Are Public Workers More Stressed Than Private Workers? The Relationship Between Work Stress and Value Congruence

Valentina Ramos, Filomena Jordão
University of Oporto, Oporto, Portugal

Work stress is one of the problems that organizational psychologists have been concerned with during the last few decades. However, there is still no general consensus about the relationship between this type of experience and value congruence within the working organizations. This study attempts to identify the relationship established between work stress and value congruence, considering value congruence as the states of adjustment, conflict, and value recognition. In our calculations, we included other socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, and organizational tenure; and organizational variables such as the company's sector. The study was applied to a sample of 298 workers, distributed in two organizations from different sectors ($N_{\text{private}} = N_{\text{public}} = 149$). The results obtained have indicated conflict as the element of value congruence that correlates significantly with work stress ($\beta = 0.022$, $p < 0.05$). Other results have indicated significant correlations between gender and work stress ($\beta_{\text{men}} = -0.424$, $p < 0.05$), and between organization sector and work stress ($\beta_{\text{private}} = 0.293$, $p < 0.05$). This investigation is relevant not only to the context in which it was applied, but also as a comparison framework with other research about value congruence and work stress organizations.

Keywords: work stress, value congruence, value conflict, P-O (person-organization) fit, organization sector, worker gender

Introduction

Work stress has been acknowledged as one of the elements that influence people's well-being and, thus, when it occurs as a negative experience, it has consequences not just in the worker's performance, but also in the organization in which he/she works. Considering Lazarus' transactional model (Lazarus, 1993; Monat & Lazarus, 1991), stress has been considered as the result of the individual's perception about the tasks requested of him/her that can be perceived as threatening when he/she believes there is a shortage of personal resources to deliver the task (Beehr & Newman, 1978; Lau, Wing Tung, & Ho, 2003; Mazzola, Schonfeld, & Spector, 2011). In this sense, work stress is an experience that comes from the relationship between personal characteristics and organizational characteristics (Monat & Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus, 1993).

One of the factors that correlate with stress is organizational culture specifically because of the influence of the articulation between personal values and organizational values (Mazzola et al., 2011). This relationship between both values has been studied in terms of congruence, and its effect in the organization has been

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Valentina Ramos, Ph.D. candidate, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Oporto.
Filomena Jordão, Ph.D., professor, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Oporto.

determined from elements such as satisfaction, permanence, performance, and well-being (Boxx & Odom, 1991; Davis, 2006; Edwards & Cable, 2009). Previous research has established a significant correlation between levels of stress and congruence values, so that higher incongruence, which is ultimately manifested by a value conflict, leads to high levels of stress and to possibly even leaving the organization (Bouckennooghe, Buelens, Fontaine, & Vanderheyden, 2005; Lamm, Gordon, & Purser, 2010; Liedtka, 1989; Medina, Munduate, Dorado, Martínez, & Guerra, 2005; Oliveira, Tenório, Souza, Pereira, & Souza, 2002).

In the context of Portuguese research, studies about work stress and organization values have considered the two as independent variables and only recently value congruence and its influence at the organizational level have been considered (Cabral-Cardoso, 2001; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Morais, 2011; Pérez-Nordtvedt, Payne, Short, & Kedia, 2008; Vicente, Rebelo, & Agostinho, 2011). An investigation in a Portuguese organization conducted by Morais, Ramos, and Jordão (2012) identified the presence of significant relationships between work stress and value congruence, establishing that as value congruence increases, labor stress decreases. However, these results still need to be confirmed in other organizations. For this reason, and because it is very important to consider the relationship established between organizational and personal values and their impact on the worker's well-being and the consequences of this well-being in the organization, it is in our interest to study if a relationship between work stress and value congruence truly exists, specifically in the Portuguese organizational context.

Work Stress

Stress in organizations is an experience that comes from the relationship established between a stress agent, known as a stress source, and the feedback coming from this agent's action, known as stress coping strategies (Mazzola et al., 2011). According with this idea, D'Amato and Zijlstra (2003) argued that work stress is considered a multidimensional construction, generally related with a negative experience coming from the individual's relationship with his environment and from the perception he holds about this relationship. Beehr and Newman (1978) explained that there are two elements in the working environment that are considered the breaking point of the stress experience: the task demand, which can be perceived as superior to the individuals' capabilities for accomplishment it; and the resources for carrying out the task, which could be perceived as insufficient.

Because of the relationship between the individual and the organization, several researchers have determined the existence of factors that have delimited the experience of stress from the organizational perspective and from the personal perspective. Beehr and Newman (1978), Cooper, Dewe, and O'Driscoll (2001), and Lau et al. (2003) have identified these elements as arising from the individuals' characteristics, such as age and gender, and from characteristics of the organization, such as degree of noise, temperature, expectations associated with performance, career opportunities, and others. However, the most common element between the workers and the organization they work for is the values, and the degree of congruence established between them is one of the elements associated with the experience of work stress (D'Amato & Zijlstra, 2003; Kristof, 1996). In this sense, acknowledging that the experience of stress arises from a relationship process between the worker and the organization, leads to the consideration of value congruence as part of this process, which is relevant for our study.

The Relationship Between Personal Values and Organizational Values

Because of the influence of values in organizational behavior as an integrated element of work culture,

they become essential for the management of organizations (Dolan & García, 2002; Dolan, Richley, García, & Lingham, 2008). According to Rokeach (1973), values are convictions or beliefs that certain behaviors are favored when compared to their opposite. Therefore, values are not positive or negative in themselves, but are determined by experiencing them.

According to Dolan and García (1998), the importance of using values as a way of organizational management is because of the formational characteristic of these values. In other words, values are a stable component of the personality, but at the same time, they are subject to modifications. Hence, organizations can directly modify the values of workers so that their behavior complies with the organizational values and goals. In this sense, it is vital that organizations dedicate time to the definition and training of values. It is not enough to identify them, as it happens in most working organizations (Jiménez, 2010; Ramos, 2008a, 2008b), but it is also necessary to communicate and integrate them in the structure of the personality of workers.

Both personal and organizational values can be classified into real/desired values and explicit/implicit values. According to González-Serra (2000), personal values—also known as general values—are the element that determines the attitude of workers and acts as the motivational force of their behavior. Jiménez (2010) defined organizational values as the basis of attitudes, behaviors, and motivations of workers; acting as the pillars of organizational culture and serving for the integration and growth of people in the organization.

Real values are those that answer the question, “Who is the organization and why does it work the way it does?” (Ramsey, 2006). Meanwhile, desired values are the ones that answer questions like, “Where are we going and what for?” (Dolan & García, 1998).

Finally, explicit values are those which are defined both by explicit strategies and by mechanisms the organization develops for its integration in the organizational culture (Patten, 2004). On the other hand, implicit values are those which guide the worker’s and the organization’s behavior, which may be far from being clear and well defined. They may even contradict the explicit values (Jaffe & Habbershon, 2002).

There are several ways in which personal and organizational values can relate, and this determines the degree of congruence that will exist between the worker and the organization. In Liedtka’s Congruence Value Model (Liedtka, 1989), subsequently sustained by Posner and Schmidt (1993), three forms appear in which personal and organizational values can relate: the fit, the misfit, and the conflict. In this sense, we are in the presence of a value’s fit when the values of the individual are in consonance with those of the organization. Misfit occurs when the values of the individual do not receive support from the organization, or vice-versa, which manifests in a subordination of values. Meanwhile, conflict arises when individual and organizational values are contradictory. However, often these forms of congruence have been used indistinctly, specifically in research on work stress (Ramos, Morais, & Jordão, 2012).

Congruence Values and Stress Experience in Organizations

According to Ramos et al. (2012), the research that has dealt with the relationship between value congruence and work stress has not reached a consensus. On one hand, there are studies establishing a significant and positive correlation between value conflict and stress (Bouckennooghe et al., 2005; Lamm et al., 2010; Talbot & Billsberry, 2011); whereas in other studies, the variable that correlates in a significant and negative way with stress is the fit of values (Edwards, 2008; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). However, these studies which correlate fit and work stress have been criticized because of the use of misfit and conflict as synonyms, and at the same time, fit was used as an antonym of misfit and conflict, when in fact these variables

can, and should be, considered independent from one another (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010; 2011).

On the other hand, results obtained in other studies indicate that, out of the three forms of value articulation mentioned, value conflict is the one associated with negative experiences in the organization, such as work stress (Liedtka, 1989; Medina, Munduate, Dorado, Martínez, & Guerra, 2005; Oliveira, Tenório, A. L. D. Souza, Pereira, & W. Souza, 2002). Value fit is the variable that correlates with positive experiences such as satisfaction, cooperation, and the reduction of turnover intentions (Boxx & Odom, 1991; Davis, 2006; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Vandenberghe & Peiró, 1999). For this reason, Ramos et al. (2012) defended the idea that fit and conflict, since they act as independent variables, should also be measured in an independent way in studies in which the purpose is to identify the relationship of value congruence with other variables within the organizations. However, only a few investigations have begun to apply this approach to the study of stress and value congruence, and specifically in the Portuguese context this subject is quite recent and almost unexplored.

Value Congruence and Work Stress in the Portuguese Context

In Portugal, value congruence has not received much attention. The studies that were found only mention the person-organization fit. One of the perspectives followed in these studies supports the importance of the worker's expectations when in search of a job (Cabral-Cardoso, 2001; Delgado, 2011; Gomes & Neves, 2011). In this sense, the person-organization fit is provided by the perception of values and culture, but a socialization process for the worker still has not occurred, since the worker still is not an active element of the organizational culture. As a result, these studies do not determine the influence of the fit of the worker's experiences within the context of the occupation he performs, but they assess future possibilities of adaptation to the culture in which the person will enter.

Another approach used in studies about congruence in Portuguese organizations is to consider its intermediary effect between satisfaction and social responsibility in the company (Vicente et al., 2011). In this sense, the authors postulate that value congruence will be the determinant in the impact that the organization's practices may have associated to a sense of social responsibility over turnover intention and job satisfaction. Again, congruence is measured considering person-organization fit, and does not consider work stress as a study variable.

On the other hand, work stress has been the object of study on several occasions within the Portuguese context, describing the issues revolving around stress in organizations from different sectors, and between workers from different hierarchies and genders (Araújo & Jordão, 2011; Cardoso, 2010; Carvalho, 2009; Castanheira & Chambel, 2010; Gonçalves & Jordão, 2011). According to these studies, female workers and managers in Portugal are observed to experience more stress. Even though these studies do not consider value congruence, they recognize the importance of organizational culture in the relationship between the workers and their organization (Brandão, 2011).

Until now, only the research by Morais (2011) and Morais et al. (2012) had focused on combining value congruence and work stress, while taking into consideration conflict and value fit. These authors have also considered the degree to which workers recognize the existence of organizational values, in an explicit and implicit form, as a control variable for measuring values corresponding to research by Meglino and Ravlin (1998). In a case study that took place in a Portuguese company, Morais (2011) and Morais et al. (2012) found that occupational stress was significantly correlated with value conflict in a positive form and with person-organization fit in a negative form. However, as a limitation, they acknowledged that the study should

be extended to other organizations in order to verify if the results were the consequence of a specific organizational context.

Also, we found that there is still a need to perform studies that consider the relationship between stress and value congruence, while using the simultaneous but independent measurement of conflict and value fit. On the other hand, it is also vital to conduct these studies in Portugal since it is necessary to verify previous results and to extend the research about values and occupational stress to this context. For this reason, we propose that our research goal is the identification of the relationship between work stress and value congruence in Portuguese organizations, considering person-organization fit, value conflict and value recognition within congruence.

To support our purpose, we identified the following RQ (research questions):

RQ1: What is the relationship between work stress and value congruence in Portuguese organizations?

RQ2: What role do socio-demographic and organizational variables, specifically the organization sector, play in the relationship established between work stress and value congruence?

Method

Sample

The sample was determined in a non-probabilistic form, by subject-type, and was formed of a total of 298 workers. Half of the sample were from a public organization and the other half from a private organization. Both organizations were Portuguese, based in the northern part of Portugal. The total sample was the result of a matching system, due to the difference between the number of people that answered in both organizations: In the public company, we obtained a total of 149 completed forms from a total of 200 sent, and in the private company we received 1,094 completed forms from a total of 3,000 sent forms. In this way, we reduced the number of forms used in the study from the private company so as to match the characteristics of the workers who answered in both organizations, in order to perform a statistical comparison. The sample was matched according to gender, age, and organizational tenure (see Table 1). For the matching process, we used the “Matching” function from the statistical program R (Team, 2011).

Table 1

Sample Distribution According to Organization Sector

	Public	Private
Gender		
Men	57	57
Women	92	92
Marital status		
Single	36	20
Married	83	106
Divorced	17	13
Other	13	10
Level of education		
Non-graduated	77	68
Superior level graduated	72	81
Age (years)		
Minimum—maximum	25–64	26–65
Average	42.95	42.45
<i>SD</i> (standard deviation)	9.115	8.559

Table 1 continued

	Public	Private
Working hours in the organization (years)		
Minimum—maximum	1–39	1–37
Average	15.58	15.13
<i>SD</i>	9.444	8.381

Note. $N_{\text{private}} = N_{\text{public}} = 149$.

Materials and Methods

To gather information, an inventory destined to measure the perception of work stress and value congruence was used. The perception of work stress was measured through a general question: “To what degree do you feel stressed by your work”, which was answered according to a Likert scale of five points, indicating: 0—Null, 1—Weak, 2—Moderate, 3—Strong, and 4—Very strong. Value congruence was measured using the APO (Articulation between the Person and the Organization) inventory by Ramos et al. (2012). This inventory has a three factors distribution that explains 71.92% of the variance and is intended to measure person-organization fit ($\alpha = 0.909$), value conflict ($\alpha = 0.891$), and organizational values recognition ($\alpha = 0.901$).

This inventory was distributed online in the case of the private organization and online and in paper form in the public organizations. To help with the online completion, we used the tool Google Docs (Google, 2010). The online inventory was available for approximately one month. The use of this tool guaranteed the confidentiality of the answers since it does not gather information related to the name or the e-mail address of the person. The link that gave access to the questionnaire was sent through e-mail, where the importance of the study was explained to collaborators and their participation was requested. In the case of the private organization, the e-mails were facilitated by the organization and their researchers carried out the distribution. In the case of the public organization, the online distribution was done through the systems of the organization. This means that the researchers did not have access to the e-mail addresses of workers. The paper distribution, in the public company, was also the responsibility of the human resources department of the organization, with which a timeline for inventories deadlines was established. The inventories had a heading explaining the research investigation and requesting the collaboration of the workers.

Data analysis

The correlations between work stress and the factors of value congruence, related to the first research question, were conducted using parametric methods of correlation, specifically the Pearson correlation coefficient. The role of the socio-demographic variables and organizational variables in the relationship between work stress and value congruence, related to answering the second research question, was determined through an ANOVA (analysis of variance). The average comparisons were conducted using the Bonferroni test as the adjustment measure. The estimates of variance uniformity, normal distribution of the responses and error independence were verified for the use of this statistical tool. The statistical program for the performance of these calculations was SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 20 (IBM, 2011).

Results

The results obtained are presented according to the RQ posed:

RQ1: What is the relationship between work stress and value congruence in Portuguese organizations?

We performed a calculation of regression to determine the relationship between work stress and the three

components considered to measure congruence-value fit, value conflict, and value recognition (see Table 2).

The results indicated that, overall, the value congruence element that significantly related with the perception of work stress was the conflict between personal and organizational values. This relationship is established in a positive way: When one increases, the other also increases.

At the same time, we identified an existing correlation between the three elements of value congruence. A significant and positive correlation was determined between value fit and the recognition of organizational values, and a negative and significant correlation between those two and value conflict.

Table 2

Correlation Between Value Congruence and Work Stress

	1	2	3	4
1. Stress perception	1.000			
2. Value fit	0.026	1.000		
3. Value recognition	0.025	0.565**	1.000	
4. Conflict values	0.123*	-0.454**	-0.291**	1.000

Notes. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

RQ2: What role do socio-demographic and organizational variables, specifically the organization sector, play in the relationship established between work stress and value congruence?

In order to respond to the second research question, we considered the organization sector as the organizational variable and the other variables such as gender, age, and organizational tenure as socio-demographic variables. In the correlations performed, these variables were included simultaneously with the elements that measure value congruence. Our results again supported value conflict as the element of value congruence that correlates in a significant and positive way with work stress ($\beta = 0.022$, $p < 0.05$). From the socio-demographic variables, the worker's gender was the variable that correlated significantly and negatively with work stress ($\beta_{\text{men}} = -0.424$, $p < 0.05$). The organization sector also correlated significantly and positively with work stress ($\beta_{\text{private}} = 0.293$, $p < 0.05$) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Correlation Between Individual Variables and Organizational Simultaneously With Work Stress Perception

	β	Std. error	t	p
Variables interception	2.491	0.335	7.443	0.000
Demographic variables				
Worker age	-0.011	0.008	-1.418	0.157
Working hours in the organization	0.012	0.008	1.609	0.109
Gender				
Men	-0.424	0.143	-2.967	0.003
Women	0 ^a			
Relation between personal values and organizational				
Value conflict	0.022	0.007	3.087	0.002
Value fit	0.004	0.008	0.488	0.626
Value recognition	-0.006	0.013	-0.447	0.655
Organizational variables				
Private sector	0.293	0.128	2.93	0.023
Public sector	0 ^a			

Note. A indicates parameters that obtained the value zero for redundancy.

The fact that the organization sector significantly correlated with work stress led us to determine the behavior of the relationships between work stress and value congruence for each sector, in order to verify if the behavior of these variables remained the same regardless of the company being public or private. In these calculations we also considered the demographic variables used—age, gender, and organizational tenure—since they are also important because of their relationship with work stress according to the results presented in Table 3.

Our results indicate a difference in the behavior of the relationship between stress and value congruence for each sector. In the case of the private sector organization, the only variable that demonstrated a significant and positive correlation with stress was value conflict ($\beta_{\text{conflict}} = 0.023$, $p < 0.05$). Whereas in the public sector, the variables that correlated with stress in a significant way were value conflict and worker's gender ($\beta_{\text{men}} = -0.441$, $p < 0.01$) (see Table 4).

Table 4

Correlation Between Stress Sources and Work Stress Perception (by Sectors)

	β	Std. error	t	p
Private sector				
Variables interception	2.440	0.477	5.120	0.000
Demographic variables				
Worker age	-0.013	0.011	-1.158	0.249
Working hours in the organization	0.009	0.011	0.848	0.398
Gender				
Men	-0.118	0.133	-0.887	0.377
Women	0 ^a			.
Relation between personal values and organizational				
Value conflict	0.023	0.010	2.316	0.022
Value fit	0.011	0.012	0.982	0.328
Value recognition	0.010	0.018	0.578	0.564
Public sector				
Variables interception	2.666	0.476	5.599	0.000
Demographic variables				
Worker age	-0.010	0.011	-0.875	0.383
Working hours in the organization	0.013	0.011	1.169	0.244
Gender				
Men	-0.441	0.160	-2.762	0.007
Women	0 ^a			
Relation between personal values and organizational				
Conflict values	0.022	0.010	2.198	0.030
Value fit	3.187E-005	0.012	0.003	0.998
Value recognition	-0.017	0.019	-0.907	0.366

Note. A indicates parameters that obtained the value zero for redundancy.

Discussion

From our results, we demonstrated that, on the one hand, there is a significant and positive relationship between work stress and value conflict as an element of value congruence; and on the other hand, that there are socio-demographic and organizational variables such as the workers' gender and the organization sector, which

also correlate significantly with work stress. These results are discussed as follows:

Work Stress and Its Relationship With Value Conflict

Our results indicate that the main element of value congruence that correlates in a significant and positive form with the experience of work stress is the conflict between personal and organizational values. This result was sustained for both private and public sector organizations when they were analyzed separately. The significant correlation found between work stress and value conflict verifies previous results obtained by Bouckennooghe et al. (2005) and Lamm et al. (2010), and in the case of the Portuguese context, by Morais (2011). However, we did not obtain significant correlations between work stress and value fit, or between work stress and organizational value recognition. For this reason, we support the idea held by Ramos et al. (2012) and Talbot and Billsberry (2011), which considers value conflict as an independent variable of fit because of its impact on the organization.

Even though value conflict, fit, and value recognition are independent variables according to their measurement and influence in the organizational dynamic (Ramos et al., 2012), we identified a significant correlation between these three variables. This allows us to identify that, in an indirect way, both fit and value recognition are connected with the experience of work stress. However, this takes into account the way in which work stress relates with value conflict in the studied context.

Work Stress and Its Relationship With the Organization Sector

Our results indicate that workers from the private sector experience work stress in a significantly stronger way than workers from the public sector. This result goes against results from previous research, especially those carried out in Portugal, which argue that the public sector is under more external demands, so the workers from this sector feel more stress than those from the public sector (Ferreira & Martinez, 2012). However, we should consider that the study by Ferreira and Martinez (2012) was carried out in an educational context, while the organizations in our research belong to the services sector. In this way, our investigation is new in the Portuguese context.

Our results coincide with those presented by Ben-Bakr, Al-Shammari, and Jefri (1995) in the Saudi context. For these authors, the reason that private organizations suffer more stress is due to the type of demands related with performance and the consequences of performance assessment when it comes to the salary system. Similar results were also obtained by Fernandes, Kumar, and Mekoth (2009) and Sankpal, Negi, and Vashishtha (2010), which were both studies carried out in India.

Work Stress and Its Relationship With Worker Gender

The correlations calculated between the gender and stress indicated that women experience work stress significantly more than men. These differences according to gender were verified in the case of public organization, but not for private, when the correlation calculations were performed by sector. Studies about stress and gender have not been conclusive, as some argue that men are more stressed, while other studies argue that women are more stressed. There is even a third group that argues that there is no difference between men and women in experiences of stress (Mazzola et al., 2011). The investigations that indicate that women are the ones suffering from more stress suggest that this is due to the existence of factors that exclusively affect the female gender, such as the presence of a double responsibility between work tasks and domestic tasks (Choi & Chen, 2006).

In the case of the differences in the relationship established between work stress and gender, taking into

account the organization sector, our results verify those found by Ramos and Jordão (2012) in the case of the private sector. These authors found that in the Portuguese private sector, there are no differences between men and women regarding experiences of work stress. The main differences between men and women were in the existence of stress sources and coping strategies that were typical for each gender. In the case of men, Ramos and Jordão (2012) identified a higher quantity of risk factors associated to the characteristics of the job station, while women indicated risk factors associated with the demands of personal and professional performance. For their part, men presented a significant use of emotional coping strategies, while women utilized strategies involving a positive reinterpretation of stressful events (Ramos & Jordão, 2012).

Our study also incorporates the public sector, where we find that women experience significantly more work stress than men. This behavior had similar results in the overall sample and has been explained previously.

Conclusions

In general, our research determined that value conflict is the element of value congruence that is significantly and positively related with work stress. In this sense, our study verifies the theories that postulate that value congruence is determined by several kinds of relationships. These relationships can be established among personal values and organizational values, where fit and conflict are types of relationships that do not have the same impact within the organizational context, since they are not opposites. For this reason, our investigation is relevant not only within the context where it was applied, but also as a comparison framework with research about value congruence and stress.

On the other hand, our results indicate the importance of considering the sector of the organization within studies about work stress. They also point to the importance of considering the worker's gender. Both variables have been revealed as significant in determining the experience of work stress.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Our study was conducted comparing workers from a public organization and a private one, and therefore, future studies should be extended to more organizations, to increase the sample of workers. At the same time, the form of application of the inventory in the public organization may have limited the number of responses, since the distribution was conducted through the organization's internal systems that already existed for this purpose, and was not done directly by the researchers.

Another crucial element that may contribute to a better comprehension of the causes and differences that were identified in our investigation is based in the measurement of stress sources and coping strategies, which will serve as suggestions for future investigations. This will allow for better understanding of what happens internally in organizations from the public and private sector, in order to justify the differences that exist between them.

Importance of the Study and Practical Implications

Despite the fact that some of our results verify previously performed studies, we consider that we have added a new perspective in the research about value congruence and stress. We have already indicated that in our research we were able to identify value conflict as the element of value congruence that significantly correlates with work stress. However, even though other research has already demonstrated this relationship, such as that by Bouckennooghe et al. (2005) and Lamm et al. (2010), the measurement of fit and conflict as

independent variables was not considered simultaneously, as it is in this case, which places our research at a superior level regarding the approach to the subject of value congruence.

Another relevant element of our research was the presence of the organization sector as significant for the study of work stress. In this sense, the importance of the context within the studies about this subject is present. For this reason, other research cannot generalize their results if they do not take into account that the studies were carried out within a specific culture, where the relationship systems are going to be determined by this culture.

Finally, we determined that the differences between organizations are not only caused by the sector to which they belong, but by demographic elements such as the gender of workers. This indicates that work stress is indeed a multi-causal phenomenon that cannot be restricted to the separate measurement of variables that act as sources of stress, but instead, there is a whole series of factors influencing this experience and that should be considered simultaneously. For these reasons, the present study works not only as a foundation for future investigations about the subject of congruence and work stress, but also as a source of arguments that validate the idea of independence in the measurement of conflict and value fit, as well as the complexity of studying work stress.

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