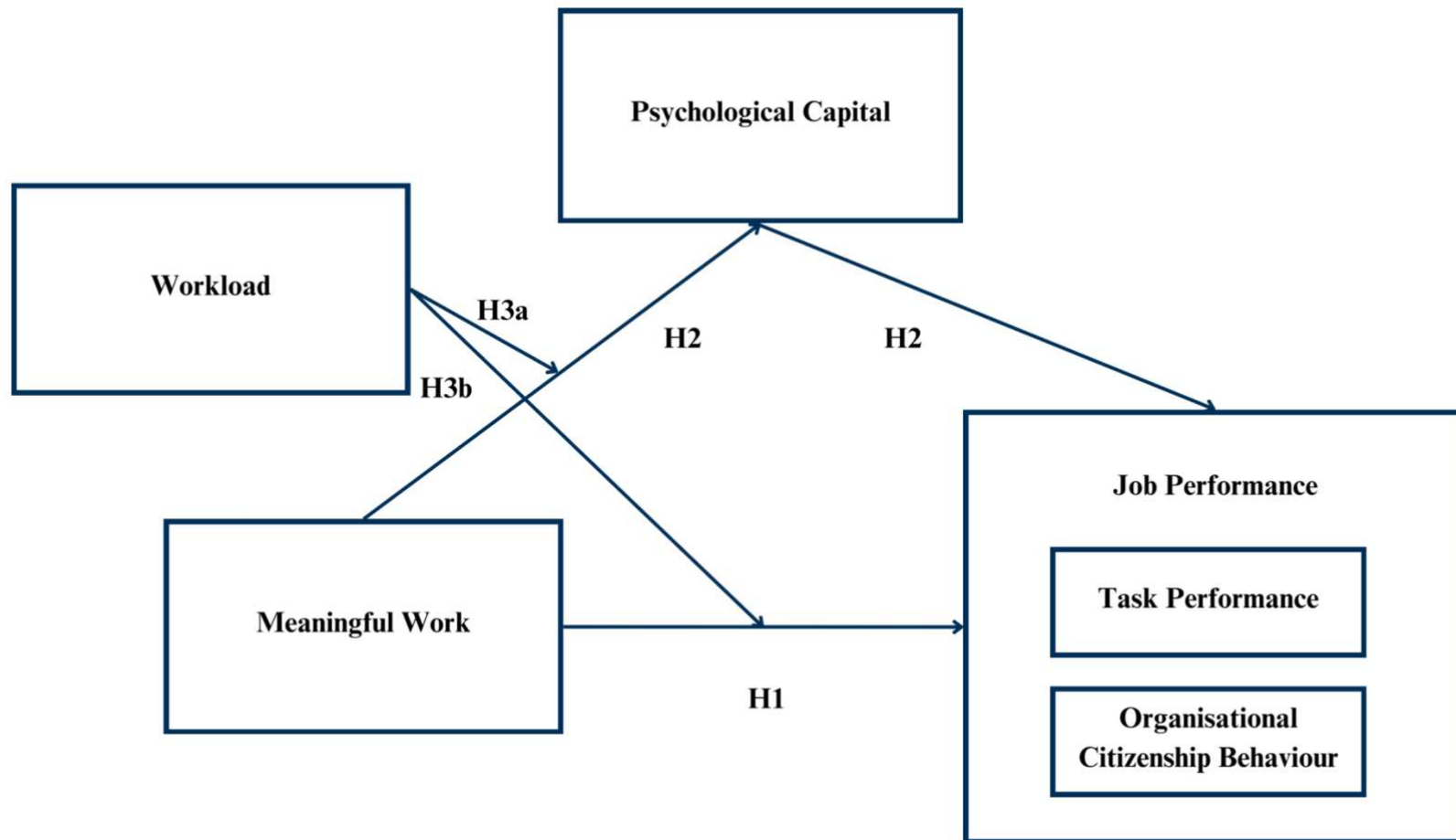


Figure 4 - Conceptual framework and hypotheses

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Research Design**

This study is characterised as quantitative, correlational, and cross-sectional. The study was conducted only in one temporal episode, through an online questionnaire.

As can be seen in the study design (Figure 1), this study has a predictor variable (meaningful work), and an outcome variable (job performance) – which is divided into two variables: task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) -, a mediator (PsyCap) and a moderator (workload).

### **4.2. Instrument**

A questionnaire was created on Qualtrics consisting of demographic questions, a meaningful work measure, a job performance measure, a PsyCap measure and a mental workload measure. Since the study sample was Portuguese, the entire questionnaire was presented in Portuguese (See Appendix A). This thesis used exclusively scales that already exist and have been translated and validated for the Portuguese population, as explained below. The scales described below were presented in random order and had an attention check question in the middle of the questionnaires that instructed participants to select the Strongly Disagree option for an item that explicitly stated, “Please select the Strongly Disagree option for this item.”.

*Meaningful Work.* The Portuguese version of the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI), by Steger (2011), was presented. This scale assesses Positive Meaning, Meaning-Making through Work and Greater Good Motivations, which in their entirety assess meaningful work. It consists of ten questions and consists of asking the participant to state, using a Likert scale from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 7 "Strongly Agree", their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement that describes ways of thinking. This version was translated and validated for the Portuguese population by Ferreira et al. (2014) (Ferreira et al., 2019; Steger, 2011).

*Job Performance.* To measure Performance, the Self-Rated Performance by Williams and Anderson (1991) was used. The Portuguese version by Bento (2021) was presented in this

study. The scale consists of twenty-one questions and consists of asking the participant to state, using a Likert scale from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 7 "Strongly Agree", their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement (Bento, 2021; Williams & Anderson, 1991).

*Psychological Capital.* The PsyCap measurement scale, Psychological Capital Questionnaire - Short Version (PCQ-12) by Luthans, Avolio, & Avey (2017), was presented. This scale was translated and validated for the Portuguese population by the author himself and permission for use was granted by Mind Garden, Inc, [www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com). To answer this scale participants were asked to state, using a Likert scale from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 6 "Strongly Agree", their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement of the questions of the scale. It assesses the four constructs represented in the PsyCap, being, as previously mentioned in the literature, Hope, Optimism, Efficacy, and Resilience (Poelingomang, Luthans, Avolio, & Avey, 2017).

*Workload.* Finally, the CarMen-Q scale of Rubio-Valdehita et al. (2017) was used for the Mental Workload scale. This scale was translated and validated for the Portuguese population by Mestre (2021). The scale consists of twenty-nine questions where participants are asked to indicate how often the statements occur to them, using a frequency scale from 1 "Never" to 4 "Always" (Mestre, 2021; Rubio-Valdehita, López-Núñez, López-Higes, & Díaz-Ramiro, 2017).

### **4.3. Sample and Procedures**

The present sample was drawn through convenience and snowballing methods, as the survey has been shared on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp), in companies and with word of mouth.

The inclusion criteria for this study required individuals to be above 18 years of age, employed, and possess a proficient knowledge of the Portuguese language, based on the questionnaire factors. These conditions were explained in the informed consent form of the questionnaire (Appendix B).

Out of the total sample size of 221 individuals who responded to the questionnaire, a subset of 17 participants did not pass the attention check. Consequently, the final sample for analysis consisted of 204 individuals.

Among the individuals included in the study, a total of 86 participants (42.2%) were identified as male, while the remaining 118 participants (57.8%) were identified as female. In terms of age, the average age of the participants was 42.3 years ( $SD = 13.0$ ), with a range of 18 to 66 years. Most of the participants (52.5%) were married or in a civil union. The remaining participants consisted of 74 (36.3%) who were single, 19 (9.3%) who were divorced or separated, and four (2.0%) who were widowers. Concerning the participants' educational background, it was found that four individuals (2.0%) had completed their Elementary Education, while 32 participants (15.7%) had attained a High School Education qualification. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the sample, specifically 96 participants (47.1%), had obtained a bachelor's degree, 69 individuals (33.8%) possessed a master's degree, while a smaller subset of the sample, comprising three participants (1.5%), had achieved a PhD. Furthermore, the study revealed that out of the total sample size of participants, a majority of 150 (73.5%) were employed under permanent contracts, a smaller proportion of 20 (9.8%) held fixed-term contracts, while three (1.5%) were engaged in fixed-term contracts through temporary work agencies. Additionally, ten (4.9%) of the participants were under open-ended contracts, ten (4.9%) were in traineeship contracts, and 11 (5.4%) had contracts of another nature. This category of contract encompasses various types of agreements, including freelance contracts and PhD scholarships. The study participants were engaged in diverse sectors of activity, with the majority involved in administration, management, and services (34.8%), followed by engineering and production (24.5%). Concerning the duration of employment among individuals in their present organisations, the mean tenure is approximately 13.8 years ( $SD = 11.9$ ).

An overview of sample characteristics can be found in Appendix C.

#### **4.4.Data Analysis Strategy**

The survey responses were initially transferred from the Qualtrics platform, where the survey was conducted, to the IBM SPSS Statistics 28 software. This last platform was used to calculate descriptive statistics and correlations for all the research variables, assess the reliability of all scales using Cronbach's Alpha, and test the two moderated mediation models, one for each dependent variable, using PROCESS macro version 4.1. Consistent with the theoretical framework of this thesis, both moderated mediations were examined using Model 8 (Hayes, 2013).

In the context of modifying variables and ensuring their right form, the following strategies were considered, with due consideration given to the use of suitable confidence values. In order to maintain uniformity in the order of scales, the reversed items were carefully recoded. Additionally, a level of significance of 5% was used, indicating a potential for incorrectly rejecting the null hypothesis in around 5% of instances. When the p-value falls below the established significance level of 0.05, it provides sufficient evidence to firmly reject the null hypothesis and support the alternative hypothesis.

## 5. Results

The first step of the data analysis consisted of evaluating the reliability of each scale used in the questionnaire, as presented in Table 1.

Cronbach's alpha is a statistical measure commonly employed to assess the internal consistency of a scale. It is used to evaluate the reliability and precision of the scale's items, specifically to determine if they are all measuring the same construct (Cronbach, 1951; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Based on the examination of Cronbach's alpha for each scale, it can be concluded that all scales, meaningful work ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ), PsyCap ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ), job performance ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ) and workload ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ), demonstrated a good level of internal consistency, as indicated by values ranging from 0.8 to 0.9 (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Taber, 2018). While alpha demonstrates good internal consistency, it can serve as a reliable indicator. A high alpha value exceeding 0.90 (high level) suggests potential redundancy within the test, implying the need for a reduction in its extension (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Table 1 - Reliability of the Scales

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></i>
Meaningful Work	42.75	10.28	.89
Psycap	54.05	8.02	.83
Performance	126.62	11.02	.84
Workload	77.97	9.27	.87

After testing for internal consistency, the normality of each variable was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, as can be seen in Table 2. The K-S tests revealed that the workload was the only factor with a *p-value* smaller than .05, indicating that it followed a normal distribution. Considering that the sample fails to demonstrate normality on meaningful work, PsyCap, task performance, and OCB, the Spearman test was used for all correlations shown in Table 3 rather than the more commonplace person test.

Table 2 - Normality of the Variables

Variable	<i>KS</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Meaningful Work	.104	<.001
PsyCap	.100	<.001
Task Performance	.084	.001
OCB	.091	<.001
Workload	.062	.058

Table 3 demonstrates that, except for the correlations involving workload, all variables exhibited positive correlations with one another. This implies a positive relationship between two variables, where an increase in one variable corresponds to an increase in the other variable, and vice versa. Specifically, the following relationships were observed: (1) A positive moderate correlation was found between meaningful work and PsyCap ( $r_{sp} = .523, p < .001$ ); (2) There was a positive weak correlation between meaningful work and task performance ( $r_{sp} = .189, p = .007$ ); (3) A positive weak correlation was observed between PsyCap and task performance ( $r_{sp} = .293, p < .001$ ); (4) A positive weak correlation was found between meaningful work OCB ( $r_{sp} = .252, p < .001$ ); (5) A positive moderate correlation was observed between PsyCap and OCB ( $r_{sp} = .445, p < .001$ ); (6) A positive moderate correlation was found between task performance and OCB ( $r_{sp} = .527, p < .001$ ) (Schober, Schwarte, & Boer, 2018). This provides support for the first hypothesis (H1) positing that “There’s a positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance so that the higher the perception of meaningful work, the higher the job performance.”, by virtue of the previously stated correlations between meaningful work and task performance, as well as meaningful work and OCB, it is possible to demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance.

Table 3 - Correlations of the Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Meaningful Work					
2. PsyCap	.523**				
3. Task Performance	.189*	.293**			
4. OCB	.252**	.445**	.527**		
5. Workload	.019	-.026	.130	-.025	

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .001$

Using Hayes' Macro Process Model 8 (2013), the moderation model was tested. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the moderated mediation model predicting task performance was not significant ( $F(1,199) = 1.025, p = .313$ ), as indicated in Table 4. Additionally, the moderated mediation model predicting OCB was also not significant ( $F(1,199) = .319, p = .573$ ), as shown in Table 5. However, it is evident from the previously mentioned tables that both analyses demonstrate an indirect influence. Therefore, an analysis was conducted to examine the mediation. Model 4 of the Process macro was used, and the findings are shown in Tables 6 and 7. The observed results indicate that there is not enough evidence to support the third hypothesis (H3a and H3b), which postulate respectively "Workload moderates the positive relationship between meaningful work and PsyCap, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals who have a low workload." and "Workload moderates the positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals who have a low workload."

Table 4 - Moderator Mediation of task performance

	Coefficient	SE	t	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Mediator variable model: PsyCap					
Constant	4.504*	.039	115.454	4.427	4.581
Meaningful work (a)	.359*	.038	9.435	.284	.434
Workload (b)	-.164	.124	-1.327	-.408	.080
a x b	-.166	.117	-1.413	-.397	.066
Dependent variable model: Task performance					
Constant	4.276*	.306	13.981	3.673	4.879
Meaningful work	.043	.044	.993	-.043	.129
PsyCap	.231*	.067	3.420	.098	.363
Workload	.265*	.118	2.242	.032	.499
Int	-.114	.112	-1.012	-.336	.108
Indirect effect					
Workload	Effect	BootSE	95% CI		
			BootLL	BootUL	
-.320*	.095	.035	.035	.172	
.000*	.083	.029	.032	.146	
.320*	.071	.027	.026	.133	

Note: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; \* =  $p < 0.001$

Table 5 - Moderated Mediation of OCB

	Coefficient	SE	t	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Mediator variable model: PsyCap					
Constant	4.504*	.039	115.454	4.427	4.581
Meaningful work (a)	.359*	.038	9.435	.284	.434
Workload (b)	-.164	.124	-1.327	-.408	.080
a x b	-.166	.117	-1.413	-.397	.066
Dependent variable model: Organisational citizenship behaviour					
Constant	4.509*	.275	16.398	3.967	5.051
Meaningful work	.005	.039	.124	-.072	.082
PsyCap	.343*	.061	5.662	.224	.463
Workload	.061	.106	.571	-.149	.271
Int	-.057	.101	-.564	-.256	.142
Indirect effect					
Workload	Effect	BootSE	95% CI		
			BootLL	BootUL	
-.320*	.141	.036	.078	.220	
.000*	.123	.028	.075	.184	
.320*	.105	.028	.059	.170	

Note: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; \* =  $p < 0.001$

Tables 6 and 7 display the total, direct, and indirect effects of the mediation of meaningful work on task performance and OCB via PsyCap. The analysis revealed findings indicating that both categories of job performance exhibited total and indirect effects of mediation, with the exception of the direct impact that was not seen. This leads to the conclusion

that there is mediation between meaningful work and task performance via PsyCap (total effect  $c = .123$ , 95% CI [.051, .200], direct effect  $c' = .045$ , 95% CI [-.042, .132] and indirect effect  $ab = .081$ , 95% CI [.028, .146]) and a mediation between meaningful work and OCB via PsyCap (total effect  $c = .128$ , 95% CI [.059, .197], direct effect  $c' = .005$ , 95% CI [-.072, .082] and indirect effect  $ab = .123$ , 95% CI [.074, .179]). This means that employees who perceive that their work is meaningful, tend to have higher hope, resilience, optimism and/or efficacy and to also display higher task performance and OCB, which provides support to the second hypothesis (H2) which postulates that “PsyCap mediates the positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance, such that the higher the meaningful work, the higher PsyCap, and the higher job performance”.

Table 6 – Mediation’s effects of the meaningful work and task performance via PsyCap

Type of effect	Effect	SE	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Total	.126*	.038	.051	.200
Direct	.045	.044	-.042	.132
Indirect	.081*	.030	.028	.146

Note: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ;  $R^2=5.2\%$

Table 7 - Mediation's effects of the meaningful work and OCB via PsyCap

Type of effect	Effect	SE	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Total	.128*	.035	.059	.197
Direct	.005	.039	-.072	.082
Indirect	.123*	.027	.074	.179

Note: CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ;  $R^2=6.2\%$

## 6. Discussion

This study aimed to examine two mediations regarding PsyCap in the relationship between meaningful work and the type of performance while considering workload as a moderating variable. The results showed that PsyCap is indeed a mediator on the relationship between meaningful work and job performance, while workload does not moderate the same relationship. Appendix D displays the findings of hypothesis testing in the Study.

Based on the first hypothesis (H1), it was postulated that there was an expected correlation between meaningful work and organisational performance. The results provided support for this hypothesis. The previous assumption was consistent with prior research that has shown a positive association between the two variables. This hypothesis can be explained by focusing on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory as discussed in the preceding literature review section. This is due to the fact that, as previously explained, the theory indicates the correlation between job demands, job resources, and employee well-being and performance. It clarifies that when the demands of a job exceed the available resources, employees go through strain, resulting in burnout, emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and possibly, adverse physical health consequences. Nevertheless, when the demands of a job are adequately fulfilled or exceeded by the available resources, employees experience a sense of motivation, thereby potentially resulting in enhanced job performance, raised employee well-being, and overall organisational success (Bakker et al., 2023). Based on the argument that meaningful work is seen as an important job resource, it can be concluded that there exists a positive correlation between the level of job resources and organisational success. Furthermore, it may be assumed that a direct relationship exists between the degree of meaningful work and organisational performance, whereby higher levels of meaningful work correspond to higher levels of organisational performance.

Regarding the second hypothesis (H2), the results provided statistically significant values to support this hypothesis, in line with the findings of Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017) who posited that individuals with higher levels of optimism tend to perceive greater chances of achieving success, as well as the theories explained in this research. This suggests that PsyCap serves as a mediator. The JD-R and Self-Efficacy theories incorporate PsyCap as a variable that directly influences both meaningful work and performance. However, it is evident that engaging in meaningful work has a significant influence on performance,

regardless of the presence of PsyCap. Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, it can be identified that PsyCap exhibits an influential association with meaningful work, subsequently impacting performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2023). Additionally, Self-Efficacy Theory posits a direct connection between PsyCap and performance (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

In relation to the third hypothesis (H3a), the analysis provided no statistically significant results to support the notion that the workload acts as a moderator in the positive association between meaningful work and PsyCap. This implies that the strength of this relationship does not differ significantly among individuals with varying levels of Workload. One possible justification for this statement is the observation that, as previously indicated, meaningful work may exhibit a direct influence on PsyCap, as shown on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2023). In other words, no matter the degree of workload, the presence of meaningful work may produce an effect on PsyCap. Another explanation for these findings is that, as anticipated, the workload can indeed have a negative impact on PsyCap. However, this effect lacks enough power to influence the levels of the other variables. An example of this phenomenon is that an increased workload has the potential to reduce an individual's PsyCap. However, it is important to note that this decrease in PsyCap may not reach a level that is significant enough to impact their experience of meaningful work.

The last proposed hypothesis (H3b) posited that workload would serve as a moderator in the positive correlation between meaningful work and performance. This implies that the correlation between meaningful work and performance is based on workload intensity. Nevertheless, the study resulted in no statistically significant findings that could support this hypothesis. This suggests that there is no significant variation in the correlation between meaningful work and performance across individuals with varying levels of workload. There exist two potential explanations for this specific finding. One possible explanation posits that the association between meaningful work and performance is so robust that the influence of workload is insufficient to alter the magnitude of this relationship. In short, individuals who perceive their work as meaningful are more likely to perform well, even when faced with a high workload. An alternate justification posits that the influence of workload on the association between meaningful work and performance is insignificant. In simpler terms, the size of the association remains consistent across individuals, irrespective of their respective workloads.

One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the level of workload does not have a substantial influence on individuals' perception of the meaningfulness of their work.

Based on the findings derived from each hypothesis and in light of the research questions posited at the initial phase of this thesis, it can be assumed that the present study supports the notion that PsyCap serves as a mediating factor between meaningful work and job performance. Additionally, it is important to note that workload is not shown to have a moderating relationship with either meaningful work and performance or meaningful work and PsyCap. This implies that the correlation between meaningful work and performance, as well as between meaningful work and PsyCap, remains consistent regardless of the workload intensity.

This study's findings suggest a mediating effect of PsyCap in the association between meaningful work and performance. Additionally, the results indicate that workload does not moderate this relationship.

### **6.1. Practical Implications**

This study shows that when employees experience higher levels of meaningful work, they tend to have higher levels of job performance because they perceive higher levels of PsyCap.

With that being said, the examination of aspects such as employees' PsyCap might provide significant advantages for organisations. Through the evaluation of employees' PsyCap, organisations may get significant insights into the strengths and potential areas for growth of their team members. This information furthermore enables organisations to identify individuals with a higher level of PsyCap, Conversely, it additionally helps in identifying individuals with lower levels of PsyCap, necessitating the development of strategies to enhance the psychological capital of personnel inside the organisation. This information has the potential to assist organisations in developing focused training programmes, providing individualised coaching sessions, and offering tools to improve employee well-being. Investing in PsyCap analysis indicates a company's dedication to fostering a favourable work atmosphere and facilitating the personal and professional development of its people. Not only does it enhance individual performance, but it also adds to the overall effectiveness of the team and the success of the organisation. Furthermore, the comprehension of employees' PsyCap enables

organisations to identify people who may contain latent potential or possess distinctive abilities that might be advantageous to the company. By effectively using this information, organisations have the ability to allocate tasks that are in line with the individual talents of their employees.

While it is important to enhance Psycap levels, it is as essential to make sure that employees have a sense of purpose within their respective professions. The act of involving employees in meaningful tasks extends beyond simply offering some sort of financial reward (Kohn, 1993). The process involves creating a setting in which people have a sense of connection to greater goals and possess a comprehensive understanding of how their contributions correspond with the goals and values of the organisation. The only increase of Psycap has the potential to provide a temporary improvement in both the well-being and performance of employees. Nevertheless, in the absence of a clear sense of purpose, this initial increase of motivation may gradually decrease, resulting in an afterwards decline in performance (Cook & Artino, 2016). The presence of meaningful work serves as an incentive for maintaining employee engagement and boosting their desire to achieve exceptional performance (Liu & Liu, 2022). Organisations could cultivate a work environment that is characterised by the presence of meaningful activities and projects through effective communication of their fundamental objective. This involves emphasising the contribution of everyone's function towards achieving a set of overall organisational goals. Moreover, providing opportunities for individual growth and development might assist employees in getting significance from their career efforts through continuous acquisition of unique abilities or engagement in demanding initiatives (Parsons, 2023).

By actively fighting for meaningful tasks alongside with improving psychological capital levels, organisations have the ability to create a dedicated team that is driven to exceed expectations. This phenomenon not only results in enhanced performance but also contributes to increased employee happiness, higher retention rates, and overall organisational success.

## 7. Limitations and Future Recommendations

The main limitation of this study pertained to its sample composition, which was exclusively focused on the Portuguese population. Moreover, the sample consisted predominantly of highly educated individuals, with the majority possessing at least a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally, the sample was primarily composed of individuals employed in white-collar jobs, such as administrative and service roles (34.8%), followed by engineering positions (24.5%). This prompts an inquiry about the veracity of the findings when applied to a more diverse sample that includes a higher proportion of individuals with lower qualifications who are employed in blue-collar jobs. Due to the correlational nature of the study, it can also be prone to common method bias. This is because the research primarily examines perceptions and opinions, which may lead participants to provide socially desirable responses to the questionnaire. Additionally, the study is focused on measuring all variables through a single questionnaire. This aligns with the theoretical framework of the common method bias as proposed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), which highlights the possible bias that may occur when using a single measuring technique for many variables within a research investigation (P. M. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

These identified limitations suggest two potential suggestions for future research. Firstly, it is recommended to do a study using diverse samples, including individuals from other nations, as well as individuals with varying levels of qualifications and a higher representation of blue-collar employees. This would allow for a comprehensive examination of whether the observed associations held across different demographic groups. The second recommendation is to do the research using several sets of variables, including both questionnaires and pre-existing, objective measurements. Additionally, incorporating metrics currently used by the organisation, such as the company's performance ratings, in order to mitigate the issue of common method bias. This bias arises from relying on a single questionnaire for assessing many constructs, and potentially respondents to provide socially desirable responses (P. M. Podsakoff et al., 2003).

## **8. Conclusion**

The findings of the research have provided valuable insights into a significant facet of organisational dynamics in the workplace. The results of this study demonstrate that workload does not have a significant impact on the relationship between meaningful work, PsyCap and job performance. Nevertheless, the results indicate that individuals with higher levels of meaningful work are more likely to PsyCap and ultimately exhibit higher job performance, regardless of their workload. In current work settings characterised by high speed and intense demands, where individuals often face excessive workloads, it is comforting to acknowledge that PsyCap may still have a beneficial effect on job performance by through engaging in meaningful tasks. This implies that the development and promotion of psychological resources such as self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope may substantially enhance employees' perception of purpose and fulfilment within their professional responsibilities. Organisations may proactively promote the performance of their employees by acknowledging the significance of PsyCap in cultivating meaningful work experiences.

In conclusion, this study has not only yielded significant findings about the relationship between meaningful work, PsyCap, and job performance but has also questioned traditional assumptions regarding the impact of workload on these dynamics. This evidence strongly indicates that despite the difficulty experienced by employees within an organisation, meaningful work may still have a positive indirect influence on job performance by fostering a sense of PsyCap. The previously mentioned finding highlights the significance of developing psychological assets and establishing a context that encourages meaningful involvement.

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## 10. Appendices

### Appendix A - Questionnaire

Indique o grau em que concorda ou discorda de cada uma das afirmações.

	Discordo Totalmente	Discordo	Discordo em parte	Nem concordo nem discordo	Concordo em parte	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
Eu encontrei uma carreira com significado.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vejo no meu trabalho um contributo para o meu crescimento pessoal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho não é relevante para o mundo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eu compreendo como o meu trabalho contribui para o significado da minha vida.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eu tenho uma boa noção do que torna o meu trabalho significativo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eu sei que o meu trabalho contribui de uma forma positiva para o mundo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho ajuda a compreender-me melhor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Eu encontrei um trabalho que me satisfaz.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho ajuda-me a entender o mundo que me rodeia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O trabalho que faço serve um propósito maior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Indique o grau em que concorda ou discorda de cada uma das afirmações.

	Discordo Fortemente	Discordo	Discordo um pouco	Concordo um pouco	Concordo	Concordo Fortemente
Sinto confiança a representar a minha área de trabalho em reuniões com a gestão.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sinto confiança em contribuir para discussões sobre a estratégia da minha empresa / instituição.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sinto confiança em apresentar informações a um grupo de colegas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Se sentir que estou bloqueado no	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

trabalho,  
penso em  
muitas formas  
de solucionar.

Neste  
momento,  
penso que  
tenho  
bastante  
sucesso no  
trabalho.

Consigo  
pensar em  
muitas formas  
de alcançar  
os meus  
objetivos de  
trabalho  
atuais.

Nesta altura,  
estou a atingir  
os objetivos  
de trabalho  
que defini  
para mim  
próprio.

Posso contar  
só "comigo  
próprio" no  
trabalho se  
tiver de ser.

Habitualmente  
lido com as  
questões  
stressantes  
com  
facilidade.

Consigo lidar  
com alturas  
difíceis no  
trabalho  
porque já  
passei por  
dificuldades  
antes.

Vejo sempre o lado bom das coisas sobre o meu trabalho.

Sou otimista sobre o que me vai acontecer no futuro sobre o trabalho.

Indique o grau em que concorda ou discorda de cada uma das afirmações.

	Discordo Totalmente	Discordo	Discordo em parte	Nem concordo nem discordo	Concordo em parte	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
Realizo adequadamente as tarefas que me estão destinadas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cumpro as responsabilidades específicas do meu cargo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Atinjo os níveis de desempenho requeridos para a minha função.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desempenho sempre as tarefas que me são atribuídas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Envolvo-me nas atividades que afetarão diretamente a avaliação do meu desempenho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negligencio aspetos da minha profissão que estou obrigado/a a executar.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Falho no desempenho de funções essenciais.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ajudo outros colegas que estiveram ausentes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ajudo outros colegas que estão com maior carga de trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Auxilio o meu superior no seu trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ouço os problemas e preocupações dos meus colegas de trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faço os possíveis para ajudar os novos colegas de trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cativo a simpatia dos colegas de trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Partilho conhecimentos com os colegas de trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por favor seleccione a opção Discordo Totalmente neste item.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sou assíduo/a e pontual no trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aviso com antecedência quando não posso ir ao trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Faço pausas desnecessárias no trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perco tempo com chamadas telefônicas pessoais durante o horário laboral.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reclamo de coisas insignificantes no trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protejo e conservo os equipamentos e bens da organização onde trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cumpro as regras informais da organização.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Indique com que frequência estas situações se adequam a si, recorrendo à escala de resposta.

	Nunca	Raramente	Frequentemente	Sempre
O meu trabalho exige que seja mantido um alto nível de atenção.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho implica o tratamento de informação complexa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho exige pensar e escolher entre diferentes alternativas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tenho de tomar decisões difíceis.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

O meu trabalho exige lidar com muitos conhecimentos.

Tenho de trabalhar constantemente, não posso fazer pausas além das estritamente regulamentadas.

O ritmo de trabalho é excessivo, difícil de alcançar, inclusive para um trabalhador experiente.

Costumo trabalhar com interrupções incomodativas.

Não consigo parar o meu trabalho quando necessito.

O ritmo de trabalho é-me imposto.

O cumprimento das minhas tarefas exige muita rapidez.

Para mim, é normal acumular tarefas.

O meu trabalho exige que não se cometam erros.

Tenho de dar respostas muito precisas.

Os meus erros podem ter consequências graves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho exige lidar com informações difíceis de compreender.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tenho dificuldade em esquecer os problemas de trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho deixa-me nervoso(a).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho está a afetar as minhas relações pessoais (família, amigos...).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho implica muita responsabilidade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sinto-me muito cansado(a), fatigado(a) fisicamente.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tenho de lidar com informações que não são facilmente percebidas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho requer o tratamento de uma grande quantidade de informação.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho afeta-me muito emocionalmente.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

O meu trabalho exige a memorização de uma grande quantidade de dados.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho é mentalmente intenso.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tenho de fazer uma grande pesquisa e compilação de informação para realizar as minhas tarefas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quando termino o meu dia de trabalho, sinto-me esgotado(a) fisicamente.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
O meu trabalho está a afetar a minha saúde.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Por fim, pedimos-lhe agora alguns dados socio-demográficos. Mais uma vez, reiteramos que estes dados têm como objetivo apenas caracterizar a nossa amostra e não serão usados para o identificar de nenhuma forma.

Género

- Masculino
- Feminino
- Outro

Idade

Estado Civil

- Solteiro/a
- Casado/a / União de Facto
- Divorciado/a / Separado/a
- Viúvo/a

Escolaridade Completa

- Menos que o Ensino Básico (9º ano)
- Ensino Básico (9º ano)
- Ensino Secundário (12º ano)
- Licenciatura
- Mestrado
- Doutoramento

Vínculo Laboral

- Contrato Sem Termo (efetivo)
- Contrato a Termo Certo
- Contrato a Termo Certo por Empresa de Trabalho Temporário
- Contrato a Termo Incerto
- Contrato de Estágio
- Outro - Qual? \_\_\_\_\_

Setor de Atividade

- Administração, Gestão e Serviços
- Artes e Design
- Ciências Biológicas e da Terra
- Análise e Desenvolvimento de Sistemas Informáticos
- Ciências Sociais e Humanas
- Comunicação Social e Informação
- Engenharia e Produção
- Saúde e Bem-estar
- Outro - Qual? \_\_\_\_\_

Tempo de trabalho na empresa

- N° de anos em que se encontra a trabalhar na empresa  
\_\_\_\_\_
- N° de horas que planeia trabalhar por semana  
\_\_\_\_\_
- N° de horas que trabalha por semana  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B - Informed consent**

### Consentimento informado

O presente estudo surge no âmbito de uma dissertação de mestrado a decorrer na Universidade Católica Portuguesa. Este estudo incide sobre características pessoais e perceções de comportamentos nas organizações. O estudo é realizado pela aluna Filipa Cortinhal (filipa.d.cortinhal@hotmail.com) e coordenado pela Prof.<sup>a</sup> Dr.<sup>a</sup> Tatiana Marques (tatiana.marques@ucp.pt), que poderá contactar caso deseje colocar uma dúvida ou partilhar algum comentário.

A sua participação consiste em ler afirmações e indicar em que medida concorda ou discorda das mesmas e poderá durar entre 10 a 15 min.

A participação neste estudo é estritamente voluntária: pode escolher participar ou não participar. Se escolher participar, pode interromper a participação em qualquer momento sem ter de prestar qualquer justificação. Para além de voluntária, a participação é também anónima e confidencial. Os dados destinam-se apenas a tratamento estatístico e nenhuma resposta será analisada ou reportada individualmente. Em nenhum momento do estudo precisa de se identificar.

Para a participação neste estudo concorda que:

- Tem mais de 18 anos;
- Tem um bom domínio da língua portuguesa;
- Está neste momento empregado;
- Leu e compreendeu a informação acima descrita.

## Appendix C - Overview of sample characteristics

	n	%
Gender		
Male	86	42.2
Female	118	57.8
Marital status		
Single	74	36.3
Married/Consensual Union	107	52.5
Divorced/Separated	19	9.3
Widower	4	2.0
Education		
Primary School	4	2.0
High School	32	15.7
Bachelor's degree	96	47.1
Master's degree	69	33.8
PhD	3	1.5
Labour Contract		
Permanent Contracts	150	73.5
Fixed-term Contracts	20	9.8
Fixed-term Contracts through Temporary Work	3	1.5
Open-ended Contracts	10	4.9
Traineeship Contracts	10	4.9
Contracts of another nature	11	5.4
Sector of Activity		

Administration, Management and Services	71	34.8
Arts and Design	3	1.5
Biological and Earth Sciences	3	1.5
IT	11	5.4
Social and Human Sciences	7	3.4
Media and Information	3	1.5
Engineering and Production	50	24.5
Health and Wellness	21	10.3
Others	35	17.2

	Min	Max	M	SD
Age	18	66	42.3	13.0
Years in the Company	0	46	13.8	11.9

## Appendix D - Overview of the study hypothesis

Hypothesis	Supported?
<i>H1: There's a positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance so that the higher the perception of meaningful work, the higher the job performance.</i>	✓
<i>H2: PsyCap mediates the positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance, such that the higher the meaningful work, the higher PsyCap, and the higher job performance.</i>	✓
<i>H3a: Workload moderates the positive relationship between meaningful work and PsyCap, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals who have a low workload.</i>	X
<i>H3b: Workload moderates the positive relationship between meaningful work and job performance, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals who have a low workload.</i>	X