



# Joint Effects of Sense of Control, Job Control, and Dispositional Mindfulness as Relating to Work Engagement

Marviene Fulton, BS & Alyssa McGonagle, PhD  
University of North Carolina at Charlotte



## INTRODUCTION

- Employees with high levels of Work Engagement have better task performance, higher company commitment, and find their work “fun” (Schaufeli, 2016).
- Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
  - When a behavior is by choice and based on intrinsic reasons, it may increase vitality (Moller et al., 2006).
- **Job control:** actual or perceived control, or authority, a person has concerning their work tasks and how they are completed
- **Sense of control:** “the belief that one can determine one’s own internal states and behavior, influence one’s environment, and/or bring about desired outcomes” (Wallston et al., 1987, p. 5)
  - Positively correlates with well-being; yet, high levels are not always beneficial
    - In uncontrollable situations, may cause stress (Heidemeier & Goritz, 2013).
- **Mindfulness:** calm, accepting, and open state of mind
  - May inhibit the fight, flight, or freeze responses leading to feelings of stress and a reduced ability to effectively cope. May help when job control is low yet sense of control is high

- H1: Sense of Control (+) → Work Engagement  
 H2: Job Control (+) → Work Engagement  
 H3: Two-way interaction: Sense of Control (+) → Work Engagement Weaker with Low Job Control  
 H4: Mindfulness (+) → Work Engagement  
 H5: Three-way interaction: Mindfulness x Job Control → Work Engagement (Sense of Control (+) → Work Engagement - Weaker with Low Job Control and low levels of Mindfulness)

## METHOD

Employees of a midwestern university ( $N = 277$ ) participated. \$10 gift card provided to complete 20-min. online survey. 65% female, mean age of 37 ( $SD = 11$ ), 73% white.

Hierarchical linear regression with standardized variables used.

Variable	Measure (Authors; Sample Item; Response Scale)
Work Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Engagement Scale (Rich, LePine, &amp; Crawford, 2010)</li> <li>• “At work, my mind is focused on my job.”</li> <li>• Response scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)</li> </ul>
Sense of Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midlife Development Inventory (Lachman &amp; Weaver, 1998)</li> <li>• “I can do just about anything I really set my mind to.”</li> <li>• Response scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).</li> </ul>
Job Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurement of Job Control (Smith, Tisak, Hahn, &amp; Schmieder, 1997)</li> <li>• “On my job, I have freedom to decide how I work.”</li> <li>• Response Scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)</li> </ul>
Dispositional Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown &amp; Ryan, 2003).</li> <li>• “I find myself doing things without paying attention.”</li> <li>• Response scale: 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always) – reversed</li> </ul>

## RESULTS

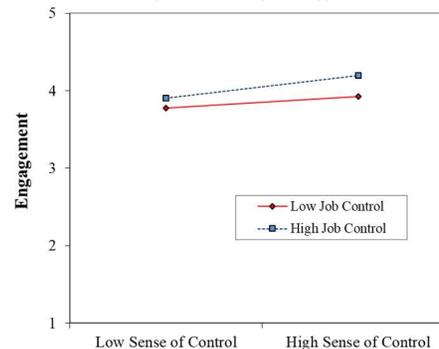
### Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Coefficient Alphas

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Sense of Control	3.80	0.71	(.87)			
2. Job Control	3.45	1.01	.14*	(.86)		
3. Mindfulness	4.11	0.88	.21**	.07	(.92)	
4. Work Engagement	3.87	0.59	.18**	.35**	.19**	(.93)

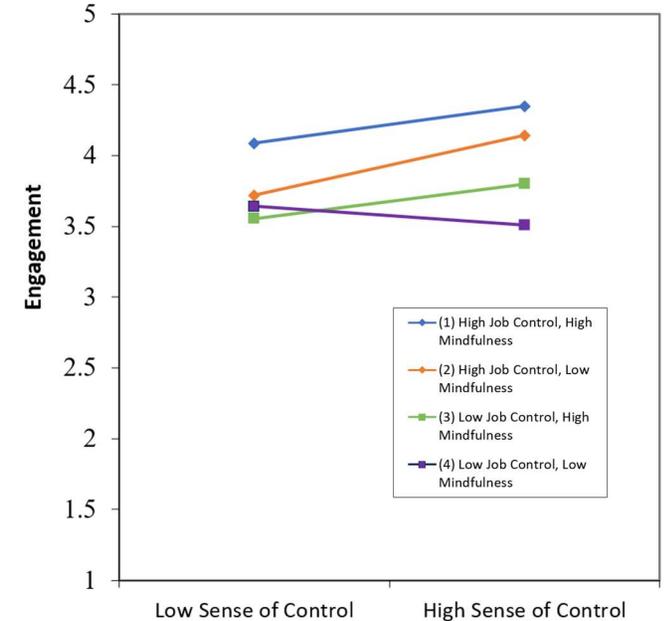
Note.  $N = 277$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . Coefficient alphas in parentheses along diagonal.

- H1: Sense of Control (+) → Work Engagement  $\beta = .17, p = .004$   
 H2: Job Control (+) → Work Engagement  $\beta = .38, p < .001$   
 H3: Two-Way Interaction  $\beta = .14, p = .019$   
 H4: Mindfulness (+) → Work Engagement  $\beta = .17, p = .003$   
 H5: Three-Way Interaction  $\beta = -.16, p = .009$

### Two-way interaction plot (Hypothesis 3)



### Three-way interaction plot (Hypothesis 5)



We plotted the three-way interaction (H5) using Excel and tested for slope differences using tools from Dawson (2014). Slope 4 was significantly different from the other three slopes.

## DISCUSSION

### Dispositional mindfulness buffered the negative effect of low job control on engagement when sense of control was high.

- Some jobs inherently lack control (e.g., call centers); our results suggest that having a high sense of control can be detrimental in these contexts.
  - These negative effects may be related to rumination and an inability to recognize when stimuli is not controllable.
- Mindfulness appears to help in these situations.
  - Mindfulness requires an open mind without emotional attachment, and this leads to a more successful assessment of situations, including identification of stimuli that is uncontrollable.

### Limitations

- The mindfulness scale is problematic in that it only measures one aspect of mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003), which may not be the most important or relevant element that allows prediction of decreased negative outcomes (Bullis, Bøe, Asnaani, & Hofmann, 2014).
- Generalization of results is cautioned since the data is from a single point in time from a mostly female white population employed at one American university.

amgonag@uncc.edu  
mfulton6@uncc.edu

Downloads & References: <http://bit.ly/2MbajAE>

