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UNDERSTANDING THE MODERATING ROLE OF COPING MECHANISMS IN WORK-FAMILY INTERACTIONS AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS ACROSS WORK ARRANGEMENTS

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between perceived occupational stress and work-home interactions, with a focus on the moderating role of coping mechanisms, comparing on-site and off-site/hybrid employees. The sample consists of 113 Romanian professionals, including both on-site and off-site & hybrid employees. The results reveal that on-site and off-site employees experience differences in specific work-home interactions, notably in work negatively influencing personal life (WH-) and personal life negatively influencing work (HW-). Additionally, off-site employees tend to rely more on emotional social support as a coping strategy than on-site employees. These differences are statistically significant, though the effect sizes are small, suggesting that while there are measurable distinctions between the two groups, the magnitude of these differences is modest. Coping strategies also play a critical role in stress management, with active strategies, such as planning and problem-solving, alleviating the negative effects of work-home conflict, while passive strategies, like denial and disengagement, intensify stress. The findings emphasize the importance of considering work arrangements and coping resources when addressing occupational stress and suggest that tailored efforts in return-to-office transitions are necessary to support employees across different work settings.

Keywords: *work-family interactions, coping mechanisms, occupational stress, work arrangements (on-site, off-site and hybrid work), return to the office*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, balancing work and personal life has become increasingly difficult, as occupational stress significantly impacts professional performance. If left unaddressed, stress can result in long-term negative consequences such as burnout, anxiety, and depression (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The balance between work and life is crucial, as conflicts between the two

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are strongly linked to higher stress levels (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). A healthy work-life balance reduces stress and enhances job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000). Coping strategies play a key role in managing work-life interactions. Proactive strategies, like problem-solving, improve integration, while passive strategies, such as avoidance, increase stress and conflict (Cheng et al., 2014).

1.1. KEY THEORETICAL INSIGHTS ON COPING MECHANISMS AS MODERATORS IN WORK-FAMILY INTERACTIONS AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Occupational stress is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has significant implications for both individuals and organizations. It is commonly defined as the physiological, psychological, or emotional response to work demands that exceed an individual's ability to cope. According to Lazarus's transactional model (1966), stress arises when situational demands surpass an individual's coping resources, thereby threatening their well-being. This model emphasizes the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environments (Michailidis & Asimenos, 2002). Occupational stress is influenced by various work-related factors such as workload, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflicts (Schaubroek et al., 1993), all of which can lead to decreased productivity, heightened psychological strain, and organizational inefficiencies (Cho et al., 2008). The Job Demands-Control-Support (JDCS) model (Karasek, 1979) further explains how high job demands, low control over tasks, and inadequate social support exacerbate stress. Prolonged exposure to such stressors is associated with physical health problems, including cardiovascular diseases (Espnes & Byrne, 2008), as well as psychological issues such as anxiety and depression (Cho et al., 2008). In the workplace, stress undermines job satisfaction, increases absenteeism, and leads to higher turnover intentions (Chiu et al., 2005). Consequently, addressing occupational stress requires interventions that target both individual coping mechanisms and organizational factors that contribute to or mitigate stress.

Coping strategies are central to managing stress in the workplace. These strategies can generally be divided into two categories: problem-focused coping, which involves taking direct action to address the problem, and emotion-focused coping, which involves managing emotional responses to stress (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Positive coping strategies, such as active problem-solving and seeking social support, are associated with more effective stress management and better psychological outcomes. In contrast, negative coping strategies like emotional suppression and substance abuse tend to exacerbate stress (Xiao et al., 2022). While no single theoretical framework for coping is universally accepted, it is widely acknowledged that coping strategies can either mitigate or intensify stress depending on how individuals respond to stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The selection of coping strategies is influenced by personal factors such as personality traits, self-esteem, and neuroticism. Individuals with high self-esteem and internal control beliefs tend to use problem-focused coping, whereas those with lower self-esteem and external control beliefs may rely on emotion-focused strategies (Fleishman, 1984). Social support also plays a critical role in problem-

focused coping, providing emotional and instrumental assistance (Billings & Moos, 1982). Additionally, how individuals appraise a stressful situation influences the coping strategies they employ. Those who perceive a stressor as controllable are more likely to use problem-solving methods, while those who see it as a threat may rely on emotion-focused approaches (Carver et al., 1989). Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective stress management interventions in high-stress environments like the workplace.

Work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC) contribute to occupational stress, with WFC arising when work interferes with family duties and FWC when family obligations affect work (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). These conflicts can be framed through four work-home interaction dimensions: negative influences on home life (WHI–) and work (HWI–), and positive influences on home life (WHI+) and work (HWI+) (Fujimoto et al., 2008; Patel et al., 2008). Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, can reduce WFC, enhancing employee well-being (Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Delsen & Smits, 2010). However, research also highlights downsides. Shimura et al. (2021) found full-remote work (5 days a week) decreased work productivity despite reducing stress. Van Zoonen & Sivunen (2021) showed that while remote work mitigated isolation via technology, increased remote work led to heightened isolation and psychological distress. These findings emphasize the need for a balanced approach to flexible work arrangements to avoid negative impacts on mental health and productivity.

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between work-home interactions and perceived occupational stress, with a particular focus on the moderating role of coping mechanisms. The analysis will be conducted on the overall study sample, as well as separately for two distinct groups: on-site employees and off-site (including hybrid) employees. By investigating how different coping strategies influence the relationship between work-home interactions and perceived stress, this research aims to enhance understanding of how stress and work-life balance are experienced in varying work arrangements. The findings will provide valuable insights into how coping strategies and work-home interactions contribute to perceived occupational stress, offering implications for both individual and organizational management.

2.2. HYPOTHESES

Memon et al. (2022) identify key stressors for remote workers, including technical issues, distractions, poor communication, and limited social support, which contribute to mental distress. Coping strategies may alleviate these challenges but differ between remote and on-site employees. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work or flexible hours, can reduce work-family conflict (WFC), leading to improved job satisfaction and organizational

commitment (Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Delsen & Smits, 2010). These arrangements help balance work and personal life, potentially lowering stress. Despite varying perspectives, both approaches reveal significant differences between on-site and remote workers. Based on this, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: We hypothesize that there are significant differences between on-site and off-site (including hybrid) employees in terms of *H1a)* perceived organizational stress, *H1b)* coping mechanisms, and *H1c)* the four dimensions of work-home interactions (WHI–, HWI–, WHI+, HWI+).

Work-home interactions strongly influence occupational stress. Zaheer (2015) links negative interactions, such as work interfering with family (WHI–) or family interfering with work (HWI–), to heightened stress, especially in academic settings. Similarly, Guest (2002) associates such conflicts with workplace tension and turnover. Conversely, positive interactions (WHI+, HWI+) correlate with reduced stress and enhanced well-being. Based on this, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H2: The four dimensions of work-home interactions (WHI+, WHI–, HWI+, HWI–) will significantly predict perceived occupational stress.

Coping strategies significantly influence the link between work-home interactions and stress. Active strategies, like problem-solving, reduce conflict and stress (Rotondo et al., 2003; Zheng et al., 2015), while passive strategies, such as avoidance, heighten stress (Ferguson et al., 2012). Adaptive coping enhances positive interactions (WHI+, HWI+) and mitigates negative ones (WHI–, HWI–) (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

H3: Coping strategies moderate the relationship between work-home interactions and perceived stress, namely: H3a*):* Active coping strategies reduce the stress-inducing effects of negative work-home interactions (WHI–, HWI–) and amplify the stress-reducing effects of positive work-home interactions (WHI+, HWI+), while, *H3b):* Passive coping strategies intensify the stress-inducing effects of negative work-home interactions (WHI–, HWI–) and weaken the stress-reducing effects of positive work-home interactions (WHI+, HWI+).

3. METHOD

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

The study sample consisted of 113 Romanian profesionals, 67,3% women, aged between 21 and 57 years (M_{age} = 34.59, *SD* = 9.32), 67,3% women. Most participants held either a university degree (40) or a post-university degree (39), while 34 had completed only high school. The majority reported working on-site (79), while 34 indicated they work off-site and/or in a hybrid setting. 55 participants were married and 48 in a stable relationship. 26 of the participants were managers, while 87 were non-managers. Data were collected via an online

questionnaire using the snowball technique for participant recruitment, ensuring confidentiality of the process.

3.2. MEASURES

Work-family interactions were assessed using the Survey Work-Home Interaction-Nijmegen (SWING) scale (Geurts et al., 2005). Adapted into Romanian by Ispas & Iliescu (2018) assesses four dimensions of work-home interaction: work negatively influencing home life (WHI–, 9 items, α = .93), home negatively influencing work (HWI–, 6 items, α = .74), work positively influencing home life (WHI+, 6 items, α = .85), and home positively influencing work (HWI+, 6 items, α = .83). Based on the Effort-Recovery Theory (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), the 27-item scale measures both negative and positive spillover effects using a 4-point Likert scale (0 = never to 3 = always). Example items include "You are irritable at home because your work is demanding" (WHI–) and "You take your responsibilities at work more seriously because you are required to do the same at home" (HWI+).

Occupational stress was assessed using the Job Stress Index (JSI), a 12-item scale developed by Berna & Major (2000) and translated into Romanian using standard forward and backward translation by an independent translator. Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study (α = .96).

The coping strategies were assessed by using the COPE scale (Carver et al., 1989), translated and adapted into Romanian by Crașovan and Sava (2013). The instrument consists of 60 items measuring 15 coping mechanisms, grouped into five main factors: Problem-focused coping (active coping, planning, and deletion of concurrent activities), Emotion-focused coping (restraint, positive interpretation, acceptance, and religious approach), Social support-focused coping (use of social-instrumental support, use of social-emotional support, and expressing emotions), Avoidant coping (denial, behavioural disengagement, and mental disengagement), and Other coping strategies (substance use and humour). Participants indicated the frequency of their actions and feelings in stressful situations using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (I usually don't do this at all) to 4 (I usually do this a lot). Internal consistency ranged from α = .50 (Restraint) to α = .94 (Religious Approach), indicating satisfactory to excellent reliability across the subscales. The scales with the lowest scores, Restraint (α = .50) and Mental Disengagement (α = .56), were also reported to have relatively low indices in the Romanian adaptation of the scale by Crasovan and Sava (2013), with scores of .48 for Restraint and .54 for Mental Disengagement.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis process began with descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha for reliability, being calculated. Based on the results of normality tests (Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov), it was found that several key variables, including WH(-), (WH+) and (HW-), exhibited non-normal distributions ($p < .05$). However, the variable "personal life influencing

work positively" (HW+) followed a normal distribution ($p > .05$). Given these findings, non-parametric procedures were employed. Spearman correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between variables, and the Mann-Whitney U test was applied to assess differences between employees working from home and those working off-site or in a hybrid model, as the data did not meet the normality assumption. Since regression analysis and moderation testing do not rely on normality assumptions, no issues were anticipated with those analyses.

To test the first hypothesis, differences between employees working from home (N = 79) and those working off-site or in a hybrid model (N = 34), *Cohen's d* was calculated to determine the effect size of the differences.

Regression analyses were conducted to test the direct effects of work-family interactions on occupational stress, and moderation effects of coping strategies were examined using interaction terms in PROCESS Model 1 (Hayes, 2012). Interaction coefficients and simple slopes analysis assessed moderation significance, with confidence intervals (95%) and standardized regression coefficients reported. Interaction plots visualized the relationship between work-family variables and occupational stress. All analyses were conducted in SPSS.

4. RESULTS

4.1. CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Spearman correlation analysis, presented in **Table 1**, revealed significant relationships between work-family dynamics and some of the coping strategies.

For work negatively impacting personal life (WH-), strong positive correlations were found with passive coping strategies such as focus on and venting of emotions ($r = .32^{**}$), behavioural disengagement ($r = .24^{**}$) and mental disengagement ($r = .26^{**}$). Similarly, for personal life negatively affecting work (HWI-), focus on and venting of emotions ($r = .46^{**}$), behavioural disengagement ($r = .32^{**}$), and mental disengagement ($r = .42^{**}$) were key strategies. In contrast, for work positively influencing personal life (WH+), proactive strategies like planning ($r = .44^{**}$) and positive interpretation and growth ($r = .43^{**}$) were prominent. For personal life positively influencing work (HWI+), positive interpretation and growth ($r = .29^{**}$), planning ($r = .29^{**}$) and active coping ($r = .28^{**}$) were identified.

Among all coping strategies, two stand out as particularly significant: the use of emotional social support and restraint, both of which exhibit significant correlations with all four dimensions of work-family interaction, with correlation coefficients ranging from $r = .19^{*}$ to $r = .34^{**}$. Notably, restraint is the only coping mechanism to show a positive, moderate in intensity correlation with occupational stress ($r = .27^{**}$), while seeking social support, denial, and behavioural disengagement display weaker positive correlations with occupational stress, ranging from $r = .20^{*}$ to $r = .23^{*}$. Furthermore, among the work-family interaction types, only work negatively influencing home life (WHI–) demonstrates a strong positive correlation with occupational stress ($r = .68^{**}$).

Table 1: Spearman Correlations Between Coping Strategies and Occupational Stress with Work-Home Interaction Styles (*N = 113*)

Variable	α	WH (-)	HW (-)	WH (+)	HW (+)	Occ Stress
Age	-	-.20*	-.05	.05	.02	-.10
Gender	-	.03	.06	.10	.04	-.04
Work Arrng	-	.21*	.19*	.15	.16	.04
PbFC_Ac	.74	.06	.01	.35**	.28**	.05
PbFC_Pln	.77	.04	.08	.44**	.29**	-.01
PbFC_Sca	.68	.24*	.23*	.34**	.21*	.20*
Soc_Fve	.83	.32**	.46**	.17	.16	.12
Soc_Uiss	.71	.18	.25**	.23*	.18	-.00
Soc_Uess	.85	.19*	.21*	.31**	.26**	.03
EM_REST	.50	.34**	.29**	.34**	.22*	.27**
EM_POS	.72	-.06	.03	.43**	.29**	-.05
EM_ACC	.70	.12	.16	.13	.07	.15
EM_REL	.94	.07	.27**	.22*	.26**	.03
AvC_DEN	.61	.17	.23*	.09	.11	.23*
AvC_Bdis	.75	.24**	.32**	-.08	-.05	.23*
AvC_Mdis	.56	.26**	.42**	.08	.07	.10
Oth_Sub	.92	.09	.10	-.05	-.02	.11
Oth_Hum	.91	.14	.26**	.24*	.14	.10
Occ Stress	.96	.68**	.14	.04	.04	-

Note: *WH(-) = Work negatively influencing home life, HW(-) = Home negatively influencing work, WH(+) = Work positively influencing home life, HW(+) = Home positively influencing work, Occ Stress = Occupational stress, Work Arrng = Work Arrangements (On-Site or Off-Site & Hybrid), PbFC_Ac = Problem-focused coping, Active coping, PbFC_Pln = Problem-focused coping, Planning, PbFC_Sca = Problem-focused coping, Seeking social support, Soc_Fve = Social support-focused coping, Focus on and venting of emotions, Soc_Uiss = Social support-focused coping, Use of instrumental social support, Soc_Uess = Social support-focused coping, Use of emotional social support, EM_REST = Emotion-focused coping, Restraint, EM_POS = Emotion-focused coping, Positive interpretation and growth, EM_ACC = Emotion-focused coping, Acceptance, EM_REL = Emotion-focused coping, Religious approach, AvC_DEN = Avoidant coping, Denial, AvC_Bdis = Avoidant coping,*

Behavioural disengagement, AvC_Mdis = Avoidant coping, Mental disengagement, Oth_Sub = Other coping strategies, Substance use, Oth_Hum = Other coping strategies, Humour , $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$

4.2. DIFFERENCES CONNECTED WITH WORK ARRANGEMENTS

To test H1, given the non-normal distribution of the data, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare on-site and off-site/hybrid employees, and the results, presented in **Table 2**, were analysed for differences.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U Test Results for On-Site vs. Off-Site/Hybrid Employees

Variable	Working On-Site (N=79) Mean Rank	Working Off-Site & Hybrid (N=34) Mean Rank	U	Z	*p*	Cohen's *d*
WH(-)	**52.53**	**67.40**	**989.50**	**-2.22**	**.027**	**-.21**
HW(-)	**52.97**	**66.37**	**1,024.50**	**-2.01**	**.045**	**-.19**
WH(+)	53.79	64.46	1,089.50	-1.59	.112	-.15
HW(+)	53.56	65.00	1,071.00	-1.71	.088	-.16
Occ Stress	56.15	58.99	1,275.50	-.42	.672	-.04
PbFC_Ac	57.07	56.84	1,337.50	-.03	.972	.00
PbFC_Pln	53.39	65.40	1,057.50	-1.81	.070	-.17
PbFC_Sca	55.26	61.04	1,205.50	-.87	.385	-.08
Soc_Fve	53.10	66.06	1,035.00	-1.94	.053	-.18
Soc_Uiss	53.16	65.93	1,039.50	-1.91	.056	-.18
Soc_Uess	**51.36**	**7.10**	**897.50**	**-2.80**	**.005**	**-.26**
EM_REST	55.30	6.96	1,208.50	-.85	.395	-.08
EM_POS	54.84	62.03	1,172.00	-1.08	.279	-.10
EM_ACC	59.20	51.88	1,169.00	-1.10	.273	-.10
EM_REL	57.66	55.47	1,291.00	-.33	.742	-.03
AvC_DEN	59.49	51.21	1,146.00	-1.25	.211	-.12
AvC_Bdis	53.52	65.09	1,068.00	-1.74	.082	-.16
AvC_Mdis	55.23	61.12	1,203.00	-.88	.378	-.08
Oth_Sub	55.66	6.10	1,237.50	-.86	.389	-.08
Oth_Hum	58.91	52.57	1,192.50	-.95	.344	-.09

Note: *WH(-) = Work negatively influencing home life, HW(-) = Home negatively influencing work, WH(+) = Work positively influencing home life, HW(+) = Home positively influencing work, Occ Stress = Occupational stress, PbFC_Ac = Problem-focused coping, Active coping, PbFC_Pln = Problem-focused coping, Planning, PbFC_Sca = Problem-focused coping, Seeking social support, Soc_Fve = Social support-focused coping, Focus on and venting of emotions, Soc_Uiss = Social support-focused coping, Use of instrumental social support, Soc_Uess = Social support-focused coping, Use of emotional social support, EM_REST = Emotion-focused coping, Restraint, EM_POS = Emotion-focused coping, Positive interpretation and growth, EM_ACC = Emotion-*

focused coping, Acceptance, EM_REL = Emotion-focused coping, Religious approach, AvC_DEN = Avoidant coping, Denial, AvC_Bdis = Avoidant coping, Behavioural disengagement, AvC_Mdis = Avoidant coping, Mental disengagement, Oth_Sub = Other coping strategies, Substance use, Oth_Hum = Other coping strategies, Humour. The bolded values indicate statistically significant results (p < .05).

Significant differences between on-site and off-site/hybrid employees were observed only for work negatively influencing personal life (WH-), personal life negatively influencing work (HW-), and the use of emotional social support. WH- reflects work-related stress spilling into personal life, while HW- captures personal stressors disrupting work performance. Differences in the use of emotional social support highlight variations in reliance on emotional and social support as a coping strategy. These findings suggest that off-site/hybrid employees may experience or manage these dynamics differently from their on-site counterparts, likely due to the distinct challenges and resources associated with each work arrangement. However, the effect sizes for these differences, ranging from .19 to .26, remain small, indicating that while the disparities are statistically significant, their magnitude is relatively modest. Thus, hypothesis *H1* is partially validated, with significant differences observed in specific dimensions of work-home interactions and coping mechanisms, but with modest effect sizes.

4.3. REGRESION ANALYSIS

Given that only work negatively influencing home life WH(-) demonstrated a significant relationship with occupational stress, it was included as the primary predictor in the regression model, F_{change} (1,111) = 107.81, $p < .001$, accounting for 49.3% of the variance in occupational stress, as shown in **Table 3**. We also controlled for age, gender, and work arrangements.

Table 3: Regression models between the work-home interactions and occupational stress

Variable	β	*t*	*p*	*R*	R^2	ΔR^2
Occupational Stress						
Model 1						
WH(-)	.97	10.38** *	.000	.70	.493	.493

*Note. *p < .05. **p < .01, ***p< .001, WH(-) = Work negatively influencing home life, N=113*

Therefore, we conclude that *H2* is partially validated, with WHI- being the only dimension of work-home interaction that significantly predicts occupational stress." The other dimensions (WHI+, HWI+, and HWI-) were not found to be significant in this regression model, which suggests that only the negative work-home interaction (WHI-) directly influences stress levels.

4.4. MODERATION ANALYSIS

Since only the work negatively influencing home life interaction (WH-) showed a significant correlation with occupational stress, the moderation analysis

will focus exclusively on this interaction style (WHI-) and its association with occupational stress, moderated by coping mechanisms. The coping strategies examined include restraint and seeking social support (active strategies), and denial and behavioural disengagement (passive strategies). To test H3a) and H3b), we will assess the moderating effects of these coping strategies using interaction terms in PROCESS Model 1 (Hayes, 2012). Specifically, H3a) hypothesizes that active coping strategies reduce the stress-inducing effects of WHI-, while H3b) posits that passive coping strategies intensify the stress-inducing effects of WHI-.

Table 4 presents the results of the moderation analysis, focusing on the relationship between WHI- and occupational stress, moderated by coping strategies. Moderation significance will be determined through interaction coefficients and simple slopes analysis, with confidence intervals (95%) and standardized regression coefficients reported.

Table 4: Moderation Analysis with Restraint and Seeking Social Support as Active Coping Strategies, and Denial and Behavioral Disengagement as Passive Coping Strategies, as Moderators of the Relationship Between WH(-) and Occupational Stress

Hypothesis	Predictors	β	se	t	95% CI	
					LLCI	ULCI
H3a	WH(-)	1.88	.41	4.63**	1.076	2.686
	Restraint	.42	.20	2.09*	.022	.816
	WH(-)* Restraint	-.36	.15	-2.35*	-.656	-.056
	Model R^2	.52				
	WH(-)	1.26	.30	4.20**	.667	1.857
	Seeking Social Emotional Support	-.03	.15	-.22	-.321	.257
	WH(-)*Seeking Social Emotional Support	-.10	.11	-.94	-.311	.111
	Model R^2	.51				
H3b	WH(-)	1.57	.26	5.94**	1.049	2.099
	Denial	.69	.24	2.83**	.209	1.175
	WH(-)*Denial	-.37	.15	-2.57*	-.666	-.083
	Model R^2	.53				
	WH(-)	1.74	.26	6.70**	1.224	2.252
	Behavioral Disengagement	.56	.19	3.04**	.195	.929
	WH(-)* Behavioral Disengagement	-.44	.14	-3.22**	-.716	-.171
	Model R^2	.54				

Note. $p^* < .05$, $p^{**} < .01$, $p^{***} < .001$, WH(-) = Work negatively influencing home life

In our study, WH (-) alone accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in occupational stress, confirming its pivotal role as a stress-inducing factor, R^2 =

.493, F_{change} (1,111) = 107.81, p < .001. Building upon this foundational relationship, we sought to test *H3*, which posits that coping strategies moderate the relationship between WH (-) and perceived stress. Specifically, *H3a* suggests that active coping strategies, such as restraint and seeking social support, reduce the stress-inducing effects of WH (-), while *H3b* hypothesizes that passive coping strategies, such as denial and behavioural disengagement, amplify these effects. Interaction plots (**Figures 1 to 4**) were generated to visualize the relationship between WH (-) and occupational stress, exploring the potential moderating effects of restraint, seeking social support, denial, and behavioural disengagement.

Testing H3a: Active Coping Strategies

When restraint was included in the model alongside WH (-), the variables accounted for a significant amount of variance in occupational stress, R^2 = .52, F(3, 109) = 39.015, p < .001. Both restraint (β = .42, p < .05) and WH (-) (β = 1.88, p < .001) were significant predictors. Additionally, the interaction between WH (-) and restraint contributed significantly to the model, ΔR^2 = .02, ΔF(1, 109) = 5.532, p <.05. These results validate part of *H3a*, indicating that restraint, as an active coping mechanism, mitigates the stress-inducing effects of WH (-). Interaction plot (**Figure 1**) revealed that individuals with higher levels of restraint experienced less occupational stress under conditions of negative work-home interactions compared to those with lower restraint levels.

Conversely, seeking social support did not demonstrate a moderating effect on the relationship between WH (-) and occupational stress. While WH (-) remained a significant predictor (β = 1.26, p < .001), seeking social support alone (β = -.03, p = .829) and its interaction with WH (-) (β = -.10, p = .348) did not significantly contribute to the model, R^2 = .51, ΔR^2 = .004, ΔF(1, 109) = .889, p = .348. Therefore, H3a was not supported in seeking social support, suggesting that it plays a limited role in buffering occupational stress in this context, as also shown

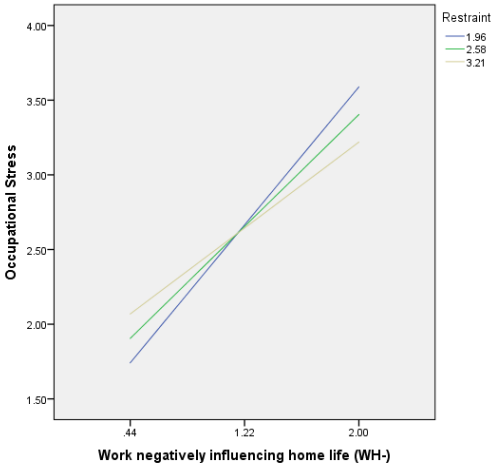

Figure 1

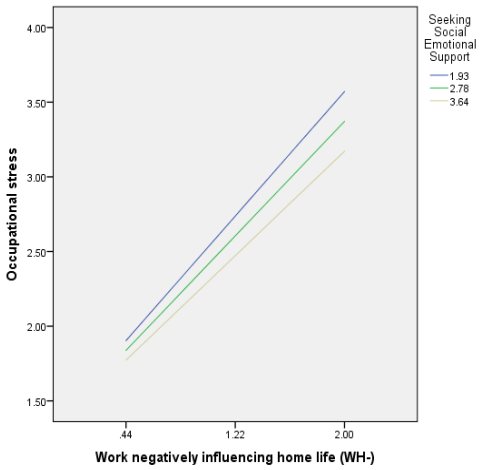

Figure 2

in **Figure 2**.

Testing H3b: Passive Coping Strategies

Denial emerged as a significant moderator, with the model explaining a notable proportion of variance in occupational stress, $R^2 = .53$, $F(3, 109) = 40.603$, $p < .001$. Both denial ($\beta = .69$, $p < .01$) and WH (-) ($\beta = 1.57$, $p < .001$) were significant predictors, and their interaction significantly contributed to the model, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1, 109) = 6.475$, $p < .05$. These findings support *H3b*, as denial amplified the stress-inducing effects of WH (-). The interaction plot (**Figure 3**) demonstrated that individuals employing denial as a coping strategy exhibited higher levels of occupational stress under conditions of negative work-home interactions.

Similarly, behavioural disengagement proved to be a significant moderator, with the model accounting for the highest variance in occupational stress, $R^2 = .54$, $F(3, 109) = 42.481$, $p < .001$. WH (-) ($\beta = 1.74$, $p < .001$), behavioural

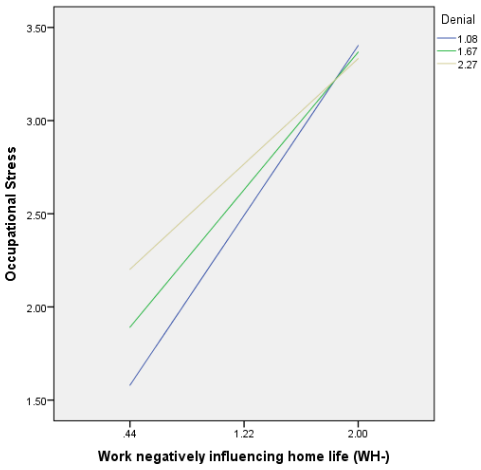

Figure 3

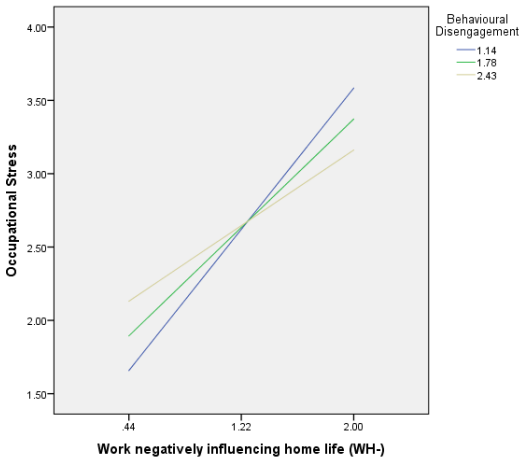

Figure 4

disengagement ($\beta = .56$, $p < .01$), and their interaction ($\beta = -.44$, $p < .01$) all significantly influenced occupational stress. This also supports *H3b*, highlighting that behavioural disengagement exacerbates the stress-inducing effects of WH (-). Interaction plot (**Figure 4**) showed that individuals with high levels of behavioural disengagement reported greater occupational stress compared to those with lower disengagement levels.

Overall, the results partially validate Hypothesis 3. Active coping strategies, specifically restraint, effectively reduce the stress-inducing effects of WH (-), while seeking social support does not. Conversely, passive coping strategies such as denial and behavioural disengagement amplify the stress-inducing effects of WH (-), consistent with the predictions of *H3b*.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this study was to shed light on the complicated dynamics between work-home interactions and perceived job stress, highlighting the moderating influence of coping mechanisms. By examining these relationships between on-site and off-site employees, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how individuals manage the interplay between professional and personal domains in different work arrangements. The findings of our study corroborate and extend existing literature on the interplay between work-home interactions, coping mechanisms, and occupational stress. Prior studies have frequently emphasized the detrimental effects of negative work-home interactions on well-being, often linking them to elevated stress levels (Allen et al., 2012; Carlson et al., 2000). Our results strongly reinforce this relationship, with work negatively influencing home life (WH-) emerging as the sole significant predictor of occupational stress, accounting for nearly half of the variance (R^2 = .493). This aligns with previous findings that WH- is a robust stressor, underscoring the critical need for targeted interventions to mitigate its impact.

Consistent with theoretical frameworks on coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), our analysis demonstrates differentiated roles of active and passive coping strategies in moderating stress. The active aspect of the restraint coping mechanism, which focuses on the stressor and does not intervene prematurely, showed a buffering effect and attenuated the stress-inducing effect of WH-. This is consistent with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of active coping strategies in managing occupational stress by promoting cognitive and emotional regulation (Folkman, 1997).

Conversely, passive strategies such as denial and behavioural disengagement were associated with higher stress levels, intensifying the negative effects of WH-. These findings resonate with literature suggesting that passive coping mechanisms often exacerbate stress by avoiding or ignoring stressors, thereby compounding their impact (Holahan & Moos, 1987). However, our study uniquely contributes to this discourse by quantifying the moderating effects of these strategies, offering empirical validation of their differential roles.

The observed differences between on-site and off-site/hybrid employees in WH- and HW- dynamics are modest but significant. These findings align with emerging research on the distinct stressors and coping resources associated with remote work settings (Bloom et al., 2015). Off-site employees reported higher reliance on emotional social support as a coping mechanism, suggesting potential benefits of flexible work arrangements in fostering supportive networks. However, the small effect sizes call for cautious interpretation, as the practical significance of these differences may be limited.

Our study also sheds light on the role of positive work-home interactions (WH+ and HW+), which have received less attention in the literature. Proactive coping strategies, such as planning and positive interpretation, were significantly correlated with WH+ and HW+, echoing findings that adaptive coping promotes

work-life enrichment (Wayne et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the non-significant relationship between these dimensions and occupational stress in our regression model suggests that while beneficial, positive work-home interactions may not directly mitigate stress.

5.2. LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The unequal distribution of participants across the on-site and hybrid/off-site groups, combined with non-normal data distributions, required the use of non-parametric tests. Although appropriate for such data, this approach may limit comparability with studies employing parametric methods. Moreover, the smaller sample size of the hybrid/off-site group raises concerns about representativeness, emphasizing the need for future research with larger, more balanced samples to improve generalizability.

Another limitation lies in the cross-sectional design, which precludes definitive conclusions about causality. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported measures may introduce biases such as social desirability or recall inaccuracies. Future studies would benefit from integrating objective measures, such as physiological markers of stress, to complement self-reported data and enhance validity.

Expanding the scope to include organizational culture, access to support systems, and personality traits would further elucidate the mechanisms driving work-family conflict and stress outcomes, offering a more comprehensive understanding of these complex dynamics.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS

This study emphasizes the distinct dynamics of work-family conflict and coping strategies in shaping occupational stress perceptions across on-site and hybrid/off-site employees. The findings reveal that specific coping mechanisms, rather than all, play a pivotal role in influencing particular types of work-family interactions. For instance, problem-focused coping demonstrates consistent effectiveness in mitigating negative interactions and enhancing positive ones, regardless of the work setting.

Practical implications point to the need for tailored interventions that address the unique stressors faced by each group. On-site employees may benefit from policies fostering greater flexibility to manage work-family boundaries, whereas hybrid/off-site workers require targeted support for developing adaptive coping strategies and managing blurred boundaries effectively.

Future research should further explore contextual variables such as organizational support, leadership styles, and resource availability to deepen understanding of how these factors interact with coping mechanisms and work-family dynamics. By addressing these distinctions, organizations can cultivate healthier, more resilient workplaces that accommodate diverse work arrangements while prioritizing employee well-being.

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