

# Participation in change, job characteristics, and hedonic well-being of senior public managers: The moderation effect of change information

Stephen T. T. Teo<sup>1</sup>  | Diep Nguyen<sup>2</sup>  | Azadeh Shafaei<sup>2</sup>  |  
David Pick<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Work and Organisational Performance, School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Western Australia, Australia

<sup>2</sup>School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Western Australia, Australia

<sup>3</sup>School of Management, Curtin University, Bentley, Western Australia, Australia

## Correspondence

Stephen T. T. Teo, Centre for Work and Organisational Performance, School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, 270 Joondalup Dr, Joondalup, WA 6027, Australia.  
Email: drstephen.teo@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study contributes to Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources theory by testing a moderated mediation model of the relationship between participation in change and senior managers' hedonic well-being. Using data collected from 266 Australian senior managers employed in the Commonwealth and State public sector, we tested the interaction of participation in change and change information with job satisfaction, an example of hedonic well-being at work. Findings from the path analysis produced two new insights. First, both participation in change and information about change are key resources that senior managers can deploy to protect and enhance their job satisfaction. Second, information about change has a buffering effect on the indirect relationship between participation in change and job satisfaction through job control. These two findings have practical implications indicating that it is important to train and equip senior managers in the adoption of effective strategies to acquire job resources in assisting them deal with change induced job demands.

## KEYWORDS

COR theory, job control, organisational change, senior managers, workload

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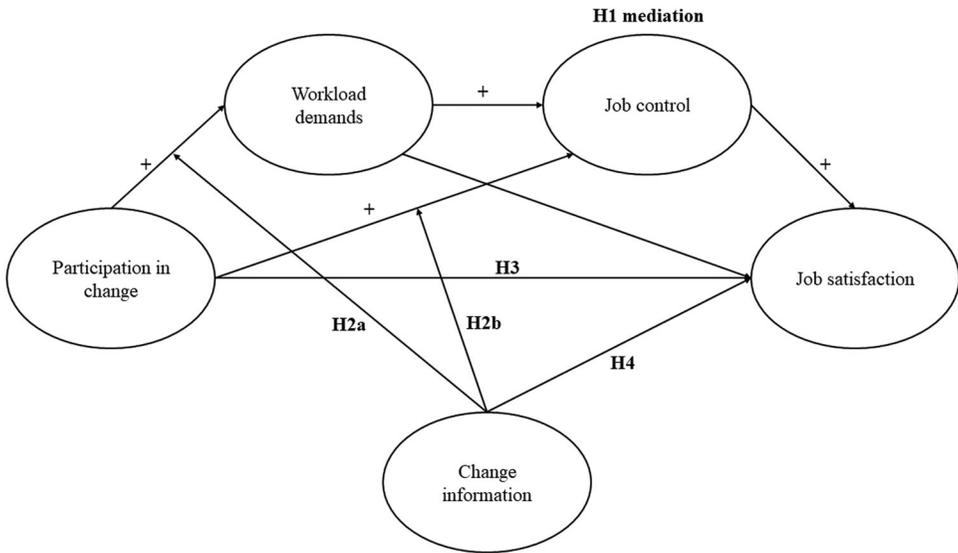
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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

There is an emerging stream of research that seeks to identify the factors affecting the experiences of change recipients in private and public sector organisations (Oreg & Berson, 2019; Stouten, Rousseau, & De Cremer, 2018). Most of the empirical evidence in the public management literature tends to focus on lower level employees and those occupying middle management roles (Lindorff, Worrall, & Cooper, 2011; Pick & Teo, 2017). This has left a relative dearth of knowledge about how senior managers react and respond to organisational change. Senior managers sit in the intersection where they have to face significant external pressures for change pushed downward from their political masters and the need to micro-level innovative initiatives being pushed upwards from within the agencies (Fernandez & Pitts, 2007). Achieving a better understanding of this group of managers is important because, unlike those occupying less senior roles, they are responsible for initiating and managing the processes of change-facilitation, as well as implementing change and providing support to subordinates using their strategic and superior knowledge (Conway & Monks, 2011). Senior managers are also accountable for the success of change programs as they are in positions of authority and have access to organisational and personal leadership and strategic resources that should enable them to lead, direct, and execute change (Balogun, Bartunek, & Do, 2015; Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018).

It is well known that senior managers tend to experience higher job demands (JD) and acquire more job resources (JR) than other staff during organisational change (Blom, Bodin, Bergström, & Svedberg, 2016). However, little is known about the extent to which the change process could affect a senior manager's perceptions of JD and JR. Recent studies (Barling & Cloutier, 2017; Li, Schaubroeck, Xie, & Keller, 2018) suggest there is a need to undertake more research focussed on the well-being of individuals who occupy leadership positions in organisations. This study utilizes the Conservation of Resources theoretical lens to examine how change management affects workplace well-being (i.e. hedonic well-being) of senior public managers. As a motivation stress theory (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018; Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson, & Laski, 2005), COR postulates that individuals strive to protect and retain current resources, and then acquire, accumulate, and foster new important and valuable resources to reduce stress arising from their work (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Therefore, individuals must build or have access to a pool of resources at their disposal during stressful events. Adopting the COR theory, job control is an example of a positive and motivational job-related resource (Hobfoll et al., 2018) which senior managers could acquire or build in order to cope with the demands of organisational change and have a positive effect on their workplace well-being. Following Bowling, Eschleman, and Wang (2010), we argue that job satisfaction can be used as a measure of hedonic well-being. It is a 'multi-faceted construct that incorporates both affective and evaluative facets consistent with how general hedonic wellbeing has been conceptualized and measured' (Bartels, Peterson, & Reina, 2019, p. 9).

As an indicator of hedonic well-being, job satisfaction of senior managers is a critical indicator of successful organisational change. Organisational change can result in beneficial outcomes such as cost efficiency improvements from downsizing or outsourcing, policy coherence, and coordination as well as service quality increase from flexible employment and treatment of service users as customers (Hammerschmid, Van de Walle, Andrews, & Mostafa, 2019). There is empirical research that points to negative consequences such as job dissatisfaction (Yang & Kassekert, 2009) that has been connected to a lack of participation and information (Pick & Teo, 2017). In this study, we incorporate change participation and information as variables that might have a significant impact in enhancing job satisfaction. We include these because previous research indicates that the dissemination of change information to employees and their involvement in change are pivotal factors in facilitating change (Allen, Jimmieson,



**FIGURE 1** Proposed model and hypotheses

Bordia, & Irmer, 2007). It is not surprising then that other research suggests that information is important in shaping an individuals’ attitudes and decision-making to the extent that is ultimately associated with reduced stress and enhanced job satisfaction (e.g. Teo, Pick, Xerri, & Newton, 2016). In this study, both participation in change and change information are proposed to be part of the job-related resources required by senior managers to mitigate their change-induced workload demands.

In summary, consistent with the COR theory, job-related resources such as participating in change, change information, and job control are proposed to be a ‘caravan of resources’ for senior managers to utilise in order to cope with organisational change-induced workload demands. These job-related resources are proposed to have a positive impact on the hedonic well-being of senior managers. A moderated mediation model will be hypothesised and tested with a sample of senior managers from Australia (see Figure 1).

## 2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 | COR theory and hedonic well-being

Organisational change is a common phenomenon in public sector organisations around the world, including Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Conway & Monks, 2011; Pick & Teo, 2017; Yang & Kassekert, 2009). In the last two decades, the change agenda has been associated with the New Public Management (NPM) reform, which has been implemented to improve how government agencies operate and deliver public services (Castillo, Fernandez, & Sallan, 2018).<sup>1</sup>

NPM reform has been a feature of Australian state and federal government policy since the 1980s (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; O’Flynn, 2007). The main thrust of the reform include a shift from rules-based management to values-based management, the rise of whole of government approaches to

<sup>1</sup>We are aware of the debate concerning the timeliness of NPM in the literature. To position the paper within the literature on public sector change management, we used NPM to refer to the various types of changes and reforms introduced into public sector organisations for effectiveness and efficiency.

policy implementation, and ministerial departments exerting greater control over the public agencies that deliver programs (Christensen, Lie, & Lægveid, 2007). More specifically, these broad-scale NPM reforms have played out in public sector organizations most visibly in the emergence of managerialism as the dominant paradigm that has been associated with a range of change events. These include restructuring (downsizing and delayering), redundancies and retrenchments, and increasing emphasis on accountability (Lynn, 2006) as well as reorganisation, departmental (agencies) merger and disaggregation, culture change, and outsourcing (Lindorff et al., 2011; Volacu, 2018). Even though NPM has long dominated thinking about public service reform, there remain problems of fragmentation and a relative lack of political steering (Christensen et al., 2007) that have led to persistent divergence between the objectives and outcomes of reform efforts (Andrews, 2019), especially in terms of, often negative, consequences that are unintended (Hood, 2000). It is these types of problems associated with reform implementation that have the potential to compromise the well-being of Australian public sector managers, especially if they are not adequately prepared and informed (Buick, Blackman, & Johnson, 2018).

An important aspect of successful organisational change is the involvement of staff at all levels in the change process to ensure that they have a good understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and contributions (Conway & Monks, 2011). It also requires managers, as change agent and change recipient, to participate in the change process and provide adequate information to deliver a clear communication to relief change-induced stress. Research into NPM-inspired organisational change indicates that there is a strong association between this type of change and increases in stress levels and rising job dissatisfaction among employees affected by it (Nguyen, Teo, Pick, & Jemai, 2018). This is most likely caused by the uncertainty arising from the change process (Bordia et al., 2004). Although most studies tend to focus on middle managers in the public sector (Conway & Monks, 2011; Pick & Teo, 2017), there is a scarcity of research on senior managers who might also experience the uncertainty during organisational change, but its effects are compounded by high workload demands.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker, van Veldhoven, & Xanthopoulou, 2010) can be used to explain the effects of change on job stress. JD 'refers to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs' (Bakker et al., 2010, p. 4). Accordingly, workload demands are an example of challenging JD (Korunka, Kubicek, Paškván, & Ulferts, 2015) that is commonly found in change management literature (Nguyen et al., 2018; Smollan, 2015). Research (Bowling, Alarcon, Bragg, & Hartman, 2015; Cantarelli, Belardinelli, & Belle, 2016) showed a negative association between workload demands and job satisfaction. Workload has been found to have negative impact on employee well-being such as job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions (Cregård & Corin, 2019).

JR is theorised to have 'an intrinsic motivational role because they foster employees' growth, learning, and development, or they play an extrinsic motivational role because they are instrumental in achieving work goals, or both' (Bakker et al., 2010, p. 4). As a motivational resource (Hobfoll et al., 2018), JR could fulfil an employee's psychological basic needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985), leading to an increase in employee job satisfaction in the public sector (Demircioglu, 2018). As an example of JR (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), job control could reduce workload demands by stimulating positive emotions and personal development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Job control could help employees meet their high workload demands (Konze, Rivkin, & Schmidt, 2017). A meta-analytical finding by Spector (1986) showed a positive association between job control and job satisfaction, suggesting that employees become more committed, involved, and motivated towards their job. This is supported by Cantarelli et al. (2016) meta-analytical review of job satisfaction in public management research.

In the current study, JD and JR are theorised as predictors of job satisfaction, consistent with the JD-R model. Previous research has noted a negative association between workload demands and the well-being of senior executives (Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005), whereas Van der Voet and Van de Walle (2018) found a positive association between job autonomy and job satisfaction of top-level public managers. The research evidence is not overwhelming supportive of this association. Karasek's activation hypothesis posits that individuals experiencing high workload demands and high job autonomy would have higher job satisfaction due to the buffering effect of high decision latitude on the strain-inducing effect of JD. High workload demands might trigger senior managers to develop strategies and behaviours to cope with the pressures of change-induced stressors, whereas job autonomy could provide change recipients with the necessary job-related resources to change how they do their jobs (Karasek & Thorell, 1990; Lopes, Lagoa, & Calapez, 2014). Job control has been shown to minimise the uncertainty associated with change and change acceptance (Stouten et al., 2018).

Consistent with the Hobfoll's COR theory, organisational change is mentally demanding and often creates perceptions or threats of resource loss that subsequently results in stress (Westman et al., 2005). Senior managers could gain and retain a variety of resources to support and improve their well-being when they encounter high JD and at the same time resist perceptions of a lack of JR that might result in strain and subsequent deterioration of well-being. JR could positively influence job satisfaction, whereas workload and emotional dissonance could impact negatively with job satisfaction (Gatti, Ghislieri, & Cortese, 2017). This situation encourages the use of job control to cope with high JD (Hakanen, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2005) as job-related resources could provide opportunities for change recipients to acquire the necessary skills to deal with change and enhance their workplace well-being (Stouten et al., 2018). We hypothesise the following:

**Hypothesis 1:** The relationship from workload demands to job satisfaction is fully mediated by job control among senior public sector managers.

## 2.2 | Participation and change information

Stress among change recipients occurs when there is a lack of well-planned implementation of change (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Wright, Christensen, & Isett, 2013). It can be argued that well-planned change would include avenues for staff to participate and means of communicating information to staff because these are two factors that have been found to facilitate change, reduce stress (Bordia et al., 2004; Van der Voet & Vermeeren, 2017), and contribute to change success (Conway & Monks, 2011). Nearly four decades ago, Jackson (1983) proposed the idea that when employees participated in decision-making, it would reduce role strain, which in turn, impacts positively on job satisfaction. Subsequent research suggests that participation in decision-making is an important factor in increasing job satisfaction during change (Scott-Ladd, Travaglione, & Marshall, 2006). In a study on hospital downsizing, Sverke, Hellgren, Näswall, Göransson, and Öhrming (2008) found a positive association between participation in decision-making and job satisfaction. This is supported by other studies (Bordia et al., 2004; Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994; Stouten et al., 2018) which suggest that when employees are provided the opportunity to participate in change, they gain a sense of ownership, control, and autonomy and that change-related information builds understanding about the need for the change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). It can be argued that participation and the provision of information in the change process have the potential to reduce stress and enhance acceptance of change. Furthermore, participation in change and change information might ameliorate stress by reducing high work demands (Falkenberg, Näswall, Sverke, & Sjöberg, 2009) while enhancing the perceptions of

job control (Pick & Teo, 2017). This will lead to a reduction of uncertainty and ambiguity that is often associated with organizational change (Van der Voet & Vermeeren, 2017).

Like other change recipients, senior managers might experience a lack of goal clarity and role ambiguity (Hassan, 2013). Following from previous arguments, it could be argued that participation in change can serve as a mechanism for senior managers to gain greater control over how they perceive change-induced stressors. Accordingly, involving senior managers in decision-making and allowing them to participate in shaping the organisational change process could make them feel that they have some ownership of the change and maintain the perception that they have a stake in the organisation (Wright et al., 2013). In addition to this, participation in decision-making during change could, at the same time, increase the attainment of higher-order needs (self-expression and morale) that lead to high job satisfaction (e.g. Karasek & Theorell, 1990). As senior managers play a key role in their sense-making about change (Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018), their participation in change is important in conveying a positive message about change throughout the organisation.

Participation in change cannot be effective though without the acquisition of adequate change-related information that allows senior managers to contextualise and facilitate change (Jimmieson, Terry, & Callan, 2004; Miller et al., 1994; Stouten et al., 2018). Both change participation and information also provide change recipients with an opportunity to gain new knowledge, skills, and work routines to respond to change initiatives (Stouten et al., 2018). In addition, the provision of information could minimise the spread of rumour-mongering (Bordia et al., 2004) and combat cynicism about change that, in turn, could help with maintaining levels of job satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2018). COR theory could be used to explain the mechanisms by which change participation and change information positively affect well-being. This is because COR theory posits that change recipients are 'motivated to obtain, retain, foster, and protect those things they value' (Westman et al., 2005, p. 169). In this study, we test the argument that those resources (things) of value to senior managers in times of change are participation in change and change information. Hence, we hypothesise:

**Hypothesis 2a:** Change information moderates the effect of participation in change on workload demands (2a) such that a high level of change information will reduce the impact of participation in change on workload demands.

**Hypothesis 2b:** Change information moderates the effect of participation in change on job control such that a high level of change information will strengthen the impact of participation in change on job control.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a positive relationship between participation in change and job satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is a positive relationship between change information and job satisfaction.

### 3 | METHOD

A questionnaire was sent to 1,200 senior managers in the Commonwealth and State public sector organisations during 2014–2015. In this study, we included only respondents who held senior appointment ( $N = 266$ ; response rate of 22.2%). The majority of the respondents were in full-time employment (96.2%). Approximately two thirds (65%) were male. The largest group (78.6%) was between 41 and 60 years old and had more than 10 years of tenure with their current agency (21.4%). The respondents also indicated that their public agencies had implemented internal-focused change (such as 'reduced internal boundaries', 'reduced external boundaries', and 'flexible work groups') and external-focused change (such as 'outsourcing' and 'disaggregation') at the time answering the survey. These initiatives were previously identified in the study on change management by Palmer and Dunford (2008).

### 3.1 | Measures

We adopted validated scales that have been used previously. Two five-item scales by Jimmieson et al. (2004) were used to measure participation in change and change information. Job control was operationalized using a four-item scale from Karasek et al. (1998) and Xanthopoulou et al. (2007). Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, and Pinneau's (1980) five-item scale was adopted to measure workload demands. Finally, job satisfaction was measured with the scale by Warr, Cook, and Wall (1979), which has been adopted in Australia (Noblet & Rodwell, 2009; Pick & Teo, 2017). Finally, we controlled for gender, employment status, age, job, and organizational tenure as these have been found to impact on job satisfaction (Fernandez & Pitts, 2007; Pick & Teo, 2017; Wright et al., 2013).

Data analysis was performed using the IBM AMOS v.26 software package. We followed the two-step approach described by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) by conducting confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to validate the convergent and discriminant validity of the scales. In the second step, we imputed second-order composites of the scales to test the moderated mediation model.

### 3.2 | Measurement model estimation

As reported in Table 1, all standardised factor loadings were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) and above 0.60 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Table 2 shows that all the values of AVE were above 0.50, whereas interreliability coefficients were above the threshold of 0.70. These analyses confirmed the convergent validity and reliability of the five constructs. CFA of the five-factor model confirmed that it had a good fit ( $\chi^2(375) = 625.27$ ; CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.07) satisfying the minimum cut-offs (Hu & Bentler, 1999). We also conducted a Chi-square comparison test against the hypothesised five-factor model. The results of this analysis revealed that the five-factor model was the most appropriate (see Table 3).

### 3.3 | Common method variance

As self-report data could generate common method variance (CMV), we conducted various remedies to check for CMV (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). First, we used different criterion measures for all the scales to minimise the potential of CMV. Second, we undertook Harman's single-factor test and found that there was a single factor explaining 34.7% of the variance. Additionally, as recommended by Gaskin and Lim (2017), a test of the performance of a common latent factor on AMOS using the specific bias test showed no specific response bias influenced our model. Finally, the incorporation of moderation and mediation effects in our model was another check for CMV. Altogether, the results of these tests showed that CMV was not a major issue in this study.

## 4 | RESULTS

As we expected, the association between participation in change and workload demands was statistically positive ( $\beta = .64, p < .001$ ). There was also support for the direct and positive relationship between participation in change and change information ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ). Additionally, we found a positive relationship between job control and job satisfaction of senior managers ( $\beta = .36, p < .001$ ). A 95% confidence interval (CI) based on 10,000 bootstrap samples did not include zero, showing a full indirect relationship between workload demands and job satisfaction through job control ( $\beta = .08; SE = 0.05; 95\% CI [0.01, 0.18]; p < .05$ ). This finding confirmed that Hypothesis 1 is supported.

**TABLE 1** Measurement properties

Variables	Item Loading
<b>Participation in change</b> (1 = not at all to 5 = a great deal)	
- How much involvement do you have regarding changes that are occurring in your organisation?	0.86
- To what extent do you get the opportunity to take part in decisions related to changes that affect your job?	0.92
- To what extent can you voice your concerns about changes that affect your job?	0.83
- How much influence do you have over how changes that affect your job will be implemented?	0.89
- Overall, how much participation have you had regarding change processes that affect your job?	0.93
<b>Change information</b> (1 = not at all to 5 = a great deal)	
- How clearly are you informed about when specific changes will be implemented?	0.92
- How well do you think you are informed about the implications that changes will have for your job?	0.92
- How clearly are you informed about the reasons underlying organisational change?	0.92
- To what extent is information about changes directly communicated to you?	0.91
- Overall, how clearly do you think you are informed about the nature of the changes that take place in your organisation?	0.94
<b>Job control</b> (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)	
- My job requires me to make a lot of decisions on my own	0.85
- I have a lot of say about what happens on my job	0.87
- My job requires that I learn new things	0.76
- My job requires me to be creative	0.86
<b>Workload demands</b> (1 = rarely to 5 = very often)	
- How often does your job require you to work very fast?	0.80
- How often does your job require you to work very hard?	0.88
- How often is there a great deal to be done?	0.83
- How much workload do you have?	0.81
- What quantity of work do others expect you to do?	0.64
<b>Job satisfaction</b> (1 = extremely dissatisfied to 7 = extremely satisfied)	
- The freedom to choose your own method of working	0.71
- Your immediate boss	0.71
- The amount of responsibility you are given	0.79
- Your opportunity to use your abilities	0.62
- Your rate of pay	0.77
- Your chance of promotion	0.70
- The way your organisation is managed	0.79
- The attention paid to suggestions you make	0.82
- The amount of variety in your job	0.62

**TABLE 2** Statistics and correlations between latent variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	0.35	0.48	-	-	1.00									
2. Employment status	0.98	0.14	-	-	-0.04	1.00								
3. Age	4.45	0.87	-	-	.04	-0.05	1.00							
4. Job tenure	3.19	1.36	-	-	-0.07	.08	.18 <sup>**</sup>	1.00						
5. Organisational tenure	3.90	1.21	-	-	.06	.11	.21 <sup>**</sup>	.57 <sup>***</sup>	1.00					
6. Participation in change	3.80	0.85	0.71	0.92	-0.02	.18 <sup>**</sup>	.03	.03	-0.03	1.00				
7. Change information	3.29	0.87	0.80	0.95	.02	.17 <sup>**</sup>	.04	.05	.02	.89 <sup>***</sup>	1.00			
8. Workload demands	3.76	0.51	0.50	0.87	.02	-0.01	-0.08	-0.06	-0.07	.16 <sup>*</sup>	.03	1.00		
9. Job control	2.13	0.34	0.55	0.71	.01	.08	.02	.02	-0.03	.54 <sup>***</sup>	.50 <sup>***</sup>	.38 <sup>***</sup>	1.00	
10. Job satisfaction	1.13	0.64	0.98	0.99	-0.03	-0.09	.01	-0.00	-0.01	.66 <sup>***</sup>	.66 <sup>***</sup>	.06	.64 <sup>***</sup>	1.00

Abbreviations: AVE, Average variance extracted; CR, Composite reliability.

Note: Control variables: employment status (0 = part-time, 1 = full-time); age group ('1' = 18-25, '2' = 26-30, '3' = 31-40, '4' = 41-50, '5' = 51-60, '6' = 61-70); job and organizational tenure (from '1' = less than 12 months to '5' = greater than 10 years).

Job satisfaction was measured using reversed scores (i.e. low scores = highly satisfied; high scores = highly dissatisfied).

*N* = 266.

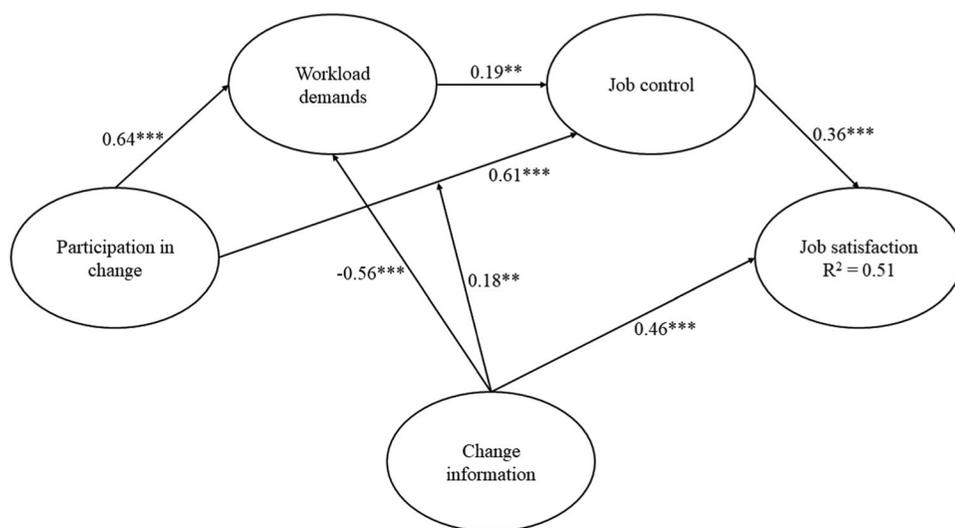
\* *p* < .05; \*\* *p* < .01; \*\*\* *p* < .001.

**TABLE 3** Results of chi-squares difference test

	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$ from 5-factor model
Five-factor model (WLD, JC, PinChg, Chg Info, Job Sat)	625.272	375	0.95	0.95	0.05	0.067	Preferred model
Four-factor model (WLD, JC, PinChg + Chg Info, Job Sat)	669.822	379	0.95	0.94	0.05	0.078	$\Delta\chi^2$ (4) = 44.55; $p < .001$
Three-factor model (WLD, JC + PinChg + Chg Info, Job Sat)	760.091	382	0.93	0.92	0.06	0.084	$\Delta\chi^2$ (7) = 134.82; $p < .001$
Two-factor model (WLD + JC + PinChg + Chg Info, Job Sat)	1,159.342	384	0.86	0.84	0.09	0.117	$\Delta\chi^2$ (9) = 534.07; $p < .001$
One-factor model (WLD + JC + PinChg + Chg Info + Job Sat)	1,325.853	385	0.82	0.80	0.10	0.128	$\Delta\chi^2$ (10) = 700.581; $p < .001$

Abbreviations: WLD, Workload demands; JC, Job control; PinChg, Participation in change; Chg Info, Change information; Job Sat, Job satisfaction; CFI, Comparative fit index; TLI, Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA, Root mean square error of approximation; SRMR, Standardized root mean square residual.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**FIGURE 2** Path analysis results

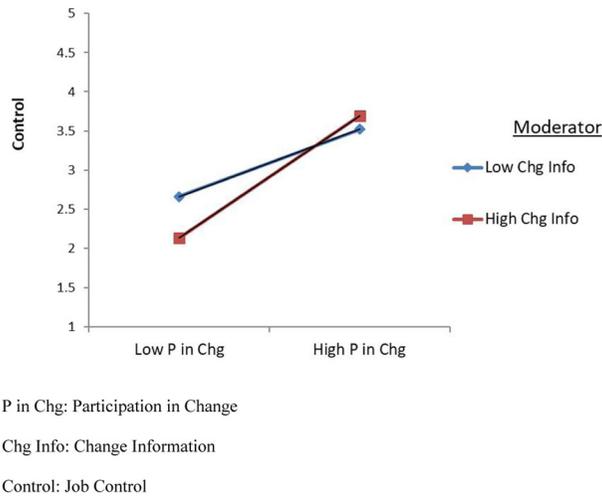
\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

As reported in Figure 2, the direct relationship between participation in change and job satisfaction was insignificant, indicating a rejection for Hypothesis 3. Based on the results, Hypothesis 2a was also not supported as change information was not found to moderate the relationship between participation in change and workload demands. Instead, there was a statistically negative association between change information and workload demands ( $\beta = -.56$ ;  $p < .001$ ). As we hypothesised, there was a statistically significant two-way interaction effect between participation in change and change information on job control ( $b = .18$ ;  $p < .05$ ), supporting hypothesis 2b. We subsequently conducted a moderation plot analysis to further examine the moderation effect. Figure 3 shows that change information enhances the positive effect of participation in change on job control. In summary, the hypothesised moderated mediation model explained 51% of job satisfaction with job control as the mediator and change information as a moderator in the effect of participation in change on job control.

## 5 | DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was designed to examine the ways in which the COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) might be used to enhance our currently limited and ambiguous understanding of how senior managers' job satisfaction could be enhanced during organisational change. Previous studies on change management have overlooked the experiences of senior public sector managers who play dual roles: change recipients and change implementers. The main theoretical contribution of this study is that we provide new insights into the COR theory by illuminating the idea that during change events participation in change and information about change are key resources that can be deployed by managers to protect and enhance job satisfaction which in turn helps maintain perceptions of overall well-being.

Our study contributes to the COR theory by showing the buffering effect of change information on the indirect relationship between participation in change and job satisfaction through job control (Stouten et al., 2018). Accordingly, useful and adequate change information may provide senior managers with an opportunity to control role and goal ambiguity, and foresee the uncertainties,



**FIGURE 3** Result of moderation analysis: Change information [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

Abbreviations: P in Chg, Participation in Change; Chg Info, Change Information; Control, Job Control

potential risks, and the outcomes of organisational change (Falkenberg et al., 2009; Van der Voet & Vermeeren, 2017). The possession of change information may increase the ability of senior managers in sense-making about change and sense-giving of change (Balogun et al., 2015). When senior managers have useful and adequate change information, they will become more satisfied and motivated to give full support for the process of change and deliver a positive message to their subordinates.

Senior managers play dual roles as change recipients and change implementers in their organisations and as such they might experience role ambiguity and unclear performance expectations in the face of increased JD (Balogun et al., 2015; Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018). Consistent with the COR theory and current research (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Van Woerkom, Bakker, & Nishii, 2016), we found that perceptions of an increase in workload motivated senior managers to employ job control to deal with JD during organisational change. We did though find that the negative relationship between workload demands and job satisfaction was not supported. This contradicts recent meta-analytical reviews (Bowling et al., 2015; Cantarelli et al., 2016). Instead, we found that this relationship was mediated by job control. Our results suggest that the relationship between JD and job satisfaction is more complex than first assumed. More research is required to establish the precise nature and mechanisms of this dynamic and somewhat contradictory relationship.

This study also produced results consistent with the general management literature (e.g. Yeh, 2015) and with Karasek's activation hypothesis (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) in that senior managers report job satisfaction during change due to the buffering effect of their job autonomy on the strain-inducing effect of high workload demands. Recent research by Igcic et al. (2017) suggests that there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and constellations of jobs with high control–high tasks demands–support over time. Our findings contributed to the literature about the JD of senior managers (see Hambrick et al., 2005) as our analysis support the idea that, as implementers and recipients of change (Balogun et al., 2015; Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018), senior managers tend to experience workload as a change-induced JD. Our study suggests that providing senior managers with greater control and autonomy has the potential to ameliorate the negative effects of these JD.

Our finding of a positive relationship between participation in change and workload demands alongside a negative association with change information supports previous studies about public sector organisational change (Pick & Teo, 2017; Van der Voet & Vermeeren, 2017). This can be explained using the threatening hypothesis (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Lindorff et al., 2011; Nguyen et al., 2018) in that senior managers could perceive participation in change as a change-inducing stressor that increases workload demands but also that providing change information to support participation has potential to reduce senior managers' experience of uncertainty and ambiguity, thereby reducing perceptions of workload demands. It is likely, therefore, that effective participation in change requires efficient communication of information to help senior managers contextualise and understand change better.

## 5.1 | Managerial Implications

Our study offers valuable insights for effective organisational change. Current literature (e.g. Balogun et al., 2015; Oreg & Berson, 2019) points to the importance of linking job characteristics with change management practices among senior managers. An understanding of senior managers' workplace well-being during organisational change is important because a lack of a carefully planned change process could increase stress, which could ultimately threaten failure of change (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Van der Voet & Vermeeren, 2017), low performance, and decreased job dissatisfaction (Yang & Kassekert, 2009). In light of our analysis, we suggest that public sector organisations might find it useful to develop training programs that equip senior managers to adopt effective strategies for acquiring JR that would help them reduce the effects of change-induced stressors. Additionally, organisations could provide senior managers with more resources such as greater control, autonomy, and more learning opportunities that will assist them in dealing with increased JD, to make meaningful decisions, be creative, and learn new things during organisational change. This would have the additional positive effect of helping to increase their job satisfaction. This would be supported if senior managers are involved in all the stages of change and by providing them with quality and useful information about the change. Our analysis suggests that this would bring benefits to senior managers and their subordinates by minimising uncertainty and stressors.

As senior executives play a key role in transmitting the information necessary about change (Miller et al., 1994; Stouten et al., 2018), our findings illuminate the pivotal role of these people during organisational change. Specifically, senior executives would do well to anticipate the negative consequences of change on senior managers and other employees before and during the change process. This supports the utility of applying COR theory to practice in that our research illuminates the importance of providing change-related resources (participation and change information) together with job control to senior managers in reducing the negative influence of change-related workload demands that, in turn, increases their hedonic well-being.

## 5.2 | Limitations and future research

The use of a single-source data collected at one point in time requires different remedies to minimise the effect of CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Although CMV was not a major issue in this study, we still suggest data collection from multiple sources of respondents in multiple time points in future studies. Future research could consider multi-level data (Jong & Ford, 2016). Additionally, we recommend a longitudinal research design (Stritch, 2017) to examine more accurately the change effect on job characteristics (Keller & Semmer, 2013; Konze et al., 2017). Furthermore, an avenue for future research is to consider how senior managers make sense of the process of change management. As there was

no support for the moderation of change information on workload demands of senior managers, other researchers could design a qualitative study to examine how senior managers 'make sense' of the impact of change on JD (Hambrick & Lovelace, 2018). This could contribute towards better understanding of the mental well-being of senior managers by focusing on positive psychological attributes as another source of resources in the COR perspective (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Finally, future studies could take up the challenge offered by Hambrick et al. (2005) to study specific type of job-related demands experienced by senior managers during change.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

This study provided significant theoretical and practical contributions to a small but growing area in the literature that focuses on organizational change in public sector agencies. In particular, empirical support was found for employing a modification of Hobfoll's COR theory to expand understanding of the mechanisms by which change management affects the hedonic well-being of senior managers. The evidence in this study suggests that participation in change is a JR variable that helps reduce workload demands, whereas job control is a JR variable that mediates the effects of workload demands on job satisfaction (well-being). Change information was found to be a JR variable that can have a positive influence on job satisfaction and a negative influence on job workload demands. The analysis also suggested that change information is a JR that can amplify the effects of participation in change on senior managers' job satisfaction. This study uses theory development through empirical research to enhance practice by giving weight to the argument that senior public sector managers involved in change management should be provided with access to and training in the deployment of job-related resources (in this case, participation in change, change information, and job control) in order to better cope with and adapt to the complexity associated with the demands of organisational change.

## ORCID

Stephen T. T. Teo  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5025-7937>

Diep Nguyen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5454-8835>

Azadeh Shafaei  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3329-6293>

David Pick  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4614-8241>

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