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Abstract

This study draws on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to examine (1) the mediating role of work-family conflict (WFC) in the relationship between psychological contract breach and burnout, and (2) the moderating role of mindfulness. A daily diary study was conducted over five consecutive workdays with 83 employees, yielding a total of 415 measurement occasions. Multilevel analyses revealed that psychological contract breach was positively associated with increased WFC, which, in turn, predicted higher levels of burnout at the intra-individual level. Moreover, the strength of this indirect effect was moderated by mindfulness: the link between psychological contract breach and burnout via WFC was stronger among employees with lower levels of mindfulness. These findings provide valuable insights for organizations by highlighting both preventive strategies—such as addressing psychological contract breaches—and interventional approaches—such as mindfulness-based practices to mitigate emotional exhaustion. The results also pave the way for future research into the mechanisms underlying the psychological contract–burnout link and the buffering role of mindfulness.

Keywords: Psychological contract; Burnout; Work-family conflict; Mindfulness; Diary study.

When Contracts Crack and Family Becomes a Resource: A Daily Diary Study of Psychological Contract Breach, Work–Family Conflict, and Mindfulness

Introduction

The psychological contract (PC) refers to the implicit expectations and unwritten promises that develop in the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1989), helping to predict employee behavior (Rousseau, 1995). Its breach—i.e., the perceived non-fulfillment of organizational obligations—often results in a loss of trust (Robinson, 1995) and is widely recognized as a harmful organizational phenomenon with negative consequences for employee well-being (e.g., Gong & Sims, 2023; Karatepe et al., 2021).

Within the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R; Demerouti et al., 2001), psychological contract breach is conceptualized as a job demand that depletes personal resources, thereby impairing health and well-being (Junça-Silva & Lopez, 2025; Taris & Schaufeli, 2015). The JD-R posits that job demands, when not counterbalanced by sufficient resources, lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout—key outcomes in the health impairment process (Griep et al., 2023).

Empirical studies have repeatedly shown the negative consequences of psychological contract breach, including anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion (Said et al., 2021; Mekawy et al., 2022), as well as increased burnout risk (Chambel & Oliveira-Cruz, 2010). However, research has often treated psychological contract breach as a static phenomenon, despite conceptualizations suggesting it is dynamic and context-sensitive (Griep et al., 2019). This static approach has contributed to inconclusive findings and overlooked how breaches fluctuate within individuals over time (Rousseau et al., 2018).

Another significant job demand contributing to the health impairment process is work-family conflict (WFC)—an inter-role conflict in which the demands of the work domain interfere with family responsibilities (Kossek & Lee, 2017). WFC has become

increasingly salient in the post-pandemic era as telework blurred work-life boundaries, intensifying role conflicts (Barriga-Medina et al., 2021; Junça-Silva-Silva, 2024a, 2025ab). Like psychological contract breach, WFC is consistently linked to emotional exhaustion (Junça-Silva & Freire, 2022) and burnout (e.g., Blanco-Donoso et al., 2021), highlighting its relevance in the JD-R framework (Kalmanovich-Cohen & Stanton, 2025).

Importantly, the JD-R model also posits that personal resources can buffer the negative effects of job demands. Mindfulness—a state of present-moment awareness and acceptance (Langer, 1989)—has emerged as one such resource. It has been shown to enhance coping and self-regulation under stress (Junça-Silva et al., 2021, 2023). From the Conservation of Resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989), mindfulness represents a psychological resource that can mitigate resource depletion caused by stressors like psychological contract breach (Walsh et al., 2025). As COR suggests, resource loss leads to strain, but access to personal resources such as mindfulness may prevent or buffer this effect (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2023).

Despite emerging interest, little is known about how psychological contract breach operates as a fluctuating daily experience (Junça-Silva & Lopez, 2025), how it contributes to burnout through WFC as a mediator, or how mindfulness may moderate these effects. To address these gaps, this study draws on the JD-R and COR frameworks to develop and test a conceptual model examining: (1) the mediating role of WFC in the daily relationship between psychological contract breach and burnout and (2) the moderating role of mindfulness in buffering this relationship.

This study advances theory in several ways. First, it addresses the call to conceptualize psychological contract breach as a dynamic construct by adopting a within-person, daily design (Griep et al., 2019; Rousseau et al., 2018). Previous research has mostly relied on cross-sectional designs, thereby overlooking how employees' perceptions and

reactions to breach evolve over time and in response to situational demands. Second, this study integrates WFC as a dynamic mediator, contributing to a deeper understanding of how job demands interact over time to predict health outcomes. Third, by testing mindfulness as a protective personal resource, we respond to calls for more research on positive coping strategies within the JD-R and COR frameworks.

Practically, the study offers insights into how mindfulness-based interventions could help employees better cope with psychological contract breaches. Understanding the when and how of these daily processes equips managers with actionable strategies to mitigate burnout, especially in high-demand, post-pandemic work contexts. Managers may benefit from recognizing early signals of strain triggered by psychological contract breach and WFC and implementing support mechanisms (e.g., mindfulness training) to sustain employee well-being and strengthen employment relationships.

Theoretical framework

Psychological contract and psychological contract breach

The psychological contract is an implicit and subjective agreement between employees and their employer that aligns mutual expectations and informal obligations, functioning as a regulatory mechanism in the employment relationship aimed at achieving organizational goals (Kotter, 1973; Rousseau, 1989, 1995). More precisely, it reflects the employee's beliefs about the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement with the organization (Rousseau, 1989), and thus entails perceived mutual obligations that emerge from this exchange (Rousseau, 1989). Guest (2004) emphasized that the psychological contract is built on implicit promises, obligations, and incentives, with the primary goal of fostering trust and fairness through the fulfillment of expectations.

When these implicit promises are broken, employees perceive a breach of the psychological contract, which may result in significant attitudinal and behavioral

consequences (Rousseau et al., 2018). Rousseau (1989) made a critical distinction between breach and violation: a psychological contract breach refers to the cognitive realization that the organization has failed to fulfill its obligations (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000; Robinson, 1996), whereas violation refers to the emotional and affective response triggered by this perceived failure, often characterized by feelings of betrayal and frustration (Zhao et al., 2007). While breach is a perceptual, evaluative process, violation reflects the emotional fallout from unmet expectations and may serve as a catalyst for retaliatory or withdrawal behaviors (Griep et al., 2023).

One key function of the psychological contract is to create a sense of predictability and control within the work environment (Rousseau, 1995). However, when obligations are not fulfilled, this function is disrupted, potentially undermining employees' psychological stability and well-being (Tetrick & LaRocco, 1987). In this regard, the loss of control and predictability associated with contract breach has been linked to the development of burnout symptoms (Li & Chen, 2018; Mekawy et al., 2022). For example, Chan (2021) found that across different cultural contexts, unmet organizational expectations were a significant predictor of burnout. Specifically, the more demanding the employees' expectations of the organization, the greater the likelihood of experiencing contract breach over time, leading to decreased work-family balance, heightened cynicism, and emotional exhaustion—two core dimensions of burnout.

The relationship between psychological contract breach and burnout

Burnout is a multidimensional construct, with emotional exhaustion and cynicism recognized as its core dimensions (Llorens et al., 2007), while reduced occupational self-efficacy is considered a relatively independent, yet significant, component (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Maslach et al., 2001). Emotional exhaustion refers to the depletion of emotional and physical resources, reflecting an affective response and a negative psychological state often

triggered by perceived injustice in the workplace (Schaufeli et al., 1996). Cynicism, on the other hand, entails a sense of detachment and disengagement from work, characterized by a loss of emotional and cognitive involvement with one's tasks. It typically arises as a defensive reaction to perceived violations of reciprocity in the employee–organization relationship (Maslach et al., 2008; Leiter & Maslach, 1988). In turn, a decline in occupational self-efficacy reflects growing doubts about one's competence and effectiveness at work, which can contribute to a more negative and disengaged relationship with the job.

Within the framework of the JD-R model, psychological contract breach (PCB) is conceptualized as a significant job demand that can deplete employees' emotional and cognitive resources (Junça-Silva & Lopez, 2024), leading to burnout. Accordingly, the health impairment process suggests that excessive job demands, especially when not buffered by sufficient job resources, can lead to stress and ultimately to burnout (Taris & Schaufeli, 2015). Psychological contract breach, as a form of cognitive and emotional strain, can therefore act as a job demand that contributes to this impairment process.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that PCB contributes to increased stress levels and emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003), and is positively related to emotional exhaustion (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). Furthermore, breaches in the psychological contract have been shown to significantly heighten emotional exhaustion (De Jong et al., 2021). These findings underscore the role of PCB as a job demand that undermines employee well-being and contributes to the development of burnout

The mediating role of work-family conflict

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered work dynamics, compelling organizations and employees to rapidly adapt to new work patterns, including the widespread adoption of telework (Vaziri et al., 2020). This shift increased the blurring of boundaries

between work and personal life, contributing to higher levels of work–family conflict (WFC; Junça-Silva, 2024a). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), WFC arises from incompatibilities between work and family roles, where fulfilling the demands of one role makes it difficult to meet the demands of the other. These authors identified three primary sources of WFC: (1) time-based conflict, which occurs when time devoted to one role reduces the time available for the other (e.g., extended work hours prevent participation in children's extracurricular activities); (2) strain-based conflict, which arises when stress from one role interferes with performance in another (e.g., when work pressure prevents attending to a spouse's needs); and (3) behavior-based conflict, when behaviors required in one role are incompatible with expectations in another (e.g., attending a work lunch with limited dietary options that conflict with personal values, such as vegetarianism).

Psychological contract breach may exacerbate WFC, particularly through strain-based conflict. When employees perceive that their employer has failed to uphold implicit promises or expectations, they may experience heightened stress and emotional strain that spills over into the family domain. This relationship can be explained through the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018), which posits that individuals strive to retain, protect, and build resources (e.g., energy, time, emotional stability). Stress occurs when these resources are threatened, depleted, or insufficient to meet demands. PCB represents a resource-draining experience that requires employees to invest additional cognitive and emotional effort to cope with unmet expectations. As resources are finite, this added strain may hinder their ability to meet family demands, leading to greater WFC. Over time, such sustained resource depletion may contribute to negative outcomes such as psychological distress or even burnout (Holmgren et al., 2024).

Empirical research supports the mediating role of WFC in the relationship between job stressors—such as PCB—and burnout. For instance, Banerjee and Malik (2024)

investigated the serial mediating effects of psychological contract violation and burnout in the relationship between psychological contract breach and work engagement. Their findings indicate that breaches in psychological contracts can lead to increased burnout, which in turn diminishes work engagement. Reimann et al. (2017) found that PCB increased WFC, which subsequently lowered job satisfaction. Similarly, Jiang et al. (2014) demonstrated that PCB not only elevated WFC but also contributed directly to burnout. Liang (2025) reported significant positive associations among PCB, WFC, and burnout. Conversely, Karatepe and Tekinkus (2006) showed that higher motivation at work was associated with lower levels of WFC, which in turn reduced the likelihood of developing burnout. These findings highlight the critical role of WFC as a mechanism linking psychological contract dynamics to employee burnout.

Therefore, relying on the JD-R model and the COR theory, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 1: Within-person fluctuations in WFC will mediate the relationship between psychological contract breach and burnout.

The moderating role of mindfulness

Mindfulness has been increasingly recognized as a valuable personal resource in the workplace, particularly for enhancing productivity, managing stress, and mitigating the effects of WFC (Morganson et al., 2015). Within this context, socio-cognitive mindfulness is defined as an active, flexible cognitive state characterized by present-focused awareness, sensitivity to context, and openness to multiple perspectives (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). This form of mindfulness is associated with three key dimensions: novelty-seeking (actively exploring new perspectives), novelty production (engaging in creative actions), and engagement (being fully present in the moment) (Bodner & Langer, 2001).

Mindfulness fosters greater emotional awareness and acceptance, allowing individuals to experience events with more positive affect and less rumination (Walsh et al., 2025). This receptive and non-judgmental stance has been linked to increased job satisfaction and reduced stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Hülsheger et al., 2013). In dynamic and unpredictable work environments, mindfulness enhances employees' ability to regulate their emotions and respond adaptively to change (Junça-Silva, 2025b). As such, mindfulness can serve as a buffer against adverse work conditions, including psychological contract breach (Junça-Silva et al., 2021).

Theoretically grounded in the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the JD-R model (Bakker et al., 2023), mindfulness has been empirically validated as a personal resource that helps individuals preserve and replenish emotional and cognitive resources. It supports self-regulation and emotional resilience (Walsh et al., 2025), thereby enabling employees to better navigate high job demands and maintain psychological well-being (Junça-Silva & Caetano, 2023). Research also shows that mindfulness can strengthen managers' ability to cope with demanding conditions, reducing stress and preventing resource depletion (Junça-Silva et al., 2023; Taskan et al., 2025).

Empirical findings further corroborate mindfulness as a moderating factor in occupational stress processes. For example, Shaffakat et al. (2022) found that mindfulness attenuated emotional and behavioral reactions to psychological contract breach. Similarly, Daniel et al. (2022) demonstrated that mindfulness moderated the relationship between job demands and WFC. Junça-Silva et al. (2021) also reported that mindfulness buffered the impact of stressful events on burnout. Among healthcare professionals, Grover et al. (2017) observed that higher levels of mindfulness were associated with lower emotional demands and perceived stress. In educational settings, Hsieh et al. (2021) found that mindfulness reduced the impact of job demands on emotional exhaustion among online teachers. Together,

these findings support the view that mindfulness not only improves individual well-being but also mitigates the harmful effects of job demands.

Thus, relying on the JD-R model, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 2: Mindfulness will moderate the relationship between psychological contract breach and burnout via WFC, in such a way that the relationship will be stronger for individuals who show lower levels of mindfulness (versus higher levels of mindfulness (see Figure 1).

--Figure 1--

Method

Participants and procedure

The first author's institution supported the ethical approval for the study as it posed no psychological or physical harm to participants. To facilitate data collection, we employed a convenience sampling method. Specifically, four human resource directors from large consultancy firms were contacted via email and invited to participate in a study examining employees' psychological contracts and well-being. Upon their agreement, these directors disseminated the survey to 200 employees within their organizations. A total of 143 employees consented to participate, resulting in a response rate of 71.5%. Participants provided their email addresses and completed a general survey assessing socio-demographic characteristics and mindfulness. They were informed about the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses and were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

To assess their daily psychological contract breach, WFC and burnout, one week later, employees completed online daily short surveys during five consecutive workdays by the end of each day. Participants received a reminder at approximately 6:00 p.m. each workday via email, to fill out the online survey and that this survey would be closed at midnight (11:59 p.m.), so they needed to fill it out before the end of each workday. The online survey

provided information on whether participants entered their data in a timely manner. The data collection occurred from January to March 2022.

Overall, as 28 participants did not complete any daily survey, 17 participants withdrew after the first one daily survey and 15 answered only to two-daily surveys, a final sample of 83 employees (response rate: 41.5%) who completed each of the 5 workdays was retained (72.5% were female; M_{age} = 41.06 years old, SD = 9.21; M_{tenure}= 20.44 years, SD = 9.94; $M_{working\ hours}$ = 37.72 hours per week, SD = 10.38). This yielded 415 corresponding data entries for further analyses.

Measures

General measure

The Langer Mindfulness Scale was used to assess mindfulness (Pirson et al., 2018). It included 14 items that measured novelty seeking (e.g., “I like to investigate things.”), novelty producing, (e.g., “I make many novel contributions.”), and engagement (e.g., “I am rarely aware of changes.”). Participants answered on a five-point scale (1 = *totally disagree*; 5 = *totally agree*) ($\alpha = 0.79$, $\omega = 0.80$).

Daily measures

The diary approach strongly recommends using surveys (ideally with up to five items) from abbreviated and adapted scales, to minimize participant dropout, and optimize the data response rate (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2017). So, these methodological recommendations (Ohly et al., 2010) were followed. First, we picked a few items (with the greatest factor loading and the highest item-total correlation) from multiple-item scales designed to capture daily psychological contract breaches, WFC and burnout. Second, the items used were adapted to a diary design and, as such, they were worded to include "today" and used the past verb tense. All responses were anchored by a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Psychological contract breach. The five-item psychological contract breach and violation scale developed by Robinson and Wolfe Morrison (2000) was used. A sample item is (e.g., "Today, I felt that my employer had come through in fulling the promises made to me when I was hired"). Participants responded based on a five-point Likert scale (1- *completely disagree*; 5 - *completely agree*) ($\alpha = 0.95$, $\omega = 0.94$).

WFC. Three items from the WFC Scale (Netemeyer et al., 1996) were used (e.g. "Today, my job produced strain that made it difficult to fulfill family duties."). Participants answered using a five-point Likert scale (1 – *never*; 5 – *always*). ($\alpha = 0.71$, $\omega = 0.70$).

Burnout. Burnout was measured with nine items from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1996). This measured the three dimensions: emotional exhaustion (e.g., "Today, I felt emotionally drained from my work"), depersonalization or cynicism (e.g., "Today, I felt that I treated some persons as if they were impersonal objects"), and personal accomplishment (e.g., "Today, I felt I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work"). Participants respond on a five-point frequency scale, ranging from "*never*" (1) to "*always*" (5). High scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales together with low scores on the personal accomplishment subscale indicate symptoms of burnout ($\alpha = 0.89$, $\omega = 0.90$).

Control variables. Gender and age were used as level-2 control variables, and the day of data collection (from Monday to Friday) as a level-1 control variable, as they have been shown to create differences in predicting burnout (e.g., LaFaver et al., 2018).

Data analyses

This study used multi-level analysis with nested data to examine the underlying model. First, the intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) were calculated to assess the proportion of variance that exists at the between-person level for daily variables (psychological contract breach, WFC and burnout). The ICC provides valuable information

about the daily variability over the monitoring days by measuring the ratio of between-subjects variance to the total variance of the daily variables, based on covariance parameters computed across participants. Lower ICC values indicate greater heterogeneity within and between person, highlighting the diversity in responses among participants during the monitoring period. We found significant variance in daily psychological contract breach (ICC = 0.69), WFC (ICC = 0.41), and burnout (ICC = 0.66). This evidences that these variables have significant variation both at the within and between-person level. Thus, we could proceed with the multilevel analysis.

Our hypotheses were tested through the macro–Multilevel Mediation (MLMed), in SPSS (Rockwood, 2017). This macro appears to deliver similar results, in estimation of model' parameters, to what other software alternatives do (e.g., Mplus). Plus, this macro appears to be particularly useful for models that include level-2 moderators (Rockwood, 2017). MLMed is, therefore, a suitable macro to test the 1-1-1 multilevel model, and for the moderated mediation model.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis

To test for common method bias, multilevel confirmatory factor analyzes were performed. The results showed that the four-factor model (psychological contract breach, WFC, burnout and mindfulness) fit the data well (both within- and between-person levels: RMSEA = 0.05, CFI = 0.96 TLI = 0.95, $SRMR_{within}$ = 0.04, $SRMR_{between}$= 0.03). On the other hand, the single-factor model showed an unacceptable fit to the data (RMSEA = 0.12, CFI = 0.71, TLI = 0.69, $SRMR_{within}$ = 0.10, $SRMR_{between}$ = 0.09).

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in table 1.

--TABLE 1--

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1 tested the mediating role of WFC on the relationship between psychological contract breach and burnout, at the daily level. Psychological contract breach was negatively related to WFC ($\gamma = -2.02$, $p < 0.05$), and WFC was positively related to daily burnout ($\gamma = 0.27$, $p<.001$), with a significant indirect effect ($\gamma = -0.54$, $p < 0.001$, 95%CI [-1.01, -0.11]). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported by the data (Table 2).

--TABLE 2--

Hypothesis 2 stated that mindfulness would moderate the relationship between daily psychological contract breaches and daily WFC. The results, in Table 3, show a significant conditional indirect effect of mindfulness ($\gamma = 0.44$, CI95% [0.03, 0.85]). We found that the mediating effect of daily psychological contract breaches on daily burnout via daily WFC was stronger and significant for individuals who scored lower on mindfulness ($\gamma = -1.58$, $p < 0.001$) when compared to those who scored lower on mindfulness ($\gamma = 0.18$, $p > 0.05$) (see Figure 2). Thus, Hypothesis 2 received support.

--FIGURE 2--

Discussion

This study integrates the JD-R and COR theories to develop a conceptual model examining the within-person relationships between psychological contract breach, WFC, burnout, and the moderating role of mindfulness. Our findings indicate that daily fluctuations in PCB are associated with daily WFC and burnout. Notably, a higher perception of PCB corresponds to a lower level of WFC, suggesting that employees may seek fulfillment in the family domain as a compensatory mechanism. Additionally, mindfulness was found to moderate the indirect relationship between PCB and burnout through WFC. Specifically, this relationship was stronger for individuals with lower mindfulness scores and became non-

significant for those with higher mindfulness scores, highlighting mindfulness as a protective personal resource.

Theoretical contributions

The results indicate a negative indirect effect of WFC on the within-person relationship between psychological contract breach and burnout. Specifically, when employees perceive a breach in their psychological contract, they may seek refuge in the family domain to mitigate the dissatisfaction stemming from the breach, thereby reducing their WFC. This behavior aligns with the COR theory, which posits that individuals strive to acquire and protect resources they value, and when these resources are threatened or lost, they take steps to prevent further depletion (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In this context, the family serves as a supportive resource that helps employees recover (Carlson et al., 2024) from the stress associated with PCB, leading to decreased WFC and potentially lowering the risk of burnout.

Furthermore, drawing on the concept of resource caravans from COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), employees experiencing high demands that deplete their resources will actively seek avenues for resource recovery to forestall emotional exhaustion, stress, and burnout (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In this context, a supportive family network functions as a critical resource caravan, facilitating the restoration and accumulation of personal resources and thereby promoting well-being (Carlson et al., 2024). Consequently, employees are inclined to engage more deeply with their family roles—where the perceived rewards for investment are greater (Perry et al., 2023)—as a protective strategy against the adverse impacts of resource loss.

Empirical evidence, however, often points in the opposite direction. For instance, Reimann et al. (2017) found that perceived imbalances in mutual obligations—and the experience of psychological contract breach—are significant positive predictors of WFC.

Such deconstruction of the employment relationship disrupts the equilibrium between work and personal life and, in turn, predisposes employees to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Maslach and Leiter (2022) further argue that burnout emerges most readily when there is a mismatch between job demands and individual capacities, and that this effect intensifies when employees perceive that their psychological contract has been violated. Paradoxically, the ensuing drive to restore resource balance may prompt employees to redirect their time and energy toward family roles, thereby reducing WFC and mitigating subsequent burnout. In this way, psychological contract breach can catalyze a compensatory shift toward nonwork domains as a protective strategy against the detrimental effects of such ruptures on mental health, that is, burnout.

The results indicate that mindfulness moderates the indirect relationship between psychological contract breach and burnout via WFC. Specifically, among employees low in mindfulness, PCB is followed by a marked reduction in WFC and, in turn, lower burnout. In contrast, for employees high in mindfulness, this indirect pathway is non-significant. These findings suggest that less mindful individuals rely on their families as a resource-recovery strategy when they perceive a contract breach, thereby alleviating WFC and protecting against burnout. Highly mindful employees—who possess superior present-moment awareness and emotion-regulation capacities (Junça-Silva et al., 2021; Taskan et al., 2025)—maintain stable levels of WFC regardless of PCB, effectively eliminating the indirect effect of breach on burnout.

This pattern can be understood through the self-regulatory functions of mindfulness: less mindful employees tend to mentally disengage from the source of the breach, thereby reducing their experience of WFC but leaving them more vulnerable to burnout when conflict does arise. In contrast, mindful employees maintain focused, novel, and adaptive engagement with their tasks even in the face of contract breaches (Junça-Silva et al., 2023; Pirson et al.,

2018), which preserves their emotional investment in work and stabilizes the relationship between breach and WFC (Hülsheger et al., 2013). Moreover, mindfulness practices strengthen employees' capacity to regulate emotions and sustain meaningful connections to both work and family domains (Junça-Silva et al., 2021; Langer, 1989), explaining why mindful individuals do not exhibit the same reduction in WFC following a breach. Socio-cognitive mindfulness, characterized by heightened situational awareness (Taskan et al., 2025) and contextual sensitivity (Junça-Silva & Caetano, 2021), thus serves as a protective resource that buffers the downstream impact of contract violations on burnout.

Limitations and future research directions

While our study provides valuable insights into the relationships among PCB, WFC, and burnout, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations and suggest avenues for future research. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small and predominantly female, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across broader populations. Future research should aim to include larger and more diverse samples to enhance external validity.

Secondly, data collection was conducted once daily over a five-day period. This approach may not fully capture the intra-day fluctuations in psychological contract breach and burnout, potentially overlooking transient states and immediate reactions. To address this, future studies could employ experience sampling methods, which involve multiple assessments throughout the day. This method allows for the examination of dynamic processes and temporal patterns in naturalistic settings, providing a more nuanced understanding of how PCB and burnout evolve within individuals over time .
Additionally, the reliance on self-reported measures collected at a single time point each day raises concerns about common method bias (CMB), which can inflate or deflate observed relationships between variables. To mitigate CMB, future research should consider

incorporating procedural remedies such as temporal separation of measurements, ensuring anonymity, and using different response formats.

Moreover, our measurement of mindfulness was confined to the socio-cognitive dimension. To enhance the generalizability and robustness of our findings, future studies should consider incorporating alternative operationalizations of mindfulness, such as the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale developed by Brown and Ryan (2003), which assesses dispositional mindfulness.

In addition, our model focused on burnout as the primary outcome variable. Expanding the model to include other criterion variables, such as additional mental health indicators (e.g., depression, anxiety) or performance metrics, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of PCB and WFC. This broader approach would allow for the examination of how these workplace stressors influence various aspects of employee well-being.

Furthermore, individual differences play a crucial role in shaping employees' experiences of PCB, WFC, and burnout. Future research should delve deeper into how personality traits, such as neuroticism and agreeableness, as well as factors like self-efficacy and coping styles, moderate these relationships. Understanding these moderating effects can inform the development of tailored interventions aimed at mitigating burnout and enhancing employee well-being.

Lastly, our findings suggest that PCB may decrease WFC, indicating a complex interplay between work and family domains. Future studies should explore the mechanisms underlying this relationship, particularly how employees may seek fulfillment and self-realization in the family context as a response to workplace stressors. Investigating these dynamics can provide deeper insights into strategies that promote overall well-being and work–life balance.

Practical implications

Ensuring the fulfillment of psychological contracts remains a critical challenge for contemporary managers and organizational leaders. In the evolving landscape of work, characterized by flexible arrangements (Junça-Silva, 2025a) and increased work–family interface complexities (Kalmanovich-Cohen & Stanton, 2025), it is imperative for management to cultivate supportive strategies aimed at minimizing potential burnout indicators. To address these challenges, managers should consider implementing strategies that promote autonomy and flexibility, enabling employees to set priorities, choose conducive work environments, and manage their schedules. Such autonomy not only protects mental health but also reinforces the psychological contract between employer and employee, minimizing the likelihood of developing burnout (Taskan et al., 2024).

Moreover, integrating mindfulness practices into the workplace has been shown to improve employee performance and well-being (Taskan et al, 2025). Mindfulness enhances employees' ability to remain present-focused, reducing the impact of past negative experiences on current work relationships (Yagil et al., 2023). This present-moment awareness has been linked to improved performance, reduced stress, and lower emotional exhaustion (Junça-Silva et al., 2023). Incorporating mindfulness training into organizational development programs can equip employees with strategies to manage stress and emotional exhaustion. These programs can improve overall mental health, thereby reducing burnout rates. Furthermore, offering resources such as coaching, physical activity programs, and mental health support can help employees cope with the demands of their roles and prevent burnout, especially in remote work settings where social isolation may be a concern.

Conclusion

All in all, psychological contract breach is related to burnout and WFC is a mediating mechanism in this relationship. In turn, the relationship appears to be stronger for employees who score lower on their mindfulness trait (when compared to more mindful employees).

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Table 1.

Means, Standard deviations, and Between-and Within-Person Level Correlations

Variables	M_{within}	SD_{within}	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Psyc Contract	3.71	1.03	-	-.26 ***	-55***	-.15*	.16*	.07
2. WFC	2.15	.88	-.38***	-	.30***	.08	.15*	-.15*
3. Burnout	2.48	.88	-.56***	.61***	-	.19*	.09	.02

4. Mindfulness	3.94	.54	-.22*	.03	.02	-	.26**	.06
5. Sex	-	-	.09	.17*	-.01	.25**	-	.03
6. Day	-	-	-.14	-28**	-.10	.07	.04	-

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are between-person level. Correlations above the diagonal are within-person level. $N_{(observations)} = 415$; $n_{(participants)} = 83$. ***$p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, *$p < .05$. WFC=Work family conflict.

Source: authors' own work.

Table 2.

Parameter estimates for 1-1-1 multilevel mediation model.

	Outcome					
	Daily WFC			Daily burnout		
	Ý	SE	95% CI	Ý	SE	95% CI

Direct effect						
Daily psyc contract	-.24	.16	(-.55, .07)	-.35***	.06	(-.47, -.23)
Daily WFC	-	-	-	.27***	.06	(.15, .39)
Sex	.31	.38	(-.50, 1.11)	-.47*	.22	(-.92, -.02)
Time	-.16*	.08	(-.31, -.00)	.42	.29	(-.21, 1.07)
Indirect effect						
Daily psyc contract (via WFC)	-	-		-.07	.05	(-.16, .01)
-2LL	201.43					
AIC	209.43					
BIC	219.77					

Note. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$, $N_{(observations)} = 415$; $n_{(participants)} = 83$. CI: confidence interval; WFC, work family conflict.

Source: authors' own work.

Table 3.

Parameter estimates for 1-1-1 multilevel moderated mediation model.

	Outcome	
	Daily WFC	Daily burnout

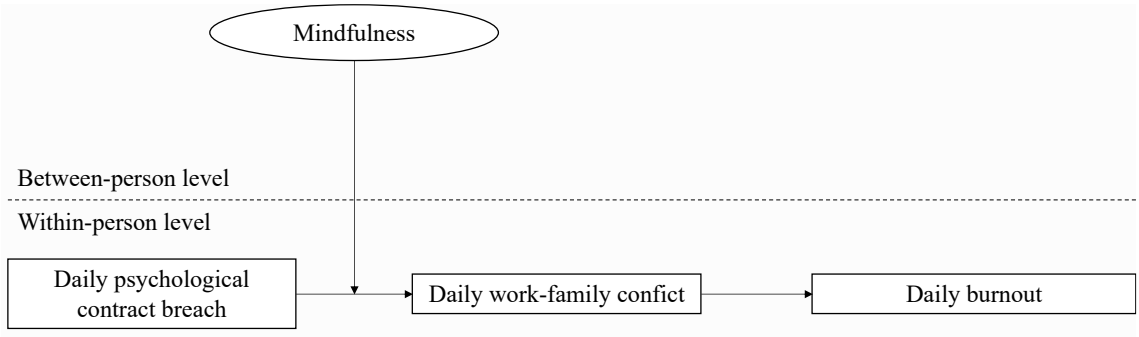
	Ý	SE	95% CI	Ý	SE	95% CI
Direct effect						
Daily Psyc cont	-2.02**	.80	[-3.64, -.39]	-.36***	.06	[-.48, -.23]
Daily WFC	-	-	-	.27***	.06	[.15, .39]
Mindfulness	-.16	.51	[-1.18, .86]	-	-	-
Daily Psyc cont *Mindfulness	.44*	.20	[.03, .85]	-	-	-
Sex	.61	.60	[-.05, .06]	-.42	.22	(-.87, .04)
Time	-.12	.07	[-.27, .03]	.02	.03	(-.04, .09)
Conditional Indirect Effect				.12***		(.01, .25)
-2LL	186.99					
AIC	194.99					
BIC	204.94					

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$, $N_{(observations)} = 415$; $n_{(participants)} = 83$. CI: confidence interval. WFC: Work-family conflict.

Source: authors' own work.

Figure 1.

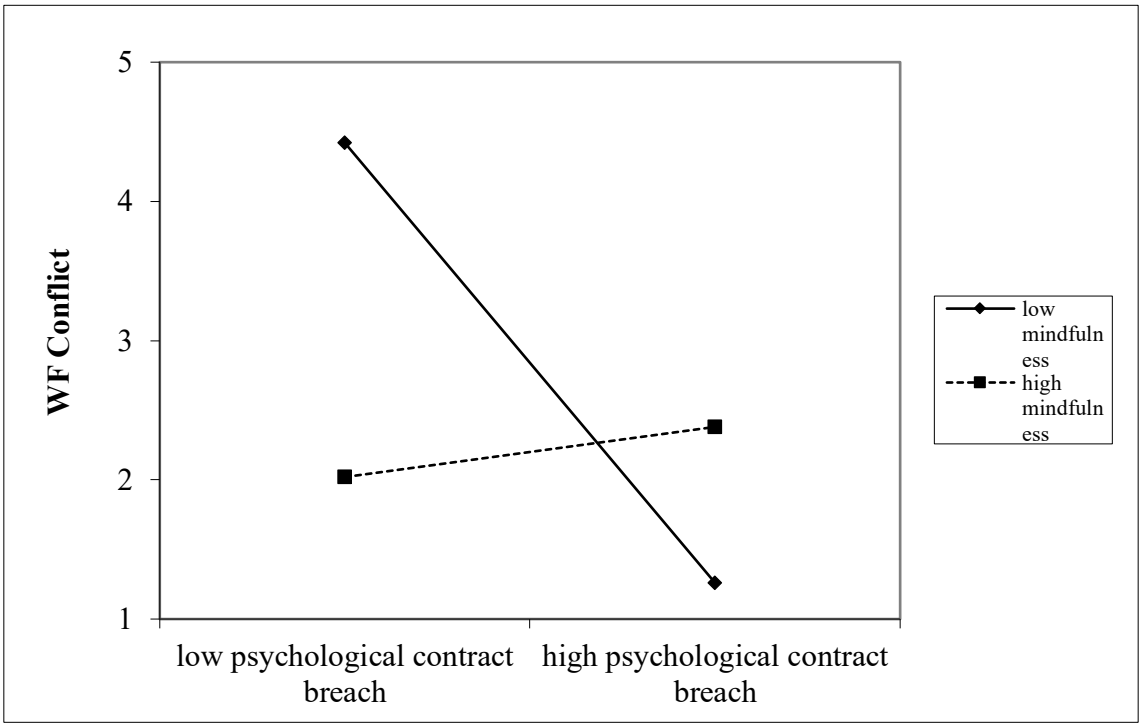
Multilevel moderated mediation model.



Source: authors' own work.

Figure 2.

Cross-level interaction between mindfulness and daily psychological contract breach predicting daily WFC.



Source: authors' own work.