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**Role stressors, participative control, and subjective fit with organisational values:  
Main and moderating effects on employee outcomes**

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Running head: Subjective fit with organizational values

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**Role stressors, participative control, and subjective fit with organisational values:  
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**ABSTRACT**

Research investigating Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control Model (D-CM) has produced mixed results relating to the stress-buffering effects of job decision latitude, or job control, on employee adjustment. Cited reasons for these mixed results include the way control is operationalised and also the potential effects of secondary moderators in the relationship among job demand, job control, and employee adjustment. Towards addressing these issues, the present study assessed the secondary moderating effects of subjective fit with organisational culture and values in the D-CM. Participation in decision-making was used as the measure of job control. Moderated multiple regression analyses revealed three significant interactions in a sample of 119 employees. The results revealed a three-way interaction between role overload, participative control, and subjective fit on physiological symptoms and psychological health. Further analyses demonstrated a significant interaction between role conflict, participative control, and subjective fit on intentions to leave. In all interactions, participative control buffered the negative effects of the stressors on levels of employee adjustment only when employees' subjective fit with the organisational values was high. The theoretical importance and practical implications of the results are discussed.

*Key words: work stressors, participative control, subjective fit, stress-buffering, organisational values, employee adjustment*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Research investigating the work stressor-employee adjustment relationship has described many negative main effects between perceived stressors in the workplace and employee outcomes. Further, a significant body of research has highlighted the potential positive effects of perceptions of control in the workplace on this relationship in terms of buffering, or reducing, the negative effects of work stressors on employee adjustment. There remain, however, several gaps in this body of literature. For instance, the effect of participative control (e.g., participation in decision-making) in the work stressor-employee adjustment relationship remains under-investigated. In addition, researchers are yet to investigate the potential effects of organisational values and how employees perceive that they fit with those values on the effectiveness of participative control to act as a buffer of strain in the workplace. This study seeks to address these research caveats.

### **Work Stressors and Employee Adjustment**

The occupational stress literature has investigated the potential negative impact of work stressors on employee health, attitudes, and behaviours. Sources of strain related to the role performed at work have, in particular, attracted a great deal of attention. There are a considerable number of empirical studies that have investigated role stressors and employee outcomes, along with several meta-analytic reviews (see Abramis 1994; Jackson & Schuler 1985; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal 1964). Most recently, Ortqvist and Wincent (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of 295 studies that involved role ambiguity (uncertainty about what is required to perform a role), role conflict (conflicting information about the same role or job), and role overload (too much work to complete) and their effects on employee outcomes. Generally consistent with conclusions in existing occupational stress research, role ambiguity was related to increased tension and indicators of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment) and less favourable

levels of job-related attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and propensity to quit). Role conflict also was related to higher levels of emotional exhaustion and lower job-related attitudes. Lastly, role overload was related to higher tension, exhaustion, depersonalisation, and propensity to quit, as well as reduced commitment to the organisation.

### **The Demand-Control Model**

Thus, many researchers have embarked on the study of potential moderators of the negative effects of role stressors on employee outcomes. The notion of personal control at work has been extensively studied as a moderator of the stressor-strain relationship. Indeed, Tannenbaum (1962) noted that personal control is a central concern for employees, arguing that organisational members generally prefer exercising influence to being powerless. In the work context, the personal control construct has been depicted by Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control Model (D-CM). The D-CM specifies two constructs (i.e., job demands and job decision latitude or control) that can vary in a workplace setting. In this model, job demands refer to psychological stressors in the workplace, whereas job decision latitude refers to the extent that employees can control their tasks and conduct each working day. Essentially, the D-CM highlights an interactive effect such that control over daily tasks and conduct ameliorates the negative impact of high job demands on levels of employee adjustment. That is, the negative impact of the stressor on employee adjustment is buffered by high decision latitude (or control).

Overall, a number of reviews, meta-analyses, and independent studies have been conducted to examine the large number of findings in relation to the moderating role of job control in the work stressor-employee adjustment relationship (e.g., deLange, Tarris, Kompier, Houtman & Bongers 2003; Terry & Jimmieson 1999; Theorell & Karasek 1996; van der Doef & Maes 1999). Generally, these research efforts have concluded that there is

mixed or limited support for the stress-buffering role of control in the workplace. For instance, van der Doef and Maes (1999) reviewed 86 studies from 63 samples published between 1979 and 1997 that investigated hypotheses relating to job control as a moderator in the prediction of psychological well-being. Of the studies reviewed in this instance, only 26 supported the buffering role of job control in the work stressor-employee adjustment process. Thus, the results are not entirely consistent in the demonstration of proposed buffering effects of job control in the experience of employee strain. However, it must be noted that deLange et al.'s (2003) meta-analysis of high-quality longitudinal studies investigating the D-CM found some support for the lagged effects of the interactive nature of these work characteristics, particularly in relation to health outcomes (e.g., cardiovascular health).

From another perspective, it has been suggested that the mixed results in relation to the D-CM might be due to further additional factors that might influence the model. Subsequently, research has sought to determine variables that might act as secondary moderators to job control in the work stressor-strain relationship. As such, these studies investigate whether the negative effects of stressors on employee adjustment are mitigated under high job control conditions and high (or low) conditions of a second moderator variable. Research has found secondary moderating effects for a range of job-related characteristics. In particular, Karasek and Theorell (1990) found social support to be a secondary moderator of the D-CM. Further, a variety of individual difference variables such as self-efficacy (e.g., Jimmieson 2000) and locus of control (e.g., Rodriguez, Bravo, Peiro & Schaufeli 2001) also have been found to moderate the buffering effect of job decision latitude. This research has presented empirical evidence supporting the notion that the Demand X Control interaction can be moderated by other job-related and individual variables. Researchers thus far, however, are yet to extend our knowledge relating to secondary moderators of the D-CM that incorporate the role of organisational values and how

they influence employees' reactions to job demands and control opportunities at work. As such, there is a need to investigate the buffering potential of the value-based characteristics of the organisation. In this study, the role of subjective fit with organisational values and goals is examined.

One particular aspect of studies testing the D-CM is related to the operationalisation of job decision latitude or control. Early researchers in job control have tended to view control as a unidimensional construct and have, therefore, developed global measures of this construct (see Ganster 1989). Job control is, however, a multidimensional construct, to the extent that employees can establish a sense of personal control over multiple facets of their occupational environment. As a result, different studies have used a wide variety of constructs and combinations of constructs to assess job control, including skill discretion and job-level decision-making authority (Karasek 1979), task and method control (Wall, Jackson, Mullarkry & Parker 1996), skill and variety (Alfredsson, Karasek & Theorell 1982), behavioural control (Jimmieson 2000), and, to a lesser extent, participation in decision-making (Baker, Israel & Schurman 1996). What is unclear, however, is whether inconsistency in the results of various studies testing the D-CM is due to problems inherent in the model or if the results indicate that different operationalisations of job control have a different relationship to job demands and employee adjustment (van der Doef & Maes 1999). For instance, Baker et al. found that decision authority, skill and variety, and pacing control were differentially associated with health and job satisfaction. Ganster (1989) argued that the failure of researchers to adopt a multidimensional view of job control may account for the weak and inconsistent findings concerning Karasek's (1979) D-CM. One particular aspect of job control that has been less researched in the context of the D-CM is related to participation in decision-making at work.

### **Participative Control**

Research relating to employee participation in decision-making (PDM; e.g., Locke & Schweiger 1979) is generally based on the assumption that employee PDM is associated with more favourable work outcomes. Traditionally, the employee participation construct has been defined as the amount of involvement employees have in the decision-making processes of the organisation. However, workplace interventions designed to increase levels of employee participation have taken a variety of forms. For instance, Cotton, Vollrath, Froggatt, Lengnick-Hall, and Jennings (1988) noted that participative management techniques have included short-term decision-making exercises in relation to specific workplace issues, involvement in the redesign of work that affords increased levels of decision-making power, the introduction of on-going consultative programs (e.g., quality circles), less formal decision-making processes between managers and employees, representation on managerial committees, and employee ownership (i.e., profit-sharing).

Overall, several reviews of this literature have concluded that employee PDM, in general, is positively associated with employee motivation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and to a lesser extent, job performance (e.g., Cotton et al. 1988; Ganster 1989; Ganster & Fusilier 1989; Pearson & Duffy 1999). Empirical evidence attesting to the importance of employee participation during times of organisational change also has spanned several decades of research. For instance, Korunka, Weiss, Huemer, and Karetta (1995) found that employees who perceived high levels of participation during the implementation of new technologies in their workplace reported lower levels of psychosomatic health complaints and job dissatisfaction than those employees who perceived low levels of involvement in the change process. Similarly, Sagie and Koslowsky (1994) also found that employee participation in decisions concerning the organisational change process (e.g., mode of implementation) was related to a variety of positive change outcomes, including work satisfaction (see also Sagie & Koslowsky 1996).



While research has documented positive effects of participation for employees and organisations, it is important to note that some researchers have highlighted situations in which the benefits of PDM may not be evident. In a response to Wagner's (1994) meta-analysis of PDM, Sagie (1995) noted that while participatory programs can lead to improved satisfaction or performance, PDM also can lower satisfaction and reduce performance. Additionally, cognitive models of participative effects (that assume PDM is effective because it enhances information flow) identify that positive effects of PDM are based on issues that employees have knowledgeable about and are interested in. Contingency models of participation effects also are relevant and are based on the idea that these effects will differ as a function of the person and the situation. In particular, this perspective proposes that a range of contextual or situational variables (e.g., job levels, relationships between supervisors and employees, and organisational values) can differentially alter the potential effectiveness of promoting PDM in the workplace. Indeed, Hulin (1971) and Singer (1974) suggested that values could moderate the relationship between participation and outcomes for employees. This proposition is based on the notion that some workers may not value participation, suggesting that the positive effects of participation may only be seen for those workers who hold similar or congruent values with those of the organisation.

Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall (1992), in a discussion of PDM, similarly noted that effective PDM for employees is premised on trust and presumes mutual self-interest. As such, these authors highlight that the value of PDM in enhancing job satisfaction and organisational commitment may be limited by the extent that employee and organisational goals are congruent. This notion is reflected in the findings of Wright (1990) who found that job satisfaction and organisational commitment were enhanced by PDM for employees seeking a career in that organisation but not for those describing themselves as non-career oriented. Overall, the research indicates that PDM or participative control may be effective;

however, the degree of effect could, in some way, be impacted by the degree of fit between the organisation and the individual employee.

### **Subjective Fit with Organisational Culture and Values**

Organisational culture has been defined as a multi-layered phenomenon comprising three different levels – assumptions, values, and artefacts (Schein 1985). The essence of culture is the set of basic assumptions that people share, regarding such things as relationships that develop from the process of resolving internal and external problems. Values are defined as enduring beliefs that embody and lead towards desired modes of conduct or end-states of existence. Lastly, artefacts are more concrete representations of an organisation's culture including the architecture, décor, dress code, explicit communications (such as mission statements, memos, and slogans), and implicit communications (such as rites, rituals, and ceremonies; Deal 1985; Sathe 1983). Different organisational cultures have been linked to different organisational performance (e.g., Cameron & Freeman 1991; Teo, Ahmad & Rodwell 2003) and employee-related well-being outcomes (e.g., Pool 2000).

An aspect of organisational culture that also has received considerable research attention is the degree to which employees fit with the values related to that culture and its impact on employee and organisational outcomes. Compatibility between a person and an organisation has been theoretically defined in a number of ways. For instance, complementary fit exists when characteristics of the employee complement or 'make whole' the organisation (Muchinsky & Monahan 1987). Supplementary fit refers to the closeness of the characteristics of the organisation and its employees (Kristof 1996). Fit has been operationalised in different ways. Verquer, Beehr, and Wagner (2003) identified three different operational definitions or variations of fit. First, objective fit involves the individuals describing self-characteristics followed by an independent person rating the organisation on those characteristics, with the fit value constructed from the two ratings.

Second, perceived value congruence indirectly asks individuals to rate themselves and the organisation on like dimensions with the fit (or more appropriately, value congruence) measure constructed from the two ratings. Last, subjective fit (a focal variable of this study) directly measures how well employees believe their own characteristics match those of the organisation (Cable & DeRue 2002). It has been argued that an individual's perceptions of fit may be more important than more objective and indirect measures (see Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson 2005). If an individual believes they do or do not share similar values, this may be all that is necessary to influence affective and behavioural outcomes. Moreover, subjective fit with organisational values represents a contextual characteristic emanating from the organisation that could potentially influence the stress-buffering properties of job control in the prediction of employee adjustment.

Overall, there is a considerable body of research finding consistent positive effects of perceptions of subjective fit on employee adjustment. With respect to employee job-related attitudes in particular, research has found perceptions of high subjective fit to positively predict job satisfaction (Cable & Judge 1996; Verquer 2002), satisfaction with the work environment (Kristof-Brown, Jansen & Colbert 2002), and organisational commitment (Cable & Judge 1996; Verquer 2002). Furthermore, low subjective fit has been associated with higher turnover intentions (Cable & DeRue 2002; Cable & Judge 1996; Lutrick & Moriarty 2002; Verquer 2002). Attesting to the wider potential impact of a perceived match with the organisation, subjective fit also has been found to positively predict employee ratings of perceived organisational support, organisational identification, and citizenship behaviours (Cable & DeRue 2002).

Irrespective of the operationalisation of fit or value congruence, a number of points can be noted regarding the underlying process of fit research which suggest a potential moderating effect in the work stressor-employee adjustment relationship. Indeed, person-

organisation values fit and congruence research is fundamentally embedded in the interaction between the person (employee) and the situation (organisation) and is based on Lewin's (1951) proposition that behaviour is a function of the person and the environment. In essence, interactional theorists argue that people affect situations and also that situations affect people. For example, a cooperative person would be most cooperative in a cooperative environment, and further, this person might also be competitive if in a competitive environment. Conversely, in the case of a mismatch (e.g., a cooperative person in a competitive environment), an environment might take on more cooperative elements as a result of the person's presence (see Chatman 1989, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell 1991). This theoretical position has implications for the present study.

### **Subjective Fit as a Moderator in the D-CM**

The interactional unpinning of person-organisation fit and congruence theory also has implications for the work stressor-employee adjustment relationship. Indeed, the degree of fit or match between the person and the environment acts to influence attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, particularly in the context of the stressor-strain process. Where a person does not place importance in the values that are ascribed importance by the environment (e.g., the organisation), it is possible that this environment may represent a source of both stressors and strains to the person (employee). On the other hand, where the person and the environment ascribe importance to similar cultural values and norms, it is possible that this fit will act as a buffer to potential stressors that may be characteristic of that environment. In this respect, a number of studies employing polynomial regression analyses have found value incongruence to be associated with lower job-related attitudes and value congruence (characterised by similarly high organisation and high employee values) to be related to higher job-related attitudes (e.g., Kalliath, Bluedorn & Strube 1999; Ostroff, Shin & Kinicki 2005). Further, this research also shows that an excess of organisation values over

person value rating (and vice versa) is associated with lower employee adjustment. As such, this literature indicates that a fit between the organisation and employee may act to buffer the potential negative relationship between work stressors and employee adjustment.

Sense of belonging and organisational identification research also can be applied to the development of the proposed stress-buffering role of subjective fit. First, the sense of belonging literature is relevant to the current study as components of the definition of a 'sense of belonging' include a valued involvement (or feeling of being valued), and 'a fit or the person's perception that their characteristics articulate with or complement the system or environment' (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema & Collier 1992: 173). This definition has similar characteristics to subjective fit in that it is partially about values and a match of the person to the environment. Indeed, Sargent, Williams, Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, and Hoyle (2002) investigated the potential stress-buffering effect of a sense of belonging with navy recruits and found that high levels of a sense of belonging had a significant buffering effect on the effects of 'new recruit stress' on depressive symptoms for both depressed and non-depressed recruits with a family history of alcohol abuse.

Furthermore, organisational identification captures the extent that individuals define themselves as members of a particular organisation (Haslam, Postmes & Ellemers 2003). Subjective fit similarly captures the degree that employee and organisational goals and values are similar. To this extent, identification literature can assist in the development of expectations relating to a potential buffering effect of subjective fit in the work stressor-employee adjustment relationship. For instance, Witt, Patti, and Farmer (2002) investigated the moderating influence of occupational and organisational identification on the relationship between organisational politics (a potential stressor; Vigoda 2002) and organisational commitment (an indicator of employee adjustment). The results revealed that perceptions of politics were less adverse on commitment levels among workers who identified primarily

with their occupations. From another perspective, Haslam, Jetten, O'Brien, and Jacobs (2004) found that informational support for participants completing a demanding work task in an experimental setting was effective in reducing perceived stress when the social identities of the source of the information and the perceiver were congruent. Overall, these results are informative in terms of the current research question in that both a sense of belonging and organisational identification (which have similarities to subjective fit with organisational values) have been found to moderate (and buffer) the negative effects of stressors on employee adjustment.

### **The Present Study**

Overall, literature has been presented that places doubt on the broad-sweeping positive effects of participative control in the workplace, particularly if the employee does not hold similar values to the organisation. In conjunction with the underlying processes of person-environment fit theory, it is, therefore, plausible that providing employees with participative control in an environment that places importance in employees having such control will collectively act to reduce the negative effects of stressors in the workplace. Moreover, not having participative control in an environment in which one perceives they fit may have deleterious effects on the ability of employees to cope with workplace stressors. In light of the research suggesting a potential stress-buffering effect of fit, the present study sought to investigate the moderating potential of subjective fit with organisational values in the context of the D-CM. Given previous research, the following main effects hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Role stressors will be related to lower levels of employee adjustment (i.e., job-related attitudes and employee health).

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Participative control will be related to higher levels of employee adjustment (i.e., job-related attitudes and employee health).

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Subjective fit will be related to higher levels of employee adjustment (i.e., job-related attitudes and employee health). With respect to two-way interactions, it is expected that subjective fit with organisational values will independently moderate role stressors and participative control.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Higher subjective fit will buffer or ameliorate the negative effects of high role stressors on employee adjustment (i.e., job-related attitudes and employee health).

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The positive effects of participative control on employee adjustment (i.e., i.e., job-related attitudes and employee health) will be more marked when employees perceive higher subjective fit with organisational values.

Because the potential of participative control as a moderator of the work stressor-employee adjustment relationship is contentious, a stress-buffering role is not anticipated at the two-way interaction level. Rather, a significant three-way interaction is predicted, whereby the stress-buffering role of participative control is only expected when employees perceive high levels of subjective fit with the organisational values.

Hypothesis 6 (H6). Participative control will buffer the negative effects of role stressors on employee adjustment at high levels of subjective fit with organisational values but not at low levels of subjective fit with organisational values.

To test these hypotheses, role stressors included role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload; participative control was assessed based on employee participation in the work unit and opportunity for job-related decision-making (and is referred to as participative control); and employee adjustment was assessed based on job-related attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction and intentions to leave) and employee health (i.e., psychological health and physiological symptoms). Spector (2006) posits that a way to help minimise common method variance is to statistically control for theoretically-relevant constructs in the analyses. As Watson and

Pennebaker (1989) reported that negative affectivity can potentially act as a 'nuisance' variable, especially in cross-sectional stress research (see also Williams, Cote & Buckley 1989), negative affectivity was included as a control variable in this study.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

One hundred and eighty surveys were distributed across an Australian Local Government Council with 119 responses (response rate = 66%). Fifty-seven percent of the respondents were male and 43% were female, with 83% employed on a permanent full-time basis. Overall, participants ages ranged from 17 to 61 years old ( $M = 38.37$ ,  $SD = 12.01$ ). Twenty-eight percent reported completing high school and a further 21% were degree qualified. Tenure ranged from 1 month to 35 years ( $M = 7.32$  years,  $SD = 6.50$  years).

### **Procedure**

Employees were informed that a survey was taking place one month prior to distribution. The researcher visited and spoke directly to supervisors and employees about the survey within the month preceding its distribution. Reminders (via electronic mail) were sent to all employees encouraging participation in the survey prior to distribution, and one week into the 2-week survey period. Employees received their questionnaire in an unmarked envelope containing the survey, an information sheet, and a reply-paid envelope. Upon completion, and to ensure confidentiality, employees returned the survey in the reply- paid envelope directly to the researcher. Ethical clearance was obtained from The University of Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee.

### **Measures**

**Role conflict.** Perceptions of role conflict were measured using Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, and Pinneau's (1980) 3-item scale (e.g., 'People in equal rank and authority over



you ask you to do things which conflict'). Responses were rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*all the time*).

**Role ambiguity.** Perceptions of role ambiguity were measured using Caplan et al.'s (1980) 4-item scale (e.g., 'I am often clear about what my job responsibilities are'). Responses were rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*all the time*).

**Role overload.** Perceptions of role overload were measured by using a slightly modified version of Caplan et al.'s (1980) 4-item scale that included 'my job requires me to work very fast'. Responses were rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*all the time*).

**Participative control.** Levels of participative control were measured using four items from previously developed participative control scales (e.g., Dwyer & Ganster 1991; Pearson & Chong 1997). These items were chosen to reflect participation in decision-making at work (e.g., to what extent do you have the opportunity to take part in job-related decisions?). Each item was responded to on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*very little*) to 5 (*very much*).

**Subjective fit.** Perceptions of subjective fit were assessed using Cable and DeRue's (2002) 3-item subjective fit scale. Items in this scale included 'the things I value in life are very similar to the things that (my organisation) values'. Respondents rated items from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction was measured with three items adapted from Caplan et al. (1980). An example item was 'overall, I am satisfied with my job'. Responses endpoints ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

**Intentions to leave.** Intentions to leave were assessed using a 3-item scale (e.g., 'I seriously intend to transfer to another job in the near future'). Responses were rated from 1 (*definitely not*) to 5 (*definitely yes*).

**Psychological health.** Perceptions of psychological well-being were assessed using the 12-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg 1972). Respondents rated

their health over the last few weeks on a 4-point scale (e.g., have you been able to enjoy your day-to-day activities?) rated as 1 (*much less than usual*), 2 (*same as usual*), 3 (*slightly more than usual*), or 4 (*much more than usual*). Using Goldberg and Williams' (1988) scoring technique, items receiving a rating of 1 and 2 were recoded to 0, and ratings of 3 and 4 were recoded to 1. Six negatively worded items were recoded (0 to 1, and 1 to 0). The global score was subsequently obtained by summing all items, resulting in a continuous scale with a potential range of 0 to 12.

**Physiological symptoms.** Self-reports of physiological illness were assessed using a scale developed by Caplan et al.(1980). The 10-item scale asked respondents to indicate physiological symptoms in the last month (e.g., you had trouble sleeping at night). Respondents rated items on a 3-point scale including 1 (*never*), 2 (*once or twice*), and 3 (*more than three times*).

**Negative affectivity.** Negative affectivity was assessed using an 11-item scale developed by Agho, Price, and Mueller (1992) with items including 'I am too sensitive for my own good'. Items were rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*all the time*).

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Data Analysis

Descriptive data (means and standard deviations), inter-correlations, and Cronbach (1951) alpha coefficients for the focal variables are displayed in Table 1. Overall, most correlations were low to moderate, indicating that multicollinearity was not a serious threat to the analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Coefficients for internal consistency were all above the accepted threshold ( $\alpha > .70$ ). As age significantly correlated with participative control ( $r = .22, p < .05$ ) and intentions to leave ( $r = -.28, p < .05$ ) it was included as a covariate in the subsequent analyses (along with negative affectivity). *T*-tests revealed no difference among the focal variables as a function of gender.

**[Insert Table 1 about here]**

### **Main Effects**

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to investigate the main effects hypotheses (H1, H2, & H3: Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken 2003). Role stressors (i.e., role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload) were entered on Step 2 (after the effects of age and negative affectivity were partialled out at Step 1). Supporting H1, role stressors accounted for explained variance on job satisfaction ( $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .18, F(3,110) = 8.86, p < .001$ ), intentions to leave ( $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .09, F(3,112) = 4.30, p < .05$ ) and physiological symptoms ( $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .06, F(3,111) = 3.55, p < .05$ ). Entry of role stressors as a set neared significance in the prediction of psychological health ( $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .05, F(3,111) = 2.35, p = .08$ ). Role conflict was negatively related to job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.23, p < .05$ ) and positively related to intentions to leave ( $\beta = .23, p < .05$ ). Role overload was positively related to job satisfaction ( $\beta = .33, p < .001$ ) and negatively related to psychological health ( $\beta = -.39, p < .05$ ).

In a separate analysis, participative control was entered on Step 2 (after age and negative affectivity were entered at Step 1). Providing only partial support for H2, participative control significantly accounted for explained variance in the job satisfaction scores ( $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .19, F(1,112) = 27.96, p < .001$ ), with participative control positively related to this outcome variable ( $\beta = .41, p < .001$ ). Participative control did not significantly predict intentions to leave or the two indicators of employee health. Partially supporting H3, entry of subjective fit on Step 2 (after control of age and negative affectivity) accounted for a significant increment on variance on job satisfaction ( $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .25, F(1,110) = 41.48, p < .001$ ) and intentions to leave ( $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .11, F(1,112) = 15.28, p < .001$ ). Subjective fit positively predicted job satisfaction ( $\beta = .55, p < .001$ ) and negatively predicted intentions to leave ( $\beta = -.42, p < .001$ ). However, subjective fit did not significantly predict employee health.

## Interactive Effects

To test hypotheses relating to the proposed interactive effects (H4, H5, & H6), a second series of separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted. Predictor variables were mean-centered in order to circumvent problems relating to multicollinearity between the main effects and the interaction terms (see Aiken & West 1991). Control variables (age and negative affectivity) were entered on Step 1 and main effects entered at Step 2. In each analysis, two-way interaction terms were entered on Step 3 and three-way interaction terms were entered on Step 4 (see Table 2).

**[Insert Table 2 about here]**

*Two-way interactive effects.* Entry of the two-way interaction terms at Step 3 revealed a significant two-way interaction between role conflict and subjective fit on psychological health ( $\beta = -.36, p < .01, R^2 \text{ ch.} = .10, F(3,106) = 5.03, p < .01$ ). In addition, there also was a significant interaction of participative control and subjective fit on job satisfaction regardless of which stressor was in the equation (see Table 2). These interactions were plotted at one standard deviation above and below the mean (see Aiken & West 1991). Contrary to H4, simple slopes analysis revealed that the negative main effects of role conflict on psychological health were more marked for those perceiving high fit ( $\beta = -.52, t(106) = -2.71, p < .01$ ) whereas role conflict did not significantly impact on levels of psychological health for those perceiving low fit ( $\beta = .19, t(106) = 1.28, ns$ : see Figure 1). The interactions of subjective fit and participative control on job satisfaction in the analyses also revealed mixed results, only providing partial support for H5. Figure 2 shows that while job satisfaction increased for those perceiving both high participative control and subjective fit with organisational values, this effect was not significant ( $\beta = .10, t(106) = .89, ns$ ). Furthermore, the positive main effects of participative control on job satisfaction were more marked for those perceiving low subjective fit ( $\beta = .40, t(106) = 4.14, p < .001$ ).

**[Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here]**

*Three-way interactive effects.* Analyses revealed three significant three-way interactions where subjective fit moderated the effect of the Role Stressor X Participative Control interaction on levels of employee adjustment. Specifically, there was a three-way interaction between role conflict, participative control, and subjective fit on intentions to leave ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .03$ ,  $F(1,106) = 4.49$ ,  $p < .05$ : see Figure 3). The results also revealed a significant three-way interaction between role overload, participative control, and subjective fit on psychological health ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .04$ ,  $F(1,105) = 6.42$ ,  $p < .05$ : see Figure 4) and physiological symptoms ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $R^2 \text{ ch.} = .03$ ,  $F(1,105) = 4.73$ ,  $p = .05$ : see Figure 5). Consistent with Hypothesis 6, the significant two-way effect between the role stressor variables and participative control on each of the relevant outcome variables was found to be occurring at high, and not low, levels of subjective fit

In support of H6, when perceptions of fit were high, employees who perceived that they had participative control were protected from the positive effects of role conflict on intentions to leave ( $\beta = .01$ ,  $t(108) = .11$ , *ns*: see Figure 3). Similarly, participative control buffered the negative effects of role overload on psychological health ( $\beta = -.29$ ,  $t(108) = -1.22$ , *ns*: see Figure 4) and the positive effects of role overload on physiological symptoms ( $\beta = .05$ ,  $t(107) = 1.09$ , *ns*: see Figure 5). Thus, it can be concluded that support for the D-CM (i.e., in terms of the stress-buffering effects of participative control) occurs only when employees feel that they fit with their organisation.

The simple slopes analyses also revealed, in line with H6 (and the strain hypothesis of the D-CM), that the main effects of the role stressors on these outcome variables was greater for those with low participative control. In this respect, role conflict exerted a positive main effect on turnover intentions when participative control opportunities were perceived as low ( $\beta = .29$ ,  $t(108) = 2.06$ ,  $p < .05$ : see Figure 3). Similarly, role overload exerted a negative

main effect on psychological health ( $\beta = -1.25$ ,  $t(107) = -3.38$ ,  $p < .01$ : see Figure 4), and a positive main effect on physiological symptoms ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $t(107) = 2.75$ ,  $p < .01$ : see Figure 5), for low-participative control employees. Given that these effects were occurring only at high levels of subjective fit with the organisation, it would suggest that participative control is a vital resource in coping with stressors in the workplace, but in light of these findings, suggests that a combination of both resources is the most helpful.

**[Insert Figures 3, 4, and 5 about here]**

## **DISCUSSION**

Inspection of the main effects reveals several discussion points. First, partially supporting H1 and in line with previous research, analyses revealed that higher perceptions of role stressors were significantly related to lower job satisfaction. While role overload was negatively related to psychological health, this was the only significant relationship of role stressors on psychological or physiological assessments of employee health. Interestingly, role overload for this sample was significantly positively related to job satisfaction. A potential explanation for this result is offered by Lepine, Podsakoff, and Lepine (2005). These authors describe hindrance stressors (e.g., constraints and resource inadequacy) and challenge stressors (e.g., role demands, pressure, and urgency) and found that challenge stressors were negatively associated with employee strain and positively related to motivation. Partially supporting H2, participative control was positively related to job satisfaction; however, the main effects on intentions to leave and employee health were not significant. Also partially supporting H3, subjective fit was related to more favourable job satisfaction and lower intentions to leave, although main effects were not present on employee health. The results for H2 and H3 indicate that main effects of participative control and subjective fit are more influential for job-related attitudes than employee health.

Inspection of the two-way interactions revealed several unexpected results. First, and failing to support H4, low, rather than high, levels of subjective fit were found to buffer the negative effects of role conflict on psychological health. The results also suggested that high levels of perceived fit exacerbated the negative effects of role conflict on psychological well-being. In light of this finding, it should be noted that some identity theorists have reported that the impact of stressors on employee adjustment can be exacerbated when it threatens identities that are important to an individual's self-definition (see Chang 2003; Marcussen, Ritter & Safron 2004). The negative impact of a stressor for those reporting high subjective fit suggests that these employees may have been required to expend more mental energy in dealing with this threat to both themselves and the organisation. Conversely, this finding also implies that those reporting low subjective fit were unaffected by role conflict and, therefore, did not expend mental effort in attending to the threat. It is possible that these employees may have experienced no threat to their identity as their identity (consisting of values) was not highly linked to the values of the organisation.

Second, the results also revealed a significant two-way interaction between participative control and subjective fit on levels of job satisfaction. Providing only partial support for H5, the results revealed that job satisfaction increased for those employees perceiving high levels of both participative control and subjective fit, but this trend was not significant. However, failing to support H5, the positive effect of greater involvement in work-related decisions on job satisfaction was more far marked for those perceiving low subjective fit with the organisational values, implying that opportunities to be more involved in decision-making is of particular importance to those employees who may feel unconnected to the values of the organisation.. Overall, these results provide support for the suggestion that subjective fit has a role to play in the work stressor-employee adjustment relationship. The mixed results reported here indicate that further research is required to clarify the

relationship between participative control and subjective fit in the prediction of employee adjustment outcomes.

Of the 12 analyses conducted, three significant three-way interactions were found, providing some support for H6. In line with predictions, the stress-buffering potential of participative control on the employee adjustment indicators (i.e., intentions to leave, psychological health, and physiological symptoms) was evident only for employees who perceived high levels of fit with their organisation. Whereas those employees who perceived high levels of fit with their organisation but did not perceive high levels of participative control were more negatively affected by the role stressors. Overall, these three-way interactions provide a relatively consistent pattern of results suggesting that subjective fit with organisational values has an additional moderating role to play in the two-way interactive relationships between work stressors and participative control in the prediction of employee adjustment.

There are a number of theoretical implications related to the findings of this study. The first concerns the way in which job control is operationalised in tests of the D-CM. In response to researchers highlighting the differential effects of different types of job control on employee outcomes, this study investigated job control in the context of the extent to which employees perceived that they could participate in decisions that affect their job and local work unit. As such, the significant results of this study provide support for the notion that investigations of job control and the D-CM can benefit from focused operationalisations of job control. Additionally, the results have implications for the continued need to consider the potential impact of additional (secondary) moderators in the D-CM. The three-way interactions in this study have demonstrated that the potential stress-buffering effect of job control (in the case of participative control) in the D-CM can be further moderated by other variables. This study demonstrates that the consideration of such secondary moderating



variables needs to move beyond individual and job characteristics to take into account the broader organisational values and the extent to which employees perceive that they fit with those values.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

A number of limitations and future research directions are provided by this study. Methodologically, this study was cross-sectional, and it is important to note that unstable occasion factors (e.g., mood states and dispositional variables) can make the results of cross-sectional studies in the area of occupational stress difficult to interpret (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff 1996; Podsakoff & Organ 1986). Nevertheless, as suggested by Spector (2006) and Watson and Pennebaker (1989), negative affectivity was controlled for in order to reduce the potential influence of mood states and therefore minimise common method variance effects. A longitudinal design should be employed in future research to enable reduction of common method variance and investigate the relationships over time. Further, this study investigated research questions based on individual perceptions of fit with organisational values. Future research should investigate individual-, workgroup-, and organisational-level processes, affording the opportunity to compare the meaning of the results from multiple perspectives. A multi-level approach also enables assessment of cultural fit with subcultures and the values ascribed importance within organisations. Lastly, in light of the operationalisation of job control, future research should further investigate the extent that other types of job control interact with subjective fit to buffer the negative effects of role stressors on employee adjustment.

### **Practical Implications and Conclusions**

The results of this study have a number of implications for managers and practitioners, particularly relating to recruitment and selection. Indeed, that a stress-buffering effect was found for participative control under conditions of high subjective fit supports an

approach to the selection of employees that involves determining the fit or match between the prospective employee and the organisations' values. As such, managers could assess employees' preferred values against established organisational values to determine an indication of the degree that the employee may 'fit' with the organisational values. This applies to the engagement of new recruits to an organisation as well as the transfer of employees from one part of the organisation to another (that might be characterised by a different subculture). The potential benefit for both the person and the organisation is that (new) employees may be better equipped to deal with stressors in the workplace. Further, the results provide more information for managers about involving employees in decision-making in the workplace. Managers need to understand that participation is not a general 'fix-it' in seeking to improve employee adjustment to workplace events. Indeed, this study has shown that the stress-buffering benefits of a participative strategy may not be realised when employees do not perceive that they fit with the values and goals of the organisation.

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**Table 1: Correlations, means, and standard deviations for the study variables**

	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Role conflict	3.11 (1.60)	(.90)									
2 Role ambiguity	2.82 (1.33)	.41**	(.90)								
3 Role overload	5.09 (1.07)	.36**	-.14*	(.78)							
4 Participative control	3.08 (1.16)	-.38**	-.17*	.09	(.93)						
5 Subjective fit	2.75 (0.94)	-.40**	-.32**	.04	.40**	(.91)					
6 Job satisfaction	3.22 (1.03)	-.30*	-.30*	.23*	.50**	.52**	(.83)				
7 Intentions to leave	2.11 (1.20)	.34**	.20*	.01	-.26*	-.36**	-.51**	(.86)			
8 Psychological health	9.24 (1.90)	-.13	.05	-.20*	.13	-.01	.01	-.11	(.77)		
9 Physiological symptoms	1.35 (0.36)	.29*	.23*	.16	-.28*	-.14	-.21*	.40**	-.41**	(.87)	
10 Negative affectivity	2.30 (0.75)	.18*	.17**	-.03	-.35**	-.06	-.26*	.24*	-.45**	.53**	(.89)
11 Age	38.37 (12.01)	-.13	-.17	-.12	.22*	.12	.13	-.28*	.04	-.18	-.15

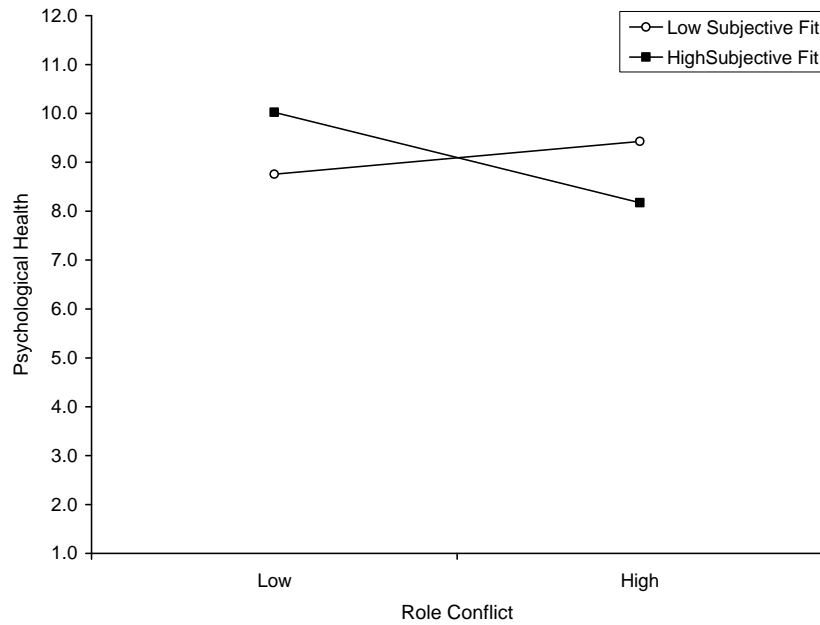
\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 2: Results of three-way hierarchical multiple regression analyses**

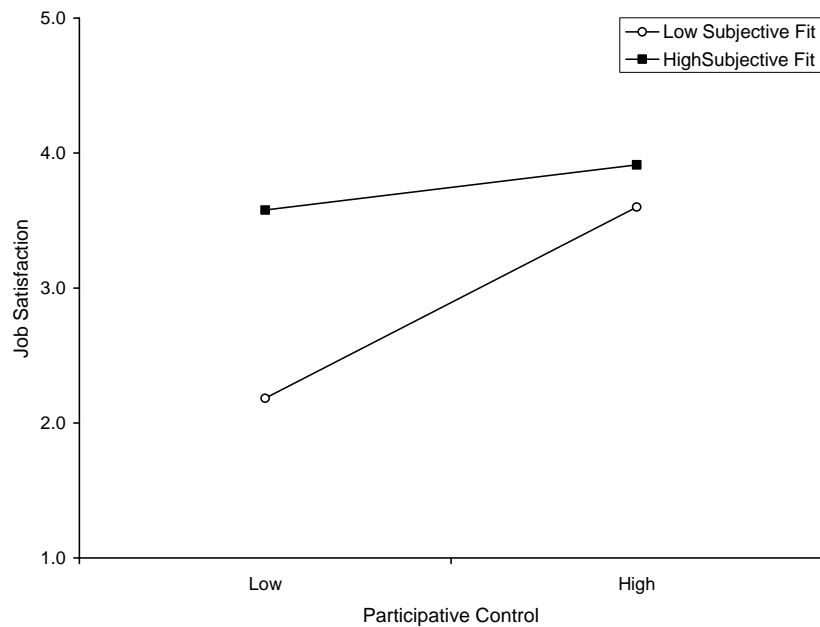
Predictors	Psychological health $\beta$			Physiological symptoms $\beta$			Job satisfaction $\beta$			Intentions to leave $\beta$		
	RC	RA	RO	RC	RA	RO	RC	RA	RO	RC	RA	RO
<u>Covariates</u>												
Age												
Negative affectivity												
$R^2$												
<u>Main effects</u>												
Role stressor <sup>a</sup>												
Participative control												
Subjective fit												
$R^2$												
$Ch.$												
<u>Two-way interactions</u>												
Role stressor x participative control												
Role stressor x Subjective fit												
Participative control x Subjective fit												
$R^2$												
$Ch.$												
<u>Three-way interaction</u>												
Role stressor x participative control x Subjective fit												
$R^2$												
$Ch.$												

<sup>a</sup> RC = Role conflict; RA = Role ambiguity; RO = Role overload.

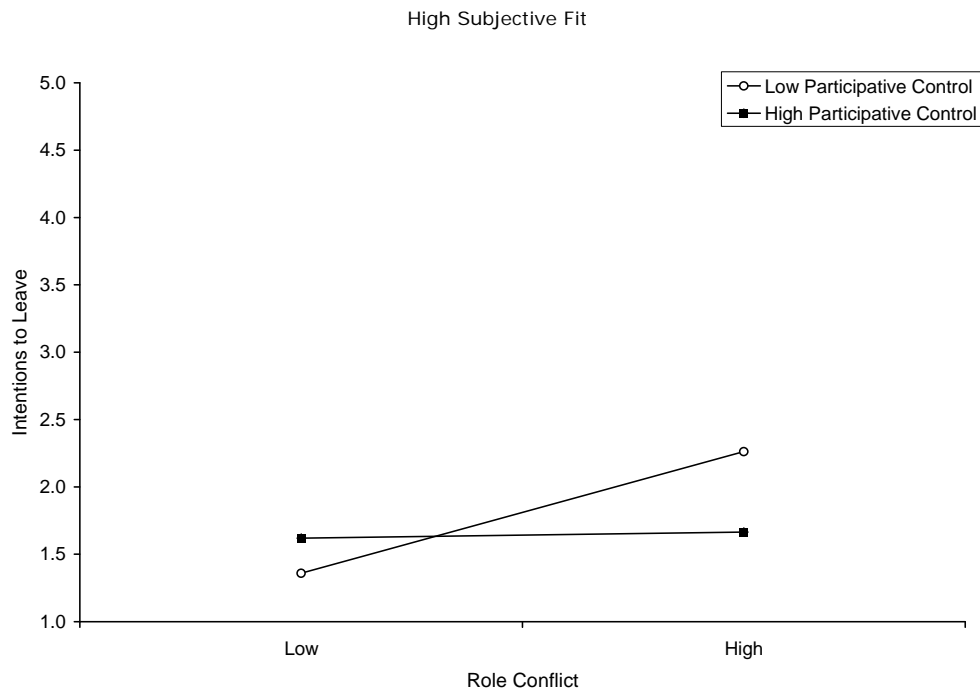
<sup>+</sup>  $p < .075$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .



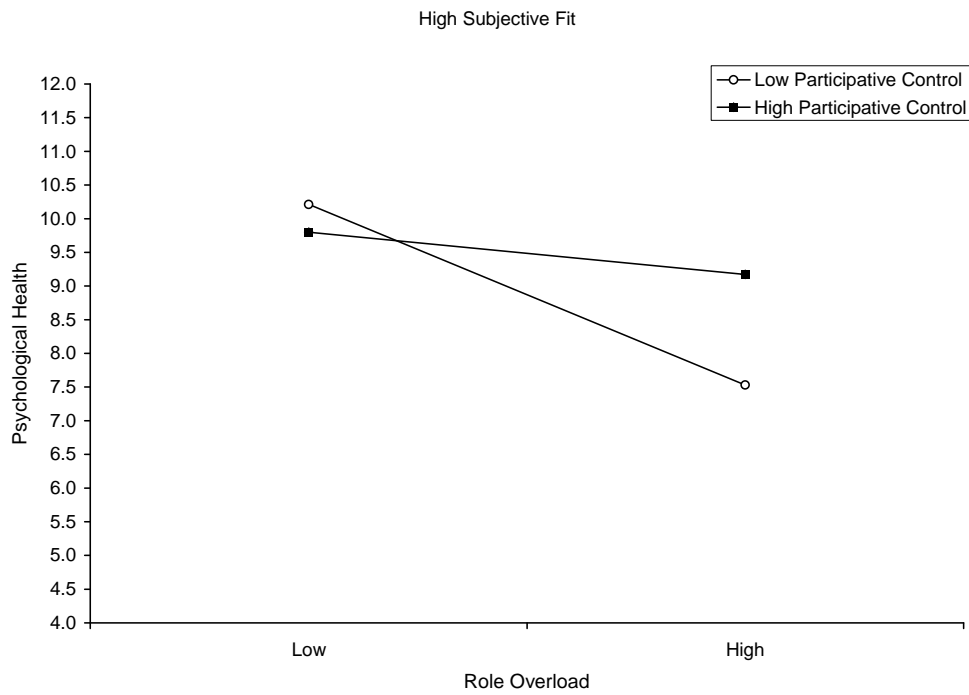
**Figure 1: Interaction of role conflict and subjective fit on psychological health.**



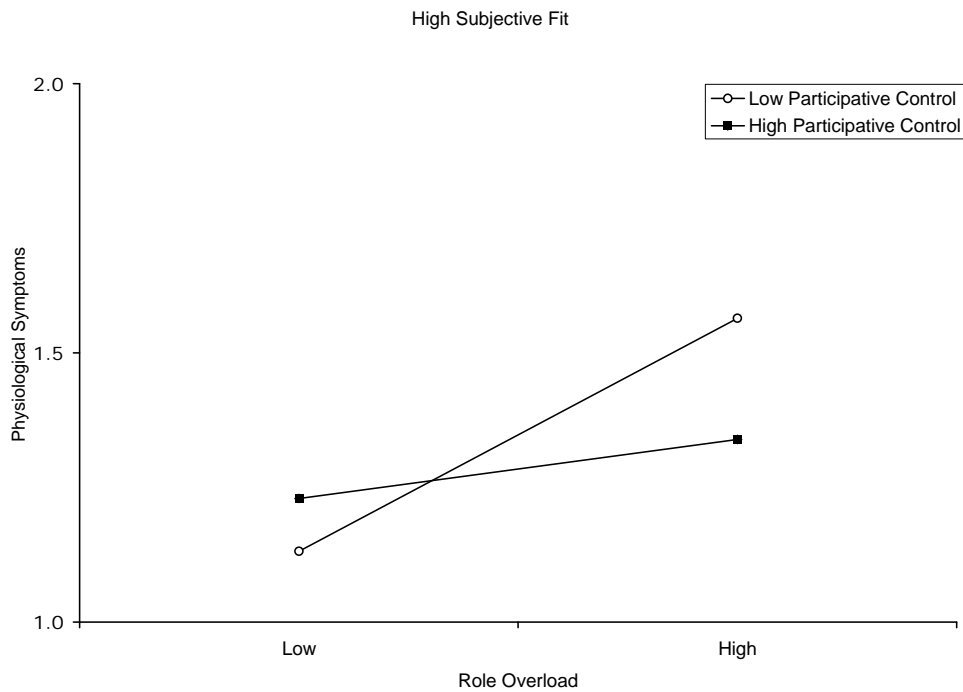
**Figure 2: Interaction of participative control and subjective fit on job satisfaction.**



**Figure 3: Interaction of role conflict and participative control on intentions to leave at high levels of subjective fit.**



**Figure 4: Interaction of role overload and participative control on psychological health at high levels of subjective fit.**



**Figure 5: Interaction of role overload and participative control fit on physiological symptoms at high levels of subjective fit.**