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## Empowering Engagement: The Role of Job Control in Moderates Faculty Disengagement from Workload Pressures

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### Abstract

*Faculty members face an extensive range of psychosocial stressors; education sector employees are at high risk of disengagement, which can affect their duties and performance. Evidence that specific individual characteristics moderate the detrimental effects of workload on employees' disengagement. The study concerns job control and workload concerning disengagement among faculty members in academic settings. Data was collected via an online survey of faculty from various educational institutions. For this purpose, 322 faculty members from the universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa completed self-administered questionnaires. In this work, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Self-Determination Theory have been employed to explore how autonomy, decision-making authority, or flexibility are perceived to affect faculty engagement and well-being. The study findings indicate significant relationships between workload, job control and disengagement; high levels of workload increase the level of disengagement, while high levels of job control decrease it. Multiple regression analyses revealed apparent moderating effects, demonstrating that job control is less likely to experience disengagement when confronted with workload. The study illustrates the moderating influence of job controls on the relationship between workload and disengagement. These observations highlight the need for organizational interventions to improve faculty's job control and lessen the negative effects of workload on involvement and well-being across colleges. The study also demonstrates the education sector's values in implementing management practices that encourage job control and provide employees with resources to reduce employee disengagement risk. In addition, the study provided limitations and recommendations for work environment policy measures.*

**Keywords:** Job Control, Workload, Disengagement, Faculty members.

## **1. Introduction**

In academic institutions, faculty members are the cornerstone of educational excellence, driving research, teaching, and service missions. However, the multifaceted nature of their roles often subjects them to substantial workload demands. These demands include teaching responsibilities, research obligations, administrative tasks, and service commitments, which can collectively contribute to heightened stress levels and decreased job satisfaction (Ugwu & Onyishi, 2020). Consequently, faculty disengagement, characterized by detachment, reduced enthusiasm, and diminished commitment to their work, has garnered significant attention in scholarly and institutional contexts. Burnout is an essential issue in the psychological literature that needs to be addressed (Khan, Gul, Gul, & Naz, 2022; Khan. et al., 2021). According to research, burnout can result in anxiety, depression, a decrease in self-esteem, substance abuse, decreased performance and increased health issues as a result of increased stress (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). As a result of the high level of stress at work, employees within the organization are at risk of health problems. In this technological world, the workplace environment is becoming more challenging and stressful (Madara & Baram, 2020). In general, stress arises among the employees due to a lack of skills and training required to meet the organization's demands, which will affect the performance and productivity of the individual and organization. Evidence that specific individual characteristics moderate the detrimental effects of heavy workload on employee disengagement. Employees are more likely to present stress symptoms (also called strains) related to workload, such as burnout, health problems, job dissatisfaction, and psychological distress. In addition to organizational disengagement, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover intention, psychological distress has received considerable attention (Khan., Rasli, Khan, Yasir, & Malik, 2014).

Understanding the factors influencing faculty engagement and disengagement is paramount for maintaining a productive and healthy academic workforce. Disengagement, also called cynicism, is an attempt to distance oneself from the job and clients by ignoring the job and clients' unique and engaging qualities (Khan, Khan, Naz, & Rasli, 2016; Peterson et al., 2008). Similarly, burnout, especially disengagement, is associated with high turnover rates and absenteeism. It is also related to relative workplace ineffectiveness, job dissatisfaction and commitment. Thus, it is essential to recognize disengagement-related organizational stressors to

encourage and facilitate strategies for preventing and reducing disengagement (Pereira et al., 2021).

Employee disengagement has consistently been linked to workload in various occupational settings, including academia. When individuals have an excessive workload, their resources are strained, and their sense of competence and control over their work environments is diminished. Furthermore, Work life has become increasingly characterized by organizational change, requiring organizational and personal changes (Khan, Zahra, Bilal, Sufyan, & Naz, 2021). Adverse employee outcomes from organizational change can be prevented despite unavoidable organizational change. Work environments that are supportive and provide autonomy may lead to more positive employee outcomes, and they may buffer negative consequences associated with change (Khan, Nisar, & Malik, 2020). Overburdened faculty members may exhibit stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Consequently, they are unable to perform their professional duties effectively. In other words, workplace burnout is considered a risk factor for workers' health and safety globally. A constantly changing environment in the education sector makes university working conditions increasingly demanding and stressful (Khan, Begum, Saeed, Hussain, & Naz, 2023). Similarly, workload's impact on faculty disengagement is well-documented, and the role of job controls in shaping this relationship remains relatively understudied within academic contexts. A job demands-resources model (JD-R) provides a helpful framework for conceptualizing the relationship between job demands, job resources, and employee health. As such, organizational changes come at a cost, requiring effort. A job resource that can be helpful to achieve work goals, reduce work costs, or enable personal development is support and control. Job control refers to individuals' autonomy, discretion, and decision-making authority in managing their work tasks and schedules (Vassos, Nankervis, Skerry, & Lante, 2019). As a result of their control over their work experiences, individuals may be protected from adverse effects on their workload, according to recent research in organizational psychology. However, how job control influences the relationship between workload and disengagement among faculty members remains an open question (Puolakanaho, Tolvanen, Kinnunen, & Lappalainen, 2020). Several research studies also show that employees with job control and autonomy can better deal with their job demands and reduce negative outcomes due to job control.

This research study addresses this gap in the literature by examining how job control moderates the relationship between workload and disengagement among faculty members. We seek to clarify the interplay between these variables to enhance faculty engagement and well-being in academic settings. Furthermore, these job resources may moderate the relationship between workload stressors and disengagement since they reduce the negative effects of disengagement on strain (Khan., Khan, Naz, & Khan, 2017). As a result of a comprehensive literature review, empirical analysis, and discussion of implications, this study contributes to the continuing discourse on employee engagement, organizational behavior, and workplace well-being.

## **2. Literature review**

In the literature, it has been well established that many stressors at work can result in burnout in the workplace, especially disengagement. Research on employee disengagement, workload, and job control provides valuable insight into the factors influencing faculty members' experiences in academic settings. In response to prolonged exposure to stressors, burnout occurs, resulting in emotional exhaustion (i.e., being depleted of your emotional resources), cynicism (having a negative, cynical attitude toward your job), and decreased professional efficacy (evaluating your work accomplishments negatively (Muda, Isa, Othman, Atim, & Wen, 2020). The literature further shows that disengagement is related to workload, etc. A critical review of theoretical frameworks and empirical research on these constructs is provided in this section, which lays the foundation for understanding their interrelationships.

Occupational stressors such as misfit between workers and their assigned jobs cause burnout. Therefore, burnout can be defined as chronic exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency. In the workplace, chronic stress is experienced as a prolonged response (Khan., Sufyan, Naz, & Bibi, 2020). In the current study, the researcher focuses on disengagement, which is the loss of enthusiasm and passion for one's work due to disengagement (Akdemir, 2019). An organization's workload refers to the number and intensity of tasks and responsibilities assigned to each employee. It is not uncommon for faculty members to have high workload demands in academic settings due to teaching commitments, research expectations, administrative duties, and service commitments (Khan et al., 2021). Besides these activities, the faculty also works with discipline meetings with parents and many other activities. According to research that consistently

demonstrates the association between workload and employee disengagement, increasing workload leads to increased stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction. According to Maslach et al. (2001) seminal study on job burnout, increased workload leads to emotional exhaustion, disengagement and reduced performance. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011), excessive workload negatively impacts teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to their profession. Several studies have shown education professionals face severe occupational stresses, including time pressure, low social support, a high workload, uncertainty regarding patient treatment, and an emotional reaction to dying and suffering patients.

Workload and disengagement correlate with job control conceptualized as individual autonomy, discretion, and decision-making authority. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) propose the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to mitigate burnout risk and promote employee engagement through job control. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), autonomous motivation and well-being are directly related to autonomy, competence, and relatedness. High job control levels give employees the freedom and flexibility to manage their work tasks and schedules. As a result, they can cope more effectively with workload pressures and maintain a sense of competence and agency.

Moreover, it provides empirical support for the moderating role of job control in the relationship between workload and disengagement across various occupational contexts. A meta-analysis by Van den Broeck et al. (2016) examined self-determination theory research and found that job autonomy significantly predicted job satisfaction, engagement, and well-being. Furthermore, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) found that teachers' perceptions of freedom and control over their work were negatively correlated with burnout (Khan, Yusoff, & Khan, 2014). According to Bakker., Demerouti, and Verbeke (2004), job resources, including job control, buffered the negative effects of workload on disengagement and emotional exhaustion among healthcare workers. However, within higher education, the specific role of job control in mitigating workload adverse effects on faculty disengagement remains relatively understudied (Puolakanaho et al., 2020). While existing research provides valuable insights into the individual effects of workload, job control, and disengagement, further investigation is needed to understand how these factors interact and influence faculty well-being and effectiveness in academic settings.

According to the literature review, workload, job control, and disengagement are essential factors in understanding faculty experiences in higher education. This study examines the moderating role of job control in the relationship between workload and disengagement among faculty members, drawing on theoretical frameworks such as the JD-R model and Self-Determination Theory.

### **3. Research Methodology**

Using a quantitative research approach, this study investigated job control as a moderating factor in the relationship between workload and disengagement among faculty members in academic settings. As part of the implementation process, this education sector underwent many changes. As a result, most employees, especially those in the teaching profession and community settings, faced numerous changes due to the widespread change. It is necessary to increase education and research on the resources and demands of the sector to improve educational levels. We collected survey data, developed instruments, recruited participants, and analyzed the results. The survey instrument measures workload (Khan, Khan, Malik, & Qureshi, 2017), job control, disengagement (Khan., Rasli, Yasir, & Khan, 2019; Pereira et al., 2021), and demographic information. A validated scale was adapted to ensure reliability and validity. Items were used to calculate the volume and intensity of various work-related responsibilities and tasks. The extent to which respondents perceived autonomy and authority in making decisions in their work environments was evaluated as part of the job control assessment. Feelings of detachment, reduced enthusiasm, and diminished commitment were used to measure disengagement. Response options were provided on Likert-type scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Using convenience sampling methods, participants were recruited from multiple academic institutions. An invitation to participate in the study and a link to the online survey was emailed to faculty members across diverse disciplines and departments. Online surveys were used to collect data, allowing participants to complete them at their convenience. Responses to the survey items were to be honest and accurate. The quality of the data was enhanced through attention checks and validation measures.

### **4. Data Analysis**

A statistical analysis investigated the relationship between workload, job control, and disengagement. Moreover, the moderating effect of job control on workload and disengagement

was examined. Using descriptive statistics, key variables and demographic characteristics were summarized. Correlations were used to assess the relationships between study variables to test the hypotheses regarding the moderating role of job control. The analysis controlled for potential confounding variables, such as gender, academic rank, and institution type.

Using a robust quantitative methodology, this study aimed to shed light on the relationship between workload, job control, and disengagement among faculty members in academic settings. Organizational policies and practices that promote faculty well-being and engagement in higher education institutions may benefit from this study.

**4.1 Findings of the study**

Workload, job control, and disengagement, along with the sample's demographic characteristics, are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Workload	3.61	0.81
Job Control	4.12	0.76
Disengagement	2.80	0.84
Male	0.48	
Female	0.52	-
Academic Rank		
Lecturer	<b>0.21</b>	
Assistant Prof	0.29	
Associate Prof	0.39	
Professor	0.31	
Institution Type		
Public	0.62	
Private	0.38	

Note: Workload, job control, and disengagement scores are based on Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

Workload, job control, and disengagement are correlated bivariate in Table 2. Based on Table 2, higher workload levels are associated with greater feelings of disengagement among faculty members ( $r = 0.42, p 0.01$ ). The relationship between perceived job control and disengagement is negatively correlated ( $r = -0.38, p 0.01$ ), suggesting a greater sense of control is associated with a lower level of disengagement. Additionally, faculty members with a higher level of job control tend to have lower workload levels ( $r = -0.30, p 0.01$ ).

**Table 2: Bivariate Correlations**

Variable	Workload	Job Control	Disengagement
<b>Workload</b>	1.00		
<b>Job Control</b>	-0.29*	1.00	
<b>Disengagement</b>	0.41*	-0.37*	1.00

\*\*p < 0.01

**Regression Analysis:**

Using regression analysis, job control was tested as a moderating factor in the relationship between workload and disengagement. Table 3 presents the results of the regression analysis.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis Results**

Predictor	Disengagement
<b>Constant</b>	2.32
<b>Workload</b>	0.49*
<b>Job Control</b>	-0.44*
<b>Workload*Job Control</b>	0.27*

\*p < 0.01

In our study, we found that both workload ( $\beta = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ) and job control ( $\beta = -0.45, p < 0.01$ ) are significant predictors of disengagement. A significant interaction term between workload and job control is also present in these results ( $-0.28, p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that job control moderates the relationship between workload and disengagement. A high level of perceived job control attenuates the positive relationship between workload and disengagement, suggesting that faculty members with a greater degree of perceived job control are less likely to suffer from disengagement despite a high workload level. The regression analysis results support the hypothesis that job control moderates the relationship between workload and disengagement among faculty members.

**5. Discussion and Conclusion**

A complex interplay between workload, job control, and disengagement among faculty members in academic settings is explored in this study. The results will be discussed along with theoretical contributions, practical implications, limitations, and future directions. Faculty members' disengagement is associated with workload, job control, and job control. Workload

levels were positively associated with disengagement, as found in previous research. It is clear from this that excessive workload harms faculty well-being and engagement (Khan, Rasli, & Zahra, 2020).

In contrast, faculty members with greater autonomy and decision-making authority experienced lower levels of disengagement. Research on Karasek and Theorell (1990) Demand-Control model has shown that low control is generally associated with adverse work outcomes (including high burnout). It is important to note that job control moderated the relationship between workload and disengagement. In other words, faculty members with significant job control seem less vulnerable to the negative impact of workload on their engagement.

In line with theoretical frameworks such as Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) and Self-Determination (Hakanena, Schaufelb, & Aholaa, 2008) Theory, this study emphasizes the importance of job resources, including job control, in buffering the negative consequences of job demands on employee engagement and well-being. Accordingly, this idea may be elaborated in the context of burnout. Employees with jobs with little control (a vital resource) will be subject to high stress and strain, leading to emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, Using the Conservation of Resources model, job control was hypothesized to be more related to disengagement than emotional exhaustion. A job that offers low resources, e.g., control, may cause disengagement as a means of coping. This study extends our understanding of employee engagement in academic settings by showing that job control moderates the relationship between workload and disengagement among faculty members. Furthermore, the results highlight the relevance of self-determination theory in explaining how autonomy and decision-making authority affect intrinsic motivation and well-being.

In light of this study's findings, institutions should implement strategies to manage and distribute workload more effectively to reduce faculty disengagement. Policies and practices that empower faculty with increased autonomy, decision-making authority, and flexibility can also protect against disengagement. Providing opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and participatory decision-making can create an engaged and satisfied work environment.

Despite the study's contributions, causal inference cannot be drawn from the cross-sectional nature of the data, and longitudinal studies are needed to establish temporal relationships between the variables. Secondly, self-report measures may be affected by common

method biases and social desirability biases. In the future, research could use multi-method approaches, including objective workload assessments and observational measures, to enhance the validity of findings. Further research should examine contextual factors influencing faculty engagement and disengagement, such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and support systems. This study focused on individual-level factors.

The results of this study suggest that job control modifies the relationship between workload and disengagement among academic faculty members. The findings suggest that faculty job control can mitigate the negative effects of workload on engagement and well-being. Educational institutions can create supportive work environments that foster faculty satisfaction, productivity, and effectiveness through autonomy, decision-making authority, and flexibility. In higher education, addressing the interrelationship between workload, job control, and disengagement is essential to enhance faculty well-being and institutional effectiveness.

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