

Workload and Turnover Intention among Contract-Based Public Employees: Mediating Emotional Exhaustion and Moderating Organizational Support

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study examines the relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention among contract-based public employees and tests the moderating role of perceived organizational support in the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative explanatory survey was conducted among 195 contract-based public employees in local government institutions in Makassar, Indonesia. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples to assess direct, mediating, and moderating effects.

Findings – Workload significantly increases emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.182$, $p = 0.003$) and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.225$, $p = 0.001$). Emotional exhaustion strongly predicts turnover intention ($\beta = 0.541$, $p < 0.001$) and partially mediates the relationship between workload and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.098$, $p = 0.004$). However, perceived organizational support does not significantly moderate the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship ($\beta = 0.009$, $p = 0.886$), with a negligible interaction effect ($f^2 = 0.000$).

Originality/Value – This study extends the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory by providing context-specific evidence of the health-impairment pathway from workload to emotional exhaustion and turnover intention among contract-based public employees. The findings also suggest that the resource-buffering role of organizational support may be context-dependent rather than universally applicable.

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1. Introduction

Employee retention remains a persistent challenge in public sector organizations, particularly within contract-based employment arrangements. Unlike permanent civil servants, contract-based public employees often experience limited job security, restricted career mobility, and heightened performance pressures. These structural conditions may intensify psychological strain and increase employees' withdrawal cognitions. In local government institutions in Makassar, Indonesia, contract-based employees are expected to meet administrative targets and service delivery standards comparable to those of permanent staff, yet they frequently operate under temporary contracts and performance-based renewal systems. Such employment arrangements provide a relevant context for examining whether workload is associated with emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, and whether organizational support can mitigate the relationship between workload and emotional exhaustion.

Within organizational behavior research, turnover intention is widely recognized as an important cognitive precursor to actual turnover behavior. Excessive workload represents a critical job demand that can be associated with psychological strain and emotional exhaustion. Within the broader burnout literature, emotional exhaustion represents a central dimension of employees' experience of being psychologically and energetically depleted by work demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017). Previous research has linked emotional exhaustion to adverse organizational outcomes, including reduced organizational attachment and increased intention to leave (Bagdadli et al., 2021; Schaufeli, 2017). Recent empirical evidence also indicates that emotional exhaustion is significantly associated with turnover intention across different organizational settings (Afshari et al., 2025; Özkan, 2022). However, because the present study measures emotional exhaustion rather than the broader multidimensional burnout construct, emotional exhaustion is treated as the focal strain outcome and mediator throughout the empirical analysis.

The present study is grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, which distinguishes between job demands and job resources as two fundamental characteristics of the work environment. Job demands, such as excessive workload, require sustained physical or psychological effort and may be associated with employee strain, whereas job resources can facilitate goal attainment, reduce the costs associated with job demands, and support employee functioning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017). From this perspective, workload may be associated with emotional exhaustion through a health-impairment process in which sustained work demands consume employees' energetic resources. Emotional exhaustion may subsequently be associated with withdrawal-related cognitions, including turnover intention. At the same time, the JD-R framework proposes that job resources may attenuate the adverse relationship between job demands and strain. The extent to which such a resource-buffering mechanism operates, however, may depend on the organizational and employment context.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) represents an important organizational resource because it reflects employees' perceptions that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Drawing on Organizational Support Theory and related social exchange perspectives, POS has been associated with more favorable employee outcomes and lower levels of strain and turnover intention (Kurtessis et al., 2015). More recent research indicates that organizational support may also influence the relationship between work-related stressors and employee strain, although evidence regarding its buffering effect is not uniformly consistent across contexts (Lim & Moon, 2025). From a JD-R perspective, this

suggests that POS may be particularly relevant during the workload–emotional exhaustion process, rather than only after emotional exhaustion has already developed. In contract-based employment settings, however, the extent to which perceived organizational support can buffer workload-related strain remains an empirical question, particularly when employees face temporary employment arrangements and uncertainty regarding employment continuity. Despite extensive research based on the JD-R framework, several gaps remain. First, although workload and emotional exhaustion have been extensively examined in organizational research, relatively limited attention has been given to their integrated relationship with turnover intention among contract-based public employees, particularly in emerging economy contexts. Second, the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the association between workload and turnover intention requires further examination in public-sector employment settings characterized by temporary or non-permanent employment arrangements. Third, although POS is widely conceptualized as a job resource, empirical evidence regarding whether it actually buffers the relationship between workload and emotional exhaustion remains mixed and context-dependent (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Lim & Moon, 2025). Fourth, research examining these relationships among contract-based employees in Indonesian public institutions remains relatively limited. These gaps indicate the need for a more integrated examination of the demand–strain–withdrawal process and the potential resource-buffering role of organizational support

Recent labor and administrative evidence further illustrate the relevance of examining employment conditions among non-permanent public employees.

Table 1. Supporting Data / Empirical Evidence

Indicator	Evidence	Source
Growth of non-permanent public employees	Increasing proportion of contract-based staff in public institutions across developing countries	Laha & Dutta, (2024)
Turnover tendency among temporary staff	Temporary employees report higher intention to leave compared to permanent counterparts	Xia et al. (2022)
Workload and emotional exhaustion linkage	High job demands significantly predict emotional exhaustion in public employees	(Ahmad et al., 2026; López-Cabarcos et al., 2021)
Emotional exhaustion and turnover intention	Emotional exhaustion is strongly associated with withdrawal cognition	(López-Cabarcos et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021)
Buffering role of organizational support	Perceived organizational support reduces strain-related outcomes	Kurtessis et al. (2015)

Source: Compiled from previous empirical research (2026)

Against this background, the present study investigates the relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and perceived organizational support among contract-based public employees in Makassar, Indonesia. Specifically, the study examines (1) the association between workload and emotional exhaustion, (2) the association between workload and turnover intention, (3) the association between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, (4) the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the workload–turnover intention relationship, and (5) the moderating role of perceived organizational support in the

workload–emotional exhaustion relationship. By integrating the health-impairment and resource-buffering perspectives of JD-R theory, the study seeks to extend understanding of the demand–strain–withdrawal process within contract-based public employment and to provide practical insights for managing workload, reducing emotional exhaustion, and supporting employee retention in local government institutions.

2. Literature Review & Hypothesis Development

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory provides the primary theoretical foundation for explaining the relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and perceived organizational support in the present study. The theory distinguishes between two broad categories of working conditions, namely job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that require sustained effort and are therefore associated with physiological and psychological costs. Job resources, in contrast, refer to aspects of the work environment that help employees achieve work goals, reduce the costs associated with job demands, and stimulate personal growth and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017). This distinction is particularly relevant to contract-based public employees, whose employment conditions may expose them to substantial work demands while simultaneously increasing the importance of organizational resources that can assist them in coping with those demands.

Within the JD-R framework, excessive or sustained job demands are associated with a health-impairment process. When employees are continuously exposed to demanding working conditions, their energetic and psychological resources may become depleted, increasing the likelihood of strain and emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017). In the present study, workload represents a salient job demand because contract-based public employees are expected to meet administrative targets, complete assigned tasks, and maintain service delivery standards. When workload becomes excessive relative to employees' available time and capacity, it may be associated with greater emotional exhaustion. Importantly, the present study does not conceptualize emotional exhaustion as synonymous with the broader burnout syndrome. Rather, emotional exhaustion is examined as the focal strain construct measured by the four-item scale used in this study.

Emotional exhaustion is particularly relevant to the JD-R health-impairment process because it reflects the depletion of employees' emotional and energetic resources in response to demanding work conditions. Sustained exposure to high job demands may therefore be associated with a progression from work-related pressure to psychological exhaustion. Such exhaustion may, in turn, be associated with unfavorable work-related attitudes and withdrawal cognitions, including turnover intention. Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes emotional exhaustion as a mediating mechanism through which workload may be associated with turnover intention. This positioning is consistent with the demand–strain–withdrawal logic of JD-R theory while avoiding the broader construct label of burnout when only emotional exhaustion is empirically measured.

JD-R theory also emphasizes the importance of job resources in determining how employees respond to demanding working conditions. Job resources can support employees in coping with job demands and may reduce the likelihood that demanding conditions will result in psychological strain. Importantly, the JD-R framework allows resources to operate through a buffering mechanism, whereby the association between a job demand and strain becomes weaker when relevant resources are more available (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli,

2017). However, the existence and strength of such buffering effects are empirical questions and may vary according to the nature of the resource, the type of job demand, and the organizational context.

This resource-buffering perspective provides the theoretical basis for positioning Perceived Organizational Support (POS) in the present study. POS reflects employees' beliefs that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. As an organizational resource, POS may provide employees with psychological and social resources that assist them in coping with demanding work conditions. From a JD-R perspective, the theoretically relevant question is therefore whether greater perceived organizational support can attenuate the association between workload and emotional exhaustion. This positioning is more consistent with the resource-buffering mechanism than placing POS solely as a moderator of the relationship between an already established strain state and turnover intention.

Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes the relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and POS within an integrated demand–strain–withdrawal framework. Workload represents the principal job demand; emotional exhaustion represents the focal psychological strain; turnover intention represents a withdrawal cognition; and POS represents a potential job resource that may buffer the association between workload and emotional exhaustion. The model therefore distinguishes two related but theoretically different mechanisms: the health-impairment pathway, through which workload is associated with emotional exhaustion and subsequently with turnover intention, and the resource-buffering pathway, through which POS may alter the strength of the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship.

Based on this theoretical foundation, the subsequent subsections develop the specific relationships among the study constructs and formulate five hypotheses concerning the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships in the proposed model.

2.1 Workload and Emotional Exhaustion

Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, workload represents a salient job demand because it requires employees to sustain physical, cognitive, and psychological effort to accomplish their assigned tasks. When workload becomes excessive or persists over time, the effort required to meet job demands may progressively consume employees' energetic resources. The resulting imbalance between work demands and available resources can generate psychological strain and increase the likelihood of emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Thus, workload is not merely a quantitative characteristic of employees' tasks, but a work condition that may have important consequences for employees' psychological well-being when perceived demands exceed their available capacity to cope.

The relationship between workload and emotional exhaustion is particularly relevant to public-sector employment, where employees are often required to meet administrative requirements, service standards, and organizational targets within constrained organizational conditions. The present study focuses on contract-based public employees, who may face work demands comparable to those of permanent employees while operating under temporary employment arrangements and performance expectations. Under such circumstances, persistent workload may intensify the accumulation of psychological strain because employees must continuously invest effort to meet work requirements while managing the uncertainty associated with their employment status. The present study therefore considers workload as a salient job demand that may be associated with the depletion of employees' energetic resources and increased emotional exhaustion.

From the health-impairment perspective of JD-R theory, sustained exposure to demanding working conditions may progressively deplete employees' physical and psychological energy. Emotional exhaustion is particularly relevant to this process because it reflects a state of psychological and energetic depletion resulting from prolonged work-related demands. Employees who repeatedly encounter high workload may have fewer energetic resources available for recovery, thereby increasing their susceptibility to exhaustion. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) provide the theoretical basis for this mechanism, while the empirical evidence considered in the present study indicates that demanding work conditions are associated with emotional exhaustion across occupational contexts.

Previous empirical evidence further supports the expected relationship between workload and emotional exhaustion. The supporting evidence identified in the article includes Ahmad et al. (2026) and Buzeti et al. (2026), who reported an association between high job demands and emotional exhaustion among public employees. The evidence discussed in the original manuscript also indicates that demanding work conditions can contribute to the accumulation of psychological strain and fatigue. Taken together, these theoretical and empirical arguments suggest that workload represents an important antecedent of emotional exhaustion because sustained work demands may increase the depletion of employees' psychological and energetic resources.

This relationship may be particularly relevant in contract-based public employment. Although workload can affect employees regardless of employment status, its psychological implications may become more salient when employees simultaneously face performance pressures and employment uncertainty. Contract-based employees may perceive continued satisfactory performance as important for maintaining their employment, potentially limiting their ability to disengage from demanding work conditions. Persistent exposure to demanding workloads may therefore be associated with greater strain and psychological fatigue. This argument is consistent with the evidence presented in the article concerning persistent task demands in public-service environments and their relationship with psychological strain (Ahmad et al., 2026).

Accordingly, the JD-R perspective suggests that workload constitutes an important job demand that may initiate the health-impairment process by depleting employees' energetic resources and increasing emotional exhaustion. In the context of contract-based public employees, this theoretical mechanism provides a basis for expecting that employees who perceive higher levels of workload will also report higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Workload is positively associated with emotional exhaustion among contract-based public employees.

2.2 Workload and Turnover Intention

Beyond its potential to generate psychological strain, workload may also influence employees' turnover intention directly. Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious consideration or intention to leave the organization and represents an important withdrawal cognition preceding actual turnover. When employees perceive their workload as excessive, persistent, or difficult to manage, they may evaluate their current employment situation as increasingly unsustainable. Under such conditions, leaving the organization may become a perceived alternative for reducing continued exposure to demanding work conditions.

From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, excessive workload represents a sustained job demand that requires employees to continuously invest physical

and psychological effort (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). Although the health-impairment process emphasizes emotional exhaustion as an important consequence of excessive demands, job demands may also have direct implications for withdrawal-related attitudes. When the demands associated with a job are perceived as disproportionate to the resources available to employees, continued participation in the organization may become less attractive. Thus, workload may contribute to turnover intention not only because it generates emotional exhaustion, but also because employees may directly question whether the conditions of their employment are sustainable.

This direct relationship is particularly relevant in contract-based public employment. Contract-based employees may face demanding workloads while having less certainty regarding employment continuity and career progression. Under these circumstances, excessive workload may intensify perceptions that the effort required by the job is difficult to justify in relation to the expected or available employment rewards. The original article similarly argues that, in public-sector settings characterized by temporary contracts, excessive workload may increase perceptions of imbalance between effort and long-term rewards, thereby strengthening employees' desire to leave. This context is important because the consequences of workload may extend beyond immediate fatigue and influence employees' broader evaluation of whether remaining in the organization is worthwhile.

Empirical evidence in the existing article provides support for this direct pathway. Dwi Anggraini et al. (2022) examined the effect of workload on turnover intention among employees of PT PLN (Persero) Malang and investigated job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism. Similarly, Hariyanto et al. (2022) examined workload and work environment in relation to turnover intention through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These studies provide empirical evidence that workload is relevant to employees' intention to leave, although the mechanisms examined in those studies differ from the burnout-centered mechanism proposed in the present research.

The distinction between the direct and indirect pathways is theoretically important. A direct workload–turnover relationship suggests that employees may develop withdrawal intentions as a response to demanding work conditions without the entire effect necessarily operating through emotional exhaustion. At the same time, the JD-R framework suggests that part of the effect may occur through psychological strain, whereby workload depletes employees' energetic resources, contributes to emotional exhaustion, and subsequently increases turnover intention. The present study therefore examines both pathways simultaneously. This specification allows workload to be assessed as a direct antecedent of turnover intention while emotional exhaustion is subsequently examined as a potential explanatory mechanism in the workload–turnover relationship.

Taken together, the theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence suggest that employees who experience higher levels of workload are more likely to develop turnover intentions. In the context of contract-based public employment, where demanding work conditions may coexist with employment uncertainty, this relationship may be particularly relevant. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Workload has a positive and significant effect on turnover intention among contract-based public employees.

2.3 Emotional Exhaustion and Turnover Intention

Emotional exhaustion represents an important psychological consequence of prolonged exposure to demanding work conditions and may subsequently be associated with employees' intention to withdraw from their organizations. Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, emotional exhaustion reflects the depletion of employees' energetic and psychological resources following sustained exposure to demanding working conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017). Rather than representing a temporary experience of work-related fatigue, emotional exhaustion reflects a more persistent state of psychological depletion that may influence how employees evaluate their work and their willingness to remain in the organization. The health-impairment process therefore provides a theoretical basis for expecting emotional exhaustion to be positively associated with turnover intention. The relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention can be explained through a psychological withdrawal process. Employees experiencing substantial emotional exhaustion may perceive that their existing work conditions require continued effort without sufficient opportunities for recovery. As psychological resources become depleted, disengagement from the organization may become an increasingly attractive response to reduce further exposure to demanding working conditions. In this sense, turnover intention represents a cognitive form of withdrawal that may emerge before actual turnover occurs. Emotional exhaustion may therefore serve as an important psychological correlate of employees' consideration of leaving their current organization.

This mechanism is particularly relevant in contract-based public employment. Contract-based employees may experience demanding work conditions while simultaneously facing employment uncertainty and limited perceptions of long-term career security. Under such conditions, persistent emotional exhaustion may have consequences beyond individual well-being because employees may increasingly evaluate whether remaining in the organization is sustainable. When opportunities for recovery are limited and future employment prospects are uncertain, psychological exhaustion may be associated with stronger inclinations to disengage and consider alternative employment opportunities.

The existing literature provides empirical support for the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. The original article identifies evidence that emotional exhaustion is significantly associated with turnover intention across public and private sector settings, including findings reported by Afshari et al. (2025) and Özkan (2022). However, because the present study operationalizes the strain construct specifically through emotional exhaustion, the empirical interpretation is restricted to this dimension rather than the broader emotional exhaustion syndrome. The article also identifies Park et al. (2021) as evidence linking emotional exhaustion with withdrawal cognition. These findings are consistent with the JD-R health-impairment process, in which prolonged exposure to job demands is associated with psychological depletion that may subsequently be related to adverse work-related outcomes.

The relationship is also theoretically important because emotional exhaustion provides a potential mechanism through which employees' psychological experiences become associated with withdrawal intentions. An employee may experience high workload without necessarily reporting an immediate intention to leave; however, when demanding work conditions are accompanied by persistent emotional exhaustion, consideration of withdrawal may become more salient. Thus, emotional exhaustion can be understood not only as a strain outcome associated with demanding work conditions, but also as a proximal psychological correlate of

turnover intention. This distinction is important for the present study because it allows the analysis to examine whether workload is associated with turnover intention both directly and indirectly through emotional exhaustion.

Accordingly, higher levels of emotional exhaustion are expected to be associated with stronger turnover intentions among contract-based public employees. Based on the JD-R health-impairment mechanism and the empirical evidence discussed above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Emotional exhaustion is positively associated with turnover intention among contract-based public employees.

2.4 The Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion

The relationship between workload and turnover intention may not be fully explained by a direct association between demanding work conditions and employees' intention to leave. Instead, emotional exhaustion may function as an intervening psychological mechanism through which workload is associated with withdrawal cognition. This proposition is consistent with the health-impairment process of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, which suggests that excessive job demands consume employees' energetic resources and are associated with psychological strain. When such strain becomes persistent, employees may experience emotional exhaustion, which may subsequently be associated with adverse work-related outcomes, including turnover intention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017).

The mediating role of emotional exhaustion can therefore be conceptualized as a sequential demand–strain–withdrawal mechanism. First, employees exposed to high workload are required to invest sustained physical and psychological effort to meet work demands. When these demands persist, available energetic resources may become depleted, increasing the likelihood of emotional exhaustion. Second, employees experiencing greater emotional exhaustion may increasingly perceive their work situation as psychologically difficult to sustain. This condition may be associated with stronger withdrawal cognitions, including the intention to leave the organization. Emotional exhaustion thus provides a potential psychological link between the experience of demanding workloads and employees' consideration of leaving.

This mechanism is particularly relevant to contract-based public employees because workload may be experienced within an employment context characterized by temporary contracts, performance expectations, and limited employment certainty. Employees may continue to perform under demanding conditions because satisfactory performance may be important for maintaining their employment. However, sustained effort without adequate recovery may be associated with greater psychological exhaustion. When employees experience persistent emotional exhaustion, the intention to leave may become a form of psychological withdrawal from demanding work conditions. The present study therefore conceptualizes emotional exhaustion not merely as a strain outcome associated with workload, but also as a potential mechanism through which workload is related to employees' withdrawal intentions.

The JD-R perspective provides a stronger theoretical explanation for this mechanism than a simple direct-association model. If workload is associated with turnover intention only through a direct pathway, the findings would indicate that demanding work conditions are directly related to withdrawal cognition. However, if emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship, the findings would indicate that the psychological strain associated with workload forms an important part of the process linking job demands with turnover intention. This distinction is theoretically meaningful because it identifies the potential psychological

pathway underlying employees' withdrawal cognitions rather than treating turnover intention as an immediate response to workload.

Empirical evidence cited in the original article also provides support for this mediating mechanism. The study identifies Park et al. (2021) as evidence that emotional exhaustion is associated with turnover-related outcomes and discusses the broader relationship between demanding work conditions, psychological strain, and turnover intention. The theoretical discussion in the article similarly positions workload as a job demand within the JD-R health-impairment process. Taken together, these arguments support the expectation that emotional exhaustion may represent an important mechanism connecting workload with employees' intention to leave.

Importantly, the mediation argument does not imply that workload is associated with turnover intention exclusively through emotional exhaustion. Workload may also have a direct association with turnover intention because employees can develop withdrawal cognitions in response to demanding working conditions without necessarily experiencing substantial emotional exhaustion. Therefore, the theoretically relevant expectation is that emotional exhaustion partially transmits the association between workload and turnover intention while a direct workload–turnover relationship may remain. This distinction is consistent with the structure of the present research model, which simultaneously examines the direct association between workload and turnover intention and the indirect association operating through emotional exhaustion.

Taken together, the JD-R health-impairment perspective and the empirical evidence cited in the original article suggest that emotional exhaustion constitutes an important psychological mechanism linking workload with turnover intention. Higher workload is expected to be associated with higher emotional exhaustion, while higher emotional exhaustion is expected to be associated with stronger turnover intention. Accordingly, the indirect association between workload and turnover intention through emotional exhaustion is expected to be positive and statistically significant. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Emotional exhaustion mediates the positive relationship between workload and turnover intention among contract-based public employees.

2.5 Perceived Organizational Support as a Job Resource

Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, Perceived Organizational Support (POS) can be conceptualized as an organizationally embedded job resource that provides employees with social and psychological resources for dealing with work demands. POS refers to employees' beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. The construct is also grounded in Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees tend to reciprocate favorable treatment from their organization through positive work attitudes and reduced withdrawal tendencies (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Its relevance to JD-R theory lies in the fact that organizational support can provide employees with resources that help them cope with demanding work conditions.

The resource function of POS is particularly relevant when employees encounter sustained job demands. According to JD-R theory, job resources can help employees achieve work goals, reduce the psychological costs associated with job demands, and support employees in maintaining their functioning under demanding conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017). Thus, organizational support may provide an additional resource base that employees can draw upon when dealing with workload. When employees perceive that their

organization values their contributions and is concerned about their well-being, they may feel less isolated in dealing with work pressures and may perceive greater access to assistance and organizational resources.

The protective function of POS, however, should not be interpreted as automatic or universal. The existing article itself recognizes that the buffering function of job resources is context-dependent and may vary according to the type of resource, the nature of the demand, and the context in which employees experience those demands. This qualification is important because the presence of an organizational resource does not necessarily mean that the resource will effectively neutralize every form of job demand. Rather, its effectiveness depends partly on whether employees perceive the resource as salient, meaningful, and relevant to the demands they face.

This consideration is particularly important in contract-based public employment. Employees working under temporary employment arrangements may experience organizational support differently from employees in more secure employment relationships. Formal organizational policies or general expressions of support may not necessarily be perceived as sufficient when employees face sustained workload and uncertainty concerning employment continuity. The original article suggests that, in relatively insecure public employment settings, organizational support may sometimes be experienced as procedural or symbolic rather than substantive. Consequently, the potential protective effect of POS should be examined empirically rather than assumed.

The existing literature nevertheless provides a theoretical and empirical basis for treating POS as a relevant job resource. The article identifies POS as one of the frequently examined organizational resources and reports evidence that it can reduce emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. The supporting evidence in the manuscript also cites Kurtessis et al. (2015) regarding the role of organizational support in reducing strain-related outcomes. These findings are consistent with the broader JD-R proposition that resources can reduce the adverse consequences associated with demanding working conditions.

Importantly, conceptualizing POS as a job resource also helps clarify where its buffering mechanism should theoretically operate. If workload is conceptualized as a job demand and emotional exhaustion as the resulting strain outcome, the most proximal JD-R proposition is that an available job resource should weaken the extent to which workload translates into emotional exhaustion. In other words, organizational support should have its theoretically strongest buffering relevance during the demand–strain process, rather than being assumed to intervene only after emotional exhaustion has already developed. This distinction provides a clearer basis for examining POS as a moderator of the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship.

Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes POS primarily as a job resource within the JD-R framework, while recognizing that its buffering effectiveness may depend on contextual conditions. This positioning provides the theoretical foundation for examining whether higher perceived organizational support weakens the positive association between workload and emotional exhaustion among contract-based public employees.

2.6 Perceived Organizational Support and Emotional Exhaustion

Perceived organizational support may be associated with lower emotional exhaustion because organizational support represents an important job resource within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework. When employees perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, they may have greater access to psychological,

social, and instrumental resources that help them cope with demanding working conditions. Such resources may reduce the extent to which employees experience sustained work demands as psychologically depleting.

From the health-impairment perspective of JD-R theory, emotional exhaustion reflects the depletion of employees' emotional and energetic resources following sustained exposure to work demands. Job resources can contribute to the protection and replenishment of these resources, thereby reducing employees' vulnerability to psychological strain. Perceived organizational support may therefore have a direct association with emotional exhaustion even when it does not necessarily alter the relationship between a specific job demand and strain.

This distinction is important for the present study. A direct POS–emotional exhaustion relationship concerns whether employees who perceive stronger organizational support generally report lower levels of emotional exhaustion. In contrast, the moderation hypothesis examines whether POS changes the strength of the association between workload and emotional exhaustion. These are theoretically distinct propositions and should not be interpreted as equivalent. Accordingly, the present study expects perceived organizational support to be negatively associated with emotional exhaustion while separately testing whether POS buffers the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship.

Based on the JD-R resource perspective and the role of organizational support in reducing strain-related outcomes, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Perceived organizational support is negatively associated with emotional exhaustion.

2.7 Perceived Organizational Support as a Moderator of Workload and Emotional Exhaustion

The resource-buffering proposition of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory suggests that job resources can attenuate the adverse association between job demands and employee strain. When employees have sufficient resources to cope with demanding working conditions, the psychological costs associated with those demands may be reduced. Accordingly, if workload represents a substantial job demand and emotional exhaustion represents a psychological strain outcome, Perceived Organizational Support (POS) may function as a resource that weakens the positive association between workload and emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017).

The proposed moderating mechanism differs conceptually from positioning POS as a moderator of the emotional exhaustion–turnover intention relationship. Moderation at the emotional exhaustion–turnover intention stage would imply that organizational support becomes particularly relevant after psychological strain has already emerged. By contrast, positioning POS as a moderator of the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship corresponds more directly to the resource-buffering logic of JD-R because the resource is expected to operate at the point where a job demand is associated with psychological strain. This distinction establishes a theoretically coherent model in which workload represents the demand, emotional exhaustion represents the strain outcome, and POS represents a potentially protective resource available to employees when dealing with demanding work conditions.

Organizational support may attenuate the psychological burden associated with workload through several complementary mechanisms. Employees who perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being may perceive greater access to assistance and social resources when dealing with demanding tasks. Such perceptions may

also reduce the extent to which demanding work is experienced as an individually burdensome condition. When employees believe that their organization is responsive to their needs, they may be better positioned to cope with work pressures and preserve psychological resources, potentially weakening the association between workload and emotional exhaustion.

This buffering mechanism is particularly relevant in contract-based public employment. Employees in temporary employment arrangements may encounter demanding workloads alongside uncertainty regarding employment continuity and career development. In such circumstances, organizational support may represent an important source of psychological and social resources that helps employees cope with work demands. Conversely, when workload is high but organizational support is perceived as limited, employees may perceive fewer organizational resources with which to manage the psychological costs of demanding work conditions. The combination of high demands and inadequate resources may therefore be associated with greater emotional exhaustion.

The existing literature provides support for the potential protective role of organizational support, although the evidence does not suggest that buffering effects are universal. The article identifies Kurtessis et al. (2015) as evidence that perceived organizational support is associated with reduced strain-related outcomes. The manuscript also recognizes evidence that organizational support may moderate relationships between stressors and strain, although such effects vary across contexts (Lim & Moon, 2025). These findings support the relevance of POS as a potential job resource while simultaneously indicating that its buffering capacity should be empirically assessed rather than presumed.

Importantly, the buffering effect of POS may depend on the extent to which the resource is salient and appropriately aligned with the demands experienced by employees. The existing manuscript notes that JD-R resources are not inherently protective and that their buffering function may depend on situational salience and employees' subjective valuation of those resources. Similarly, recent evidence indicates that job resources do not uniformly buffer the effects of demanding work conditions, with their moderating effects varying according to the nature of job demands, occupational context, and the specific dimension of strain examined (Popucza, 2026; Sklar et al., 2021). Therefore, the proposed moderation should be interpreted as a theoretically grounded expectation rather than an assumption that organizational support will necessarily eliminate or substantially reduce the psychological consequences associated with workload.

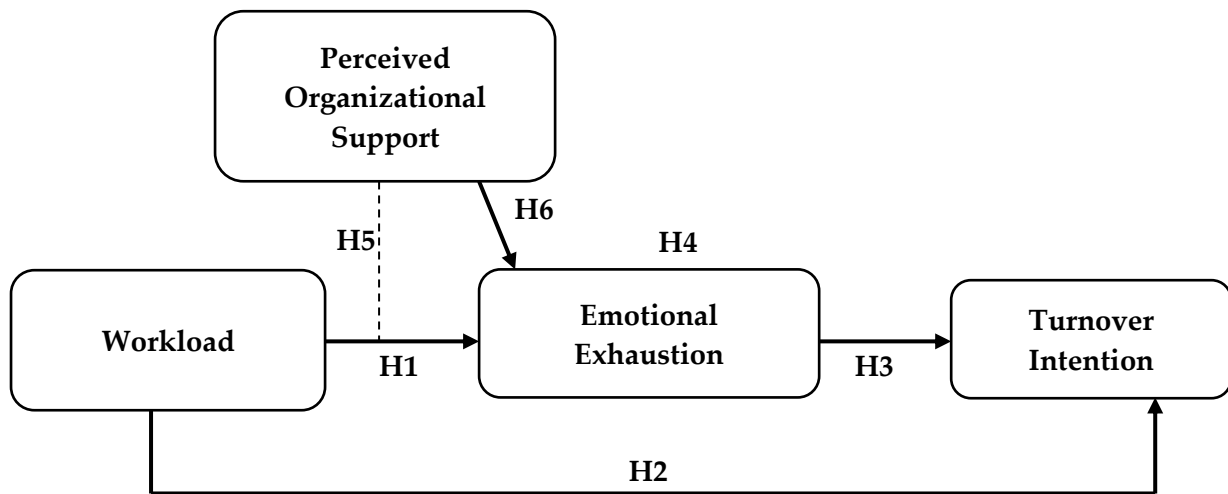
In the context of the present study, the central proposition is that employees experiencing high workload may report lower levels of emotional exhaustion when they perceive stronger organizational support. Conversely, when POS is low, the positive association between workload and emotional exhaustion is expected to be stronger because employees may perceive fewer organizational resources available to cope with demanding working conditions. This proposition places POS directly at the demand–strain interface, providing a more direct application of the resource-buffering mechanism of JD-R theory than positioning organizational support after emotional exhaustion has already developed.

Based on the JD-R resource-buffering perspective and the empirical evidence discussed above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Perceived organizational support moderates the positive association between workload and emotional exhaustion, such that the association is weaker when perceived organizational support is high.

Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence discussed above, the conceptual model of this study is proposed as follows.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Source: Author's perception (2026)

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Study Context

The study was conducted among individuals employed under contract-based or non-permanent employment arrangements across several locally governed or publicly oriented organizations in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The sampled organizational settings included regional public hospitals, regional education offices, municipal water utilities, regionally owned enterprises, and regional market-management enterprises. These organizations operate within different institutional and managerial arrangements and should therefore not be interpreted as representing a single homogeneous organizational environment.

For the purpose of this study, the term contract-based employee refers to an individual who was employed under a non-permanent work arrangement at the time of data collection and whose employment continuity was subject to contractual or non-permanent employment conditions. Eligibility was determined based on the respondent's current employment status as reported during the survey and a minimum organizational tenure of one year. The study did not assume that the legal status, governance arrangements, employment systems, service mandates, or specific contractual mechanisms were identical across all participating organizational categories.

Accordingly, the study focuses on individual employees who share the broader characteristic of non-permanent or contract-based employment rather than treating the five participating organizational categories as institutionally equivalent. This broader employment context provides an opportunity to examine the associations among workload, emotional exhaustion, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention across heterogeneous organizational settings. However, the findings should be interpreted at the individual employee level and should not be generalized as evidence that the sampled organizations operate under identical employment or institutional conditions.

3.2 Population, Sampling, and Data Collection

The target population comprised contract-based employees working across locally governed and publicly oriented organizations in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The participating organizational settings included regional public hospitals operating under Regional Public Service Agency arrangements, regional education offices, municipal water utility companies, regionally owned enterprises, and regional market-management enterprises. These organizations represent different institutional and organizational settings and may differ in terms of governance arrangements, service mandates, managerial autonomy, employment systems, and specific contractual practices. Accordingly, the study does not assume that all respondents operated within an identical institutional or employment environment.

For the purpose of this study, contract-based employees were defined as individuals who, at the time of data collection, were employed under a non-permanent or contract-based employment arrangement and whose continued employment was subject to the terms or continuation of that arrangement. A purposive sampling technique was employed because the study required respondents who met specific employment characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Memon et al., 2025).

The inclusion criteria were: (1) respondents were currently employed under a contract-based or other non-permanent employment arrangement and (2) had a minimum organizational tenure of one year. The minimum-tenure criterion was applied to ensure that respondents had sufficient experience with their organizational environment, workload conditions, supervisory practices, and employment arrangements to provide informed responses to the study variables. The inclusion criteria were based on the broader characteristic of non-permanent employment rather than on the assumption that respondents across all participating organizations shared identical legal, administrative, or contractual arrangements.

Data collection was conducted from August to December 2025 through a combination of online and paper-based questionnaires. Prior to distribution, the researcher contacted administrative representatives or designated personnel within the participating organizations to facilitate access to eligible respondents. The questionnaire link was distributed electronically to respondents who preferred online participation, while printed questionnaires were provided to employees in units where direct distribution was more practical. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their responses would be treated confidentially and used solely for research purposes.

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed across five participating organizational settings. Of these, 220 questionnaires were returned, corresponding to an overall response rate of 88.0%. During the data-screening process, 25 returned questionnaires were excluded because they were incomplete or did not satisfy the predetermined eligibility criteria. Consequently, 195 valid responses were retained for the final analysis.

The response rate was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Response Rate} = \frac{220}{250} \times 100 = 88\%$$

After data screening, 195 questionnaires were retained as valid responses. Therefore, the valid response rate relative to the number of distributed questionnaires was:

$$\text{Valid Response Rate} = \frac{195}{250} \times 100 = 78\%$$

The proportion of valid questionnaires among the returned questionnaires was:

$$\text{Usable Response Rate} = \frac{195}{220} \times 100 = 88.6\%$$

The final sample therefore consisted of 195 valid respondents, representing 78.0% of the initially distributed questionnaires and 88.6% of the returned questionnaires after data screening.

To provide greater transparency regarding the organizational composition of the sample, the distribution of questionnaires and valid respondents across the participating organizational settings is presented in **Table 2**. The categories presented in Table 2 should be interpreted as distinct organizational settings rather than as institutionally equivalent units. Although all retained respondents met the study's eligibility criteria for contract-based or non-permanent employment, the specific governance and contractual arrangements may vary across organizational categories. Therefore, the findings are interpreted at the individual employee level and should not be understood as implying institutional homogeneity across the participating organizations.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents Across Participating Organizational Settings

Participating Institution	Functional Unit/Type	Questionnaires Distributed	Returned	Valid Responses	% of Valid Sample
Regional Public Hospitals (Regional Public Service Agency Hospitals)	Administrative Services	55	49	43	22.1%
Regional Education Offices	Technical Services	50	44	39	20.0%
Regional Water Utility Companies (Municipal Water Utilities)	Public Service Unit	50	45	41	21.0%
Regionally Owned Enterprises (ROEs)	Administrative and Support Services	45	40	35	17.9%
Regional Market Management Enterprises	Technical and Public Services	50	42	37	19.0%
Total		250	220	195	100.0%

Source: Primary survey data (2026).

As shown in Table 2, the final sample was drawn from five different organizational categories. These categories represent heterogeneous institutional settings and may differ in terms of governance arrangements, service mandates, managerial autonomy, employment systems,

and specific contractual practices. Therefore, the sample should not be interpreted as representing a single institutionally homogeneous population.

The common characteristic used for respondent eligibility was the broader condition of non-permanent or contract-based employment, rather than institutional equivalence across the participating organizations. The study therefore examines individual-level relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention across these organizational settings. Because detailed contractual classifications were not modelled separately and an institution-level identifier was not retained for multilevel or subgroup analysis, the findings should be interpreted with caution and should not be generalized to imply identical relationships across all organizational categories.

3.3 Sample Size Adequacy and Statistical Power

The adequacy of the sample size was assessed using an a priori statistical power analysis rather than relying exclusively on the ten-times rule. This approach was adopted because the revised structural model includes direct relationships and an interaction effect, and moderation effects are generally more difficult to detect than main effects. The power analysis therefore focused specifically on the statistical requirements for detecting the proposed interaction between workload and perceived organizational support.

The power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1 under the *F tests, Linear multiple regression: Fixed model, R² increase* procedure (Faul et al., 2009). The analysis was specified with an alpha level of 0.05, statistical power of 0.80, and a conservative small effect size of $f^2 = 0.02$ for the interaction effect. The analysis considered one tested predictor, representing the Workload $\times$ Perceived Organizational Support interaction term, and three total predictors, comprising workload, perceived organizational support, and their interaction term in the emotional exhaustion equation.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power to determine the minimum sample size required to detect a small interaction effect ($f^2 = 0.02$) with a statistical power of 0.80 and a significance level of 0.05. The analysis indicated that approximately 395 respondents would be required for reliable detection of a small moderation effect.

Given that the present study included 195 respondents, the sample size was sufficient for estimating the main effects and mediation relationships but was below the recommended threshold for detecting small interaction effects.

A sensitivity analysis further indicated that, with $N = 195$ and a statistical power of 0.80, the study was capable of detecting only interaction effects of approximately $f^2 \approx 0.04$ or larger. Therefore, the study may have had limited sensitivity for identifying very small moderation effects.

3.4 Organizational Clustering and Independence of Observations

The potential for organizational clustering was considered because the respondents were recruited from different types of regional public institutions in Makassar. The final sample consisted of 195 contract-based public employees distributed across five institutional categories, namely regional public hospitals, regional education offices, regional water utility companies, regionally owned enterprises, and regional market management enterprises. The distribution of valid respondents ranged from 35 to 43 respondents per institutional category, indicating that the sample was not heavily concentrated in a single organizational setting.

Despite this distribution, employees working within the same institution may share organizational conditions that can influence their perceptions and experiences. These

conditions may include supervisory practices, workload allocation procedures, employment policies, contract arrangements, and organizational support practices. Consequently, respondents from the same institutional environment may provide responses that are more similar to one another than responses from employees working in different institutions. This creates a potential source of non-independence among individual observations.

The potential clustering issue is particularly relevant to the present study because the focal constructs may be shaped partly by shared organizational conditions. Workload may reflect institution-specific work allocation practices, perceived organizational support may be influenced by common organizational policies and supervisory practices, and emotional exhaustion may be affected by shared working conditions. Therefore, the fact that respondents were distributed across several institutional categories does not by itself establish that all individual observations are statistically independent.

The study nevertheless maintained an individual-level analytical framework because the unit of analysis was the individual contract-based public employee. The research instruments were administered and analyzed at the respondent level, and the hypotheses were formulated to explain relationships among individual perceptions of workload, emotional exhaustion, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention. The institutional categories were therefore used to describe the sampling composition rather than as higher-level analytical units.

Importantly, an institution-level identifier was not collected at the individual respondent level. Consequently, it was not possible to formally estimate between-institution variance or determine the extent to which the observed relationships were attributable to differences between institutions. A multilevel analysis or institution-level cluster adjustment could therefore not be implemented reliably within the available dataset. The absence of an institution identifier also prevents a direct assessment of the degree of within-institution dependence among respondents.

Accordingly, the potential for organizational clustering is acknowledged as a methodological limitation of the study. The PLS-SEM results are therefore interpreted primarily as relationships at the individual employee level and should not be generalized to imply that the same relationships necessarily hold across organizations or that institution-level differences are negligible. In particular, the reported path coefficients and significance levels should be interpreted with appropriate caution because unobserved institution-level characteristics may have contributed to similarities among respondents from the same institutional environment. Future research should address this limitation by incorporating an institution-level identifier into the sampling and data-collection design. Where an adequate number of organizational clusters is available, subsequent studies could employ multilevel structural equation modelling or cluster-robust estimation to account explicitly for the nested structure of employees within organizations. Such an approach would allow researchers to distinguish individual-level relationships from institution-level variation and provide stronger evidence regarding the generalizability of the relationships examined in this study.

In addition to the potential statistical dependence among respondents within organizational settings, the participating organizations differed in their institutional characteristics. The sample included government administrative units as well as publicly oriented service organizations and regionally owned enterprises. These settings may operate under different governance structures, managerial arrangements, and employment systems. Accordingly, the analysis does not assume that all respondents experienced identical institutional conditions.

The unit of analysis remained the individual employee, and the study examined whether the proposed relationships were observable across the combined sample of eligible contract-based or non-permanent employees. The absence of detailed institution-level and contract-type classifications in the analytical dataset prevents a formal assessment of whether the structural relationships differ systematically across organizational or employment categories.

3.5 Measurement Instruments

All study constructs were measured using previously developed instruments adapted to the context of contract-based public employment. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Workload was measured using four indicators capturing perceived quantitative work pressure, high work volume, time pressure, and excessive workload. The items were adapted from previous empirical research examining workload within job demands and JD-R-based settings (Hung et al., 2025; Park et al., 2021).

Emotional exhaustion was measured using four items reflecting feelings of emotional depletion, tiredness, exhaustion, and being worn out as a consequence of work. The measurement approach was informed by the emotional exhaustion and broader burnout literature, including the sources cited in the original manuscript (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Buzeti et al., 2026; López-Cabarcos et al., 2021; Schaufeli, 2017). Consistent with the conceptual scope of the present study, emotional exhaustion was treated as a distinct focal construct rather than as a measure of the broader multidimensional burnout syndrome.

Turnover intention was measured using five indicators representing employees' cognitive intention to leave their current organization, including thoughts of leaving, intention to search for another job, expectations of leaving, thoughts of quitting, and willingness to leave if an alternative opportunity became available (Hung et al., 2025; Özkan, 2022; Park et al., 2021).

Perceived organizational support was measured using four items adapted from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) and related organizational support literature. The items captured employees' perceptions concerning whether their organization values their contributions, cares about their well-being, provides assistance when problems arise, and responds appropriately to honest mistakes (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Lim & Moon, 2025).

Before structural hypothesis testing, the measurement model was evaluated for indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

3.6 Measurement Items

Table 3. Measurement Items

Variable	Code	Measurement Item	Source/References
Workload	WL1	I have too many tasks to complete in the time available.	Hung et al. (2025); S.-K. Park et al. (2021)
	WL2	I am required to work very fast to meet job demands.	
	WL3	My job requires a high volume of work that often feels overwhelming.	
	WL4	I feel that workload pressure is excessive in my daily tasks.	

Variable	Code	Measurement Item	Source/References
Emotional Exhaustion	EE1	I feel emotionally drained from my work.	Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Buzeti et al., 2026; López-Cabarcos et al., 2021; Schaufeli, 2017
	EE2	I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.	
	EE3	Working all day is really exhausting for me.	
	EE4	I feel worn out at the end of the workday.	
Perceived Organizational Support	POS1	My organization values my contribution to its well-being.	Kurtessis et al. (2015); Eisenberger et al. (2020); Lim & Moon (2025)
	POS2	My organization really cares about my well-being.	
	POS3	Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.	
	POS4	My organization would forgive an honest mistake I make.	
Turnover Intention	TI1	I often think about leaving my organization.	Hung et al. (2025); Özkan (2022); (Park et al., 2021)
	TI2	I intend to look for a new job soon.	
	TI3	I will probably leave this organization in the near future.	
	TI4	I frequently think about quitting my current job.	
	TI5	If I had another opportunity, I would leave this organization.	

Source: Adapted from previous research (2026)

3.7 Control Variables

The final structural model did not include demographic or employment-related control variables. Although respondent characteristics such as age, gender, tenure, and work unit may theoretically be associated with workload, emotional exhaustion, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention, these variables were not specified as control predictors in the final PLS-SEM model.

The primary objective of the study was to examine the hypothesized relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention based on the proposed theoretical framework. Accordingly, the final structural model was specified to test the substantive relationships and the proposed mediation and moderation mechanisms rather than to estimate an exploratory demographic-adjusted model.

Additional employment-related characteristics, such as contract duration, employment renewal history, and perceived job insecurity, were not included as control variables because sufficiently detailed and complete individual-level data for these characteristics were not available in the analytical dataset. No variable was introduced retrospectively without corresponding respondent-level information.

Therefore, the results reported in this study represent estimates from the final model without demographic control variables. This modelling decision should be considered when interpreting the findings, particularly because unobserved respondent and employment characteristics may potentially contribute to the observed relationships. The absence of demographic and detailed employment controls is therefore acknowledged as a limitation, and future research should incorporate theoretically relevant individual and employment characteristics to examine the robustness of the substantive relationships.

3.8 Data Analysis

PLS-SEM was employed to estimate the proposed structural model because the study combines theory-based examination of direct, mediating, and moderating relationships with an assessment of the model's out-of-sample predictive relevance. The analytical objective was therefore not limited to testing the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships, but also included evaluating how well the estimated model could predict the indicators of the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2019, 2021; Haryono, 2017). PLS-SEM provides an appropriate variance-based framework for simultaneously estimating the structural relationships and conducting prediction-oriented assessments through procedures such as PLS predict (Shmueli et al., 2019).

The selection of PLS-SEM was not based solely on the presence of mediation or moderation effects, as such relationships can also be estimated using covariance-based SEM. Rather, PLS-SEM was selected because of its compatibility with the study's combined explanatory and predictive objectives, particularly the complementary assessment of out-of-sample predictive relevance. The model was estimated using Smart-PLS 4, and the predictive assessment was subsequently conducted using the PLS predict procedure (Hair et al., 2019; Shmueli et al., 2019).

The analysis consisted of two principal stages. First, the measurement model was assessed to establish the reliability and validity of the constructs. Indicator loadings were examined to assess indicator reliability, while Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used to assess internal consistency. Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity was examined using the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Hair et al., 2021; Henseler et al., 2015; Santosa, 2018).

Second, the structural model was assessed by examining the path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), predictive relevance where applicable, and statistical significance. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was employed to obtain the sampling distributions required for significance testing (Hair et al., 2019).

The direct relationships were assessed through the estimated path coefficients from workload to emotional exhaustion, workload to turnover intention, and emotional exhaustion to turnover intention. The mediating role of emotional exhaustion was evaluated through the indirect effect of workload on turnover intention through emotional exhaustion.

3.9 Mediation and Moderation Analysis

The mediating role of emotional exhaustion was examined through the indirect effect of workload on turnover intention through emotional exhaustion (Workload → Emotional Exhaustion → Turnover Intention). The indirect effect was assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, with statistical support determined based on the bootstrap confidence interval and p-value. An indirect effect was considered statistically supported when its confidence interval did not include zero. The mediation result was interpreted together with the direct effect of workload on turnover intention to determine whether emotional exhaustion statistically transmits part of the association between workload and turnover intention.

In addition, perceived organizational support was specified as a moderator of the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship. The moderation effect was tested through the interaction term Workload × Perceived Organizational Support → Emotional Exhaustion using the PLS-SEM moderation procedure in Smart-PLS and bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. A negative and statistically significant interaction coefficient would indicate that higher perceived organizational support weakens the positive association between workload and emotional exhaustion, whereas a non-significant interaction would indicate insufficient evidence that POS alters this relationship. This specification reflects the resource-buffering mechanism proposed by JD-R theory.

3.10 Ethical and Data Quality Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and the confidential treatment of their responses. Participation was not compulsory, and the collected data were used solely for research purposes and reported only in aggregated form. No personally identifiable information was included in the reported findings.

According to the applicable institutional policy at the time of data collection, formal ethical review was not required for this non-interventional survey study involving voluntary adult participants and anonymous questionnaire responses. Nevertheless, the study followed fundamental ethical principles for research involving human participants, including voluntary participation, informed participation, confidentiality, and the protection of respondent anonymity.

Data quality was assessed before PLS-SEM estimation by screening the returned questionnaires against the predefined eligibility and completeness criteria. Responses that were incomplete or did not satisfy the eligibility requirements were excluded. Following the screening process, 195 valid observations were retained for the final analysis.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

A total of 195 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis. All respondents were contract-based public employees working in local government institutions in Makassar, South Sulawesi. The respondent characteristics are presented to describe the composition of the final sample in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, tenure, and work unit.

In terms of gender, 108 respondents (55.4%) were female and 87 (44.6%) were male, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution with a slightly higher proportion of female respondents. Regarding age, the largest group consisted of respondents aged 25–35 years

(52.3%), followed by those aged 36–45 years (25.1%), 20–24 years (14.4%), and above 45 years (8.2%).

With respect to educational attainment, the majority of respondents held a bachelor's degree (S1), accounting for 67.2% of the sample, followed by diploma-level education (17.4%) and master's degree (15.4%). In terms of organizational tenure, 49.2% of respondents had worked for 1–3 years, 32.3% had 4–6 years of tenure, and 18.5% had more than six years of tenure.

The respondents were also distributed across four broad work-unit categories. Administrative divisions accounted for 31.3% of the sample, followed by technical services (27.7%), public service units (24.6%), and support or other units (16.4%). This distribution indicates that the sample included employees performing different types of organizational functions rather than being concentrated in a single work-unit category.

Table 4. Respondent Characteristics (n = 195)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	87	44.6
	Female	108	55.4
Age	20–24 years	28	14.4
	25–35 years	102	52.3
	36–45 years	49	25.1
	>45 years	16	8.2
	Diploma (D3)	34	17.4
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree (S1)	131	67.2
	Master's Degree (S2)	30	15.4
	1–3 years	96	49.2
Tenure	4–6 years	63	32.3
	>6 years	36	18.5
	Administrative Division	61	31.3
Work Unit	Technical Services	54	27.7
	Public Service Units	48	24.6
	Support/Other Units	32	16.4

Source: Primary survey data (2025)

Overall, the sample was characterized by a relatively balanced gender distribution, a concentration of respondents in the 25–35-year age group, predominantly bachelor's-level education, and relatively short to moderate organizational tenure. The distribution across work units also indicates variation in the functional roles represented in the sample. These characteristics provide contextual information for interpreting the findings concerning workload, emotional exhaustion, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention among contract-based public employees.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

Prior to testing the structural relationships among constructs, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments. The assessment followed standard PLS-SEM procedures, including indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability,

convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). All constructs in this study were specified as reflective measurement models.

Indicator reliability was assessed by examining outer loadings. A loading value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable, indicating that the construct explains at least 50% of the indicator variance. The results show that all indicators loaded significantly on their respective constructs, with loading values ranging from 0.712 to 0.893. Since all values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70 and were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicator reliability was established.

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). A CR value between 0.70 and 0.95 indicates satisfactory reliability. As shown in Table 4, all constructs demonstrated strong reliability, with CR values ranging from 0.884 to 0.931. Cronbach's Alpha values also exceeded 0.70, confirming adequate internal consistency.

Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An AVE value above 0.50 indicates that a construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. The AVE values for all constructs ranged from 0.603 to 0.771, exceeding the recommended threshold. This confirms that the measurement model achieved adequate convergent validity.

Table 5. Summary of Measurement Model Evaluation Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Workload (WL)	WL1	0.909	0.904	0.913	0.933	0.778
	WL2	0.894				
	WL3	0.914				
	WL4	0.807				
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	EE1	0.823	0.878	0.886	0.916	0.733
	EE2	0.797				
	EE3	0.908				
	EE4	0.891				
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	POS1	0.909	0.907	0.914	0.935	0.782
	POS2	0.913				
	POS3	0.893				
	POS4	0.819				
Turnover Intention (TO)	TO1	0.856	0.900	0.906	0.926	0.714
	TO2	0.877				
	TO3	0.821				
	TO4	0.856				
	TO5	0.813				

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015). All HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.90, indicating that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. This suggests that workload, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and perceived organizational support measure conceptually different phenomena.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Assessment Using the HTMT Ratio

Construct Pair	HTMT Value
Perceived Organizational Support ↔ Emotional Exhaustion	0.719
Turnover Intention ↔ Emotional Exhaustion	0.682
Turnover Intention ↔ Perceived Organizational Support	0.483
Workload ↔ Emotional Exhaustion	0.354
Workload ↔ Perceived Organizational Support	0.241
Workload ↔ Turnover Intention	0.437

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion proposed by Henseler et al. (2015). HTMT values below 0.85 indicate a conservative level of discriminant validity, whereas values below 0.90 are generally considered acceptable for conceptually related constructs.

As presented in Table 6, all HTMT values ranged from 0.241 to 0.719, which are substantially below the recommended threshold of 0.85. The highest HTMT value was observed between Perceived Organizational Support and Emotional Exhaustion (HTMT = 0.719), followed by Turnover Intention and Emotional Exhaustion (HTMT = 0.682). Although these constructs are theoretically related, the HTMT values remain below the critical threshold, indicating that they represent empirically distinct latent constructs.

Furthermore, the relatively low HTMT values between Workload and Perceived Organizational Support (HTMT = 0.241), Workload and Emotional Exhaustion (HTMT = 0.354), and Workload and Turnover Intention (HTMT = 0.437) provide additional evidence that the constructs capture different conceptual domains within the proposed model.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the measurement model satisfies the requirement for discriminant validity, indicating that each construct is empirically distinguishable from the others and measures a unique aspect of employees' work experiences and behavioral intentions. Therefore, the discriminant validity of the measurement model is considered satisfactory, supporting the suitability of the constructs for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 7. HTMT Confidence Intervals

Construct Pair	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	2.5%	97.5%
Perceived Organizational Support ↔ Emotional Exhaustion	0.719	0.718	0.606	0.822
Turnover Intention ↔ Emotional Exhaustion	0.682	0.682	0.575	0.781
Turnover Intention ↔ Perceived Organizational Support	0.483	0.483	0.332	0.623
Workload ↔ Emotional Exhaustion	0.354	0.353	0.197	0.507
Workload ↔ Perceived Organizational Support	0.241	0.243	0.098	0.390
Workload ↔ Turnover Intention	0.437	0.437	0.285	0.576

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

Table 7 presents the bootstrapped confidence intervals for the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) used to further assess discriminant validity. The results show that all 97.5% upper confidence limits are substantially below 1.00, ranging from 0.390 to 0.822. The highest upper confidence limit is observed for the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Emotional Exhaustion (0.822), which remains clearly below the critical value of 1.00.

The HTMT inference results therefore provide additional evidence that the latent constructs are empirically distinguishable. In particular, the confidence interval for each construct pair remains below 1.00, indicating that the null hypothesis of perfect discriminant validity cannot be rejected. This finding is consistent with the HTMT point estimates reported in Table 6, where all values are below the more conservative threshold of 0.85.

The closest construct pair is Perceived Organizational Support and Emotional Exhaustion, with an HTMT estimate of 0.719 and a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of [0.606, 0.822]. Although these constructs are theoretically related because organizational support may be associated with employees' psychological well-being, the confidence interval remains below 1.00, supporting their empirical distinctiveness. Similarly, Turnover Intention and Emotional Exhaustion produces an HTMT estimate of 0.682 with a confidence interval of [0.575, 0.781], further indicating adequate discriminant validity.

The remaining construct pairs demonstrate even lower HTMT values and narrower confidence intervals. The lowest HTMT estimate occurs between Workload and Perceived Organizational Support (0.241), with a confidence interval of [0.098, 0.390]. This indicates substantial empirical distinction between employees' perceptions of workload and their perceptions of organizational support.

Overall, all six construct pairs satisfy the HTMT inference criterion, as none of the bootstrapped confidence intervals approaches or includes 1.00. Taken together with the HTMT ratios in Table 6, these results indicate that discriminant validity has been established for all constructs in the revised measurement model.

4.3 Structural Collinearity Assessment

Before evaluating the structural relationships, collinearity among the predictor constructs was assessed using the inner variance inflation factor (VIF) values. This assessment was conducted to determine whether excessive multicollinearity among exogenous predictors could distort the estimation and interpretation of the structural path coefficients.

As presented in Table 8, the inner VIF values ranged from 1.042 to 1.110. These values are substantially below the commonly recommended threshold of 3.0 and the more conservative threshold of 5.0, indicating that collinearity among the predictors does not represent a concern in the structural model. Therefore, the estimated relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention can be interpreted without evidence of problematic predictor collinearity.

It should be noted that the inner VIF assessment evaluates structural collinearity among predictors and does not constitute a statistical test of common method bias or common method variance. Because all study variables were collected from the same respondents using self-reported questionnaires at a single point in time, the potential for same-source measurement bias cannot be fully excluded. Accordingly, common method variance is acknowledged as a methodological limitation of the present study rather than being considered resolved by the inner VIF results.

Table 8. Collinearity Statistics (Inner Model VIF)

Structural Relationship / Predictor	VIF
Emotional Exhaustion → Turnover Intention	1.110
Perceived Organizational Support → Emotional Exhaustion	1.052
Perceived Organizational Support × Workload → Emotional Exhaustion	1.042
Workload → Emotional Exhaustion	1.095
Workload → Turnover Intention	1.110

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

The highest VIF value is observed for Emotional Exhaustion → Turnover Intention and Workload → Turnover Intention, both with a VIF of 1.110. Meanwhile, the interaction term between Perceived Organizational Support and Workload has a VIF of only 1.042. All values are substantially below the commonly applied threshold of 5.00, indicating that collinearity does not represent a critical problem in the structural model.

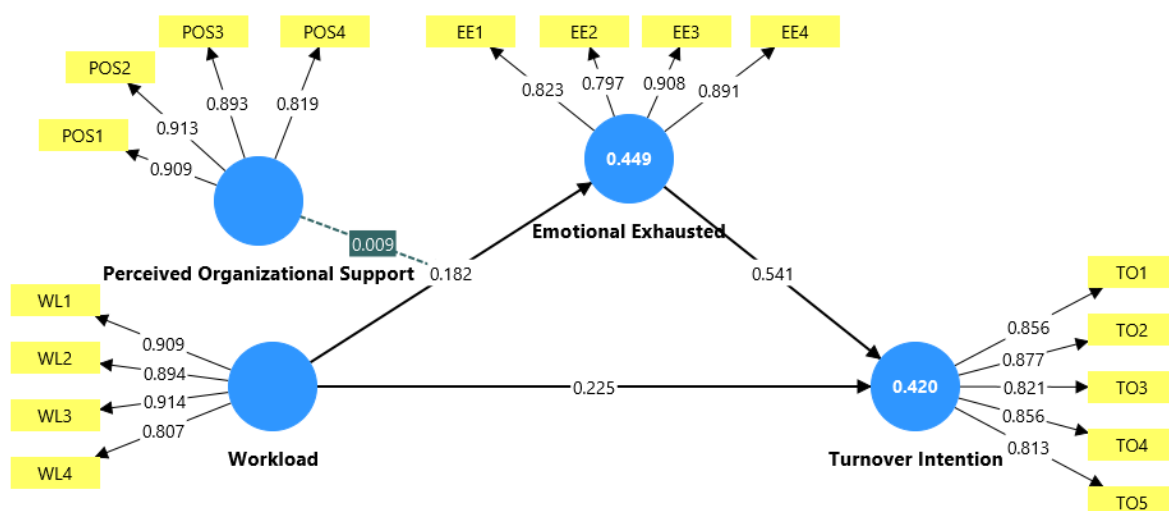
The particularly low VIF for the interaction term is also important because moderation analysis can potentially introduce collinearity between the interaction construct and its constituent predictors. In the present model, however, the VIF of 1.042 suggests that the inclusion of the Workload × Perceived Organizational Support interaction term does not create problematic collinearity.

Overall, the results indicate that the structural model is not affected by problematic predictor collinearity, and the estimated path coefficients can therefore be interpreted without evidence of substantial multicollinearity among the structural predictors.

4.4 Structural Model Assessment

After establishing the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed to examine the relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and perceived organizational support. The final PLS-SEM model estimated using Smart-PLS is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Structure Equation Model



Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

The structural model includes the direct relationships between workload, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention, as well as the moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between workload and emotional exhaustion. The model was further evaluated using R^2 , f^2 , model fit indices, predictive assessment, and bootstrapping results.

Table 9. R-Square (R^2) Values

Endogenous Construct	R-Square (R^2)	R-Square Adjusted	Interpretation
Emotional Exhaustion	0.449	0.440	Moderate
Turnover Intention	0.420	0.414	Moderate

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

Table 9 presents the coefficient of determination (R^2) for the endogenous constructs in the structural model. The R^2 value indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct that can be statistically accounted for by its predictors in the model.

For Emotional Exhaustion, the R^2 value is 0.449, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.440. This indicates that 44.9% of the variance in emotional exhaustion is explained by workload, perceived organizational support, and the Workload $\times$ Perceived Organizational Support interaction term. The substantial contribution of POS is further reflected in its large effect size ($f^2 = 0.634$), whereas the interaction term contributes negligible incremental explanatory power ($f^2 = 0.000$). For Turnover Intention, the R^2 value is 0.420, while the adjusted R^2 is 0.414. Thus, 42.0% of the variance in turnover intention is explained by workload and emotional exhaustion, with the remaining 58.0% potentially attributable to factors outside the present model. The adjusted R^2 of 0.414 indicates that the explanatory power remains similar after adjusting for the number of predictors.

Overall, both endogenous constructs demonstrate moderate explanatory power. The model explains a somewhat larger proportion of variance in Emotional Exhaustion (44.9%) than in Turnover Intention (42.0%). These results indicate that the proposed structural model provides a meaningful level of explanatory capacity for both psychological strain and withdrawal cognition among the respondents, although a substantial proportion of unexplained variance remains.

Table 10. Effect Size (f^2)

Structural Path	f^2	Effect Size Interpretation
Workload $\rightarrow$ Emotional Exhaustion	0.055	Small
Workload $\rightarrow$ Turnover Intention	0.079	Small
Emotional Exhaustion $\rightarrow$ Turnover Intention	0.455	Large
POS $\rightarrow$ Emotional Exhaustion	0.634	Large
POS $\times$ Workload $\rightarrow$ Emotional Exhaustion	0.000	Negligible

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

Table 10 presents the effect size (f^2) of each predictor on the endogenous constructs. The f^2 statistic evaluates the extent to which an individual predictor contributes to the R^2 value of an endogenous construct when that predictor is included in the structural model.

The effect of Workload on Emotional Exhaustion is relatively small ($f^2 = 0.055$). This indicates that, although workload contributes to explaining variance in emotional exhaustion, its incremental explanatory contribution to the construct is limited. Similarly, the effect of

Workload on Turnover Intention is small ($f^2 = 0.079$), suggesting that workload provides a relatively modest contribution to the explained variance in turnover intention.

In contrast, Emotional Exhaustion demonstrates a large effect on Turnover Intention ($f^2 = 0.455$). This indicates that emotional exhaustion makes a substantial contribution to explaining turnover intention beyond the other predictors included in the model. The result highlights the comparatively important role of employees' psychological exhaustion in explaining their intention to leave the organization.

A large effect is observed for perceived organizational support on emotional exhaustion ($f^2 = 0.634$), indicating that POS makes a substantial incremental contribution to the explained variance in emotional exhaustion. The corresponding structural path is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.606$, $t = 11.104$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.496, 0.711]). Thus, POS represents a substantively important predictor of emotional exhaustion in the estimated model. However, the positive direction of the coefficient is contrary to the theoretically expected negative relationship and therefore requires cautious interpretation. The f^2 statistic indicates incremental explanatory contribution and should not itself be interpreted as evidence of causality.

The interaction term $POS \times Workload \rightarrow Emotional\ Exhaustion$ has an f^2 value of 0.000, indicating a negligible incremental contribution of the moderation term to the explained variance in emotional exhaustion. This finding is consistent with the non-significant moderation result for H5 discussed earlier. Thus, the interaction between workload and POS does not appear to add meaningful explanatory power to emotional exhaustion in the present sample.

Overall, the effect-size results indicate that emotional exhaustion is the strongest predictor of turnover intention in terms of incremental effect size, while POS shows a substantial contribution to the explanation of emotional exhaustion. In comparison, the direct contribution of workload is relatively small, and the interaction effect between workload and POS is negligible.

Table 11. Model Fit Indices

Model Fit Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model	Reference Criterion	Interpretation
SRMR	0.055	0.056	< 0.08	Acceptable fit
d_ULS	0.455	0.472	No universal threshold	Acceptable, with small difference between models
d_G	0.287	0.287	No universal threshold	Comparable across models
Chi-square	328.840	329.218	No universal threshold in PLS-SEM	Comparable across models
NFI	0.867	0.867	≥ 0.90	Marginal fit

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

The model fit assessment indicates that the final PLS-SEM model demonstrates an acceptable level of approximate fit based on the SRMR criterion. The SRMR value is 0.055 for the saturated model and 0.056 for the estimated model, both of which are below the commonly applied threshold of 0.08. The very small difference between the saturated and estimated models also

indicates that the structural specification does not produce a substantial deterioration in approximate model fit.

The d_ULS values are 0.455 for the saturated model and 0.472 for the estimated model, while the d_G values are identical at 0.287 for both models. Because d_ULS and d_G do not have a universally applicable single cutoff value for determining acceptable model fit in PLS-SEM, these statistics are primarily reported as supplementary measures rather than interpreted using an arbitrary threshold. The relatively small differences between the saturated and estimated models provide additional evidence that the final model specification does not substantially alter the discrepancy measures.

The Chi-square values are also highly similar between the saturated model (328.840) and estimated model (329.218). In PLS-SEM, Chi-square is sensitive to sample size and model complexity; therefore, it is not interpreted in isolation as a definitive indicator of model adequacy. Instead, it is reported as a supplementary model discrepancy statistic.

However, the NFI of 0.867 is below the commonly referenced value of 0.90, indicating marginal rather than fully satisfactory incremental fit. Therefore, the model should not be characterized as demonstrating uniformly strong model fit based on all indices. Rather, the evidence indicates acceptable approximate fit according to SRMR, accompanied by marginal incremental fit according to NFI.

Predictive Assessment Using PLSpredict. In addition to assessing construct reliability and validity and the model's explanatory power through R^2 , this study conducted a PLSpredict analysis to assess the predictive performance of the PLS-SEM model using data that were not used to estimate the model. PLSpredict uses a holdout-based procedure to generate predictions for endogenous indicators and compares the prediction errors of the PLS-SEM model with those of a linear model (LM) benchmark.

This analysis is useful because a high R^2 value does not necessarily mean that a model can make accurate predictions for new observations. PLSpredict therefore provides additional evidence of whether the structural relationships estimated in the model can generate reliable out-of-sample predictions.

For interpretation, a $Q^2_predict$ value greater than zero indicates that the model has predictive relevance for the corresponding indicator. Predictive performance is then assessed by comparing the PLS-SEM_RMSE and PLS-SEM_MAE values with the corresponding LM_RMSE and LM_MAE values. Lower prediction errors indicate better predictive performance (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Table 12. PLSpredict Results

Endogenous Indicator	$Q^2_predict$	PLS-SEM RMSE	PLS-SEM MAE	LM RMSE	LM MAE	Predictive Comparison
EE1	0.282	0.763	0.590	0.777	0.617	PLS better
EE2	0.238	0.859	0.713	0.870	0.719	PLS better
EE3	0.405	0.833	0.621	0.800	0.525	LM better
EE4	0.310	0.876	0.686	0.898	0.704	PLS better
TO1	0.179	0.837	0.673	0.859	0.692	PLS better
TO2	0.250	0.993	0.814	1.002	0.819	PLS better
TO3	0.180	0.893	0.740	0.920	0.759	PLS better
TO4	0.198	0.832	0.683	0.843	0.680	Mixed

Endogenous Indicator	Q ² _predict	PLS-SEM RMSE	PLS-SEM MAE	LM RMSE	LM MAE	Predictive Comparison
TO5	0.143	0.870	0.720	0.891	0.733	PLS better

Source: SmartPLS PLSpredict output (2026).

The PLSpredict results provide evidence of positive predictive relevance, with generally favorable benchmark performance across most endogenous construct indicators. For the majority of indicators, the PLS-SEM predictions demonstrated lower prediction errors than the linear-model benchmark, indicating that the model provides useful out-of-sample predictive information.

Nevertheless, the predictive advantage was not uniform across all indicators. One indicator of Emotional Exhaustion was predicted more accurately by the linear-model benchmark, indicating that the PLS-SEM model did not consistently outperform the benchmark for every indicator. In addition, the predictive evidence for TO4 was mixed, as the comparative result differed depending on whether prediction error was assessed using RMSE or MAE. Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of uniformly strong predictive performance. Overall, the PLSpredict assessment indicates positive predictive relevance with generally favorable benchmark performance, rather than uniformly strong predictive performance across all endogenous construct indicators.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

After evaluating the structural model in terms of explanatory power and model fit, the next step is to examine the significance of the hypothesized relationships. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples in Smart-PLS (Ghozali, 2021; Hair et al., 2019). The assessment focused on path coefficients (β), t-statistics, and p-values. A relationship is considered statistically significant when the t-value exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05 at the 5% significance level.

Table 13. Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Structural Path	β	STDEV	t-value	P-value	95% CI	Decision
H1	Workload → Emotional Exhaustion	0.182	0.060	3.006	0.003	[0.066, 0.302]	Supported
H2	Workload → Turnover Intention	0.225	0.067	3.387	0.001	[0.099, 0.356]	Supported
H3	Emotional Exhaustion → Turnover Intention	0.541	0.059	9.140	<0.001	[0.423, 0.651]	Supported
H5	POS × Workload → Emotional Exhaustion	0.009	0.060	0.144	0.886	[-0.107, 0.126]	Not Supported
H6	POS → Emotional Exhaustion	0.606	0.055	11.104	<0.001	[0.496, 0.711]	Not Supported

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

Table 14. Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	β	STDEV	t-value	P-value	95% CI	Decision
H4	Workload → Emotional Exhaustion → Turnover Intention	0.098	0.034	2.881	0.004	[0.035, 0.169]	Supported

Source: Smart-PLS output (2026)

The results support H1, indicating that workload has a positive and statistically significant association with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.182$, $t = 3.006$, $p = 0.003$; 95% CI [0.066, 0.302]). Because the confidence interval does not include zero, the result provides additional evidence of a statistically significant relationship. Employees reporting higher workload tend to report greater emotional exhaustion. The relatively modest path coefficient also indicates that workload represents one of several factors associated with emotional exhaustion in the present model. Thus, H1 is supported.

H2 is also supported. Workload has a positive and statistically significant association with turnover intention ($\beta = 0.225$, $t = 3.387$, $p = 0.001$; 95% CI [0.099, 0.356]). Because the confidence interval remains entirely above zero, the result provides evidence of a significant positive relationship. Employees reporting higher workload tend to report stronger turnover intentions. Thus, workload is associated not only with emotional exhaustion but also directly with employees' withdrawal intentions. Therefore, H2 is supported.

The results provide strong support for H3. Emotional exhaustion has a positive and statistically significant association with turnover intention ($\beta = 0.541$, $t = 9.140$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.423, 0.651]). Among the direct relationships examined in the model, this path has the largest standardized coefficient. The finding indicates that emotional exhaustion has a strong direct association with employees' turnover intention and a stronger direct association than workload. Therefore, H3 is supported.

H4 examined the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between workload and turnover intention. The indirect effect of workload on turnover intention through emotional exhaustion was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.098$, $t = 2.881$, $p = 0.004$; 95% CI [0.035, 0.169]). Because the confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect effect is statistically significant. These findings indicate that workload is associated with turnover intention partly through its association with emotional exhaustion.

The mediation is classified as partial because the direct relationship between workload and turnover intention remains statistically significant ($\beta = 0.225$, $p = 0.001$), while the indirect effect through emotional exhaustion is also significant. Thus, workload is associated with turnover intention both directly and indirectly through emotional exhaustion. Therefore, H4 is supported.

H6 examined the direct relationship between perceived organizational support and emotional exhaustion. The results show a positive and statistically significant association between POS and emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.606$, $t = 11.104$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.496, 0.711]). Although the path is statistically significant, its positive direction is contrary to the hypothesized negative relationship. Therefore, H6 is not supported.

The magnitude of the direct association is also reflected in the large effect size of POS on emotional exhaustion ($f^2 = 0.634$). Thus, POS makes a substantial incremental contribution to explaining emotional exhaustion in the structural model. However, the positive direction

differs from the theoretically expected protective relationship and therefore requires cautious interpretation.

The workload $\times$ perceived organizational support interaction was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.009$, $t = 0.144$, $p = 0.886$; 95% CI [-0.107, 0.126]). The effect size of the interaction term was also negligible ($f^2 = 0.000$), indicating that the interaction contributed virtually no additional explanatory power to emotional exhaustion.

However, this result should be interpreted cautiously because the study was underpowered to detect small interaction effects. An a priori power analysis indicated that approximately 395 respondents would be required to detect an interaction effect of $f^2 = 0.02$ with 80% statistical power, whereas the present study included 195 respondents. A sensitivity analysis further indicated that, with $N = 195$, $\alpha = 0.05$, and 80% statistical power, the study could reliably detect interaction effects of approximately $f^2 = 0.041$ or larger.

Therefore, the present findings indicate that no statistically detectable workload $\times$ perceived organizational support interaction was observed in this sample. The results do not provide evidence supporting the hypothesized buffering effect, but they also do not conclusively demonstrate the absence of very small interaction effects. Accordingly, H5 is not supported.

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 Workload and Emotional Exhaustion

The findings provide support for H1, showing that workload has a positive and statistically significant association with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.182$, $t = 3.006$, $p = 0.003$). This result indicates that employees who perceive higher workload tend to experience greater emotional exhaustion. Although the coefficient is relatively modest, the significant relationship confirms that workload remains an important job demand associated with psychological strain among contract-based public employees.

This finding is consistent with the health-impairment process proposed by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory. The theory suggests that demanding working conditions require sustained physical and psychological effort, which can gradually deplete employees' energetic resources and increase strain (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017). In the present context, contract-based public employees may face substantial administrative and service-related demands while also working under temporary employment arrangements. Persistent workload may therefore increase the psychological effort required to maintain performance and meet organizational expectations.

The finding is also in line with the empirical evidence discussed in the original manuscript, particularly research showing that demanding work conditions are associated with emotional exhaustion among public employees (Ahmad et al., 2026; Buzeti et al., 2026; Park et al., 2021). However, the relatively small effect size suggests that workload alone does not fully explain emotional exhaustion. This interpretation is also supported by the model's R^2 value of 0.449 for emotional exhaustion, indicating that more than half of its variance remains associated with factors outside the structural relationship examined here.

Thus, the result supports the basic health-impairment mechanism of JD-R theory, but it also suggests that emotional exhaustion among contract-based public employees is likely to reflect a broader set of organizational and psychological conditions. Workload matters, but it should not be treated as the sole explanation for employees' exhaustion.

4.6.2 Workload and Turnover Intention

H2 is supported, with workload showing a positive and statistically significant association with turnover intention ($\beta = 0.225$, $t = 3.387$, $p = 0.001$). The result indicates that employees who perceive greater workload tend to report stronger intentions to leave their organization. This finding suggests that demanding work conditions may be associated with withdrawal cognition even before considering the psychological strain represented by emotional exhaustion.

The finding is consistent with the JD-R framework, in which excessive job demands may have consequences that extend beyond employee well-being. When employees perceive that, work demands are difficult to manage or disproportionate to the resources available to them, they may begin to evaluate whether remaining in the organization is sustainable (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). This interpretation is particularly relevant for contract-based employees, whose employment arrangements may already involve uncertainty regarding employment continuity and future career opportunities.

The present result is also consistent with previous research cited in the article showing that high job demands are associated with turnover-related outcomes (Dwi Anggraini et al., 2022; Hariyanto et al., 2022). The positive direct relationship between workload and turnover intention is important because it demonstrates that workload is associated with withdrawal intention through more than one pathway. Employees may consider leaving because of the workload itself, while emotional exhaustion provides an additional psychological mechanism through which workload is associated with turnover intention.

4.6.3 Emotional Exhaustion and Turnover Intention

The findings provide strong support for H3. Emotional exhaustion has a positive and statistically significant association with turnover intention ($\beta = 0.541$, $t = 9.140$, $p < 0.001$). Among the direct relationships examined in the model, this is the largest standardized coefficient. The result suggests that emotional exhaustion is more strongly associated with turnover intention than workload itself.

This finding is consistent with the health-impairment pathway of JD-R theory. Prolonged exposure to demanding working conditions may gradually deplete employees' psychological resources. Once employees experience substantial emotional exhaustion, remaining in the same work environment may become increasingly difficult to sustain. Turnover intention can therefore emerge as a withdrawal cognition associated with persistent psychological strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017).

The result is also consistent with previous empirical evidence showing that emotional exhaustion is associated with turnover intention across different occupational settings (Afshari et al., 2025; Özkan, 2022). The relatively large coefficient observed in the present study further suggests that psychological strain deserves particular attention when examining employee retention among contract-based public employees.

Importantly, the result should not be interpreted as evidence that emotional exhaustion *causes* employees to leave. Because the present study uses cross-sectional data, the finding should be understood as a statistically significant association. Nevertheless, the strength of the relationship indicates that emotional exhaustion is an important correlate of turnover intention and deserves greater attention in public-sector retention policies.

4.6.4 The Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion

H4 is supported, as the indirect effect of workload on turnover intention through emotional exhaustion is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.098$, $t = 2.881$, $p = 0.004$; 95% CI [0.035, 0.169]). Because the confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect relationship is statistically supported.

The mediation result provides further evidence for the demand–strain–withdrawal mechanism proposed by JD-R theory. Workload is associated with greater emotional exhaustion, while emotional exhaustion is in turn strongly associated with turnover intention. This pattern suggests that part of the relationship between workload and turnover intention operates through employees' psychological experience of exhaustion.

The mediation is partial rather than full, because the direct relationship between workload and turnover intention remains statistically significant ($\beta = 0.225$, $p = 0.001$), while the indirect effect through emotional exhaustion is also significant. Therefore, workload is associated with turnover intention both directly and indirectly through emotional exhaustion. This finding is theoretically important because it indicates that employees do not necessarily develop turnover intentions only after experiencing emotional exhaustion. Workload may be associated with withdrawal cognition directly, while emotional exhaustion represents an additional mechanism through which this association becomes stronger.

This result is consistent with previous research cited in the manuscript, which identifies psychological strain as an important mechanism connecting demanding work conditions with turnover-related outcomes (Park et al., 2021). More broadly, the finding strengthens the application of JD-R theory in the context of contract-based public employment by showing that the demand–strain–withdrawal sequence is empirically relevant in this setting.

4.6.5 Direct Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on Emotional Exhaustion

The structural results reveal a statistically significant positive direct association between perceived organizational support and emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.606$, $t = 11.104$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.496, 0.711]). The magnitude of this relationship is also reflected in the large effect size of POS on emotional exhaustion ($f^2 = 0.634$), indicating that POS makes a substantial incremental contribution to explaining emotional exhaustion in the structural model. However, the positive direction of the relationship is contrary to the theoretical expectation that organizational support, as a job resource, should be associated with lower psychological strain. Accordingly, the result does not support the directional hypothesis that higher POS is associated with lower emotional exhaustion.

This finding requires careful interpretation. Within the JD-R framework, POS is theoretically positioned as a job resource that can help employees cope with demanding working conditions and reduce the psychological costs associated with job demands. The literature review therefore anticipated a negative relationship between POS and emotional exhaustion. The observed positive association suggests that the role of POS in this particular sample may be more complex than the conventional resource-protection assumption implies.

One possible interpretation is that employees experiencing greater psychological strain may also perceive or seek greater organizational support. In such circumstances, POS and emotional exhaustion may be positively associated because organizational support is more salient among employees who are already experiencing demanding or psychologically taxing work conditions. However, this interpretation is speculative and cannot be established from the cross-sectional design of the present study. The positive coefficient should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that organizational support causes emotional exhaustion.

Another possibility is that the direct POS effect reflects a contextual or suppression-related pattern within the multivariate structural model. The coefficient represents the association between POS and emotional exhaustion after accounting for workload and the interaction term, rather than a simple bivariate relationship. Therefore, the positive path should be interpreted as a conditional structural association rather than as evidence of a causal detrimental effect of organizational support.

Importantly, this finding should also be distinguished from the moderation result. The direct POS path examines whether POS is associated with emotional exhaustion, whereas the interaction term tests whether POS changes the strength of the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship. In the present study, POS shows a strong positive direct association with emotional exhaustion, while the interaction effect is negligible and statistically non-significant ($\beta = 0.009$, $p = 0.886$). Thus, the results do not provide evidence that POS buffers the effect of workload on emotional exhaustion, and they simultaneously reveal an unexpected positive direct association between POS and emotional exhaustion.

4.6.6 The Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

Contrary to H5, perceived organizational support does not significantly moderate the relationship between workload and emotional exhaustion. The interaction effect is very small and statistically non-significant ($\beta = 0.009$, $t = 0.144$, $p = 0.886$), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -0.107 to 0.126. Because the confidence interval includes zero, there is insufficient evidence that POS changes the strength of the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship.

This finding is important from a theoretical perspective. JD-R theory proposes that job resources can buffer the negative effects of job demands, but the buffering effect is not necessarily universal. The present result suggests that perceived organizational support did not function as a statistically identifiable buffer against workload-related emotional exhaustion in this sample. Thus, the resource-buffering proposition should be understood as conditional rather than automatic.

The finding differs from the expectation developed in the revised theoretical model, where POS was positioned at the demand–strain interface. Previous research has suggested that organizational support can reduce strain-related outcomes and may moderate relationships between stressors and psychological strain (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Lim & Moon, 2025). However, the present evidence indicates that these protective effects may depend on the specific employment and organizational context.

One possible interpretation is that general perceptions of organizational support may not be sufficient to offset the psychological burden associated with workload among contract-based public employees. Employees may perceive support from their organization while still facing high task demands, limited control over workload, or uncertainty associated with contract-based employment. In such circumstances, support may be perceived positively but may not provide the concrete resources needed to reduce the psychological consequences of excessive workload.

Importantly, the non-significant interaction should be interpreted alongside the significant direct role of POS in the structural model. The results indicate that the direct and moderating roles of POS should not be treated as empirically equivalent mechanisms. In the present model, POS shows a statistically significant positive association with emotional exhaustion, although this direction is contrary to the theoretically expected protective role of organizational support. As discussed above, this coefficient should be interpreted cautiously as a conditional structural association rather than as evidence that organizational support increases psychological strain.

At the same time, the non-significant interaction indicates that POS does not significantly alter the strength of the workload–emotional exhaustion association. Therefore, the findings do not provide empirical support for the hypothesized resource-buffering mechanism, while the unexpected direct association warrants further investigation in future research.

4.6.7 Overall Theoretical Implications

Taken together, the findings provide stronger support for the health-impairment pathway of JD-R theory than for its resource-buffering mechanism in the present sample. Workload is positively associated with emotional exhaustion, emotional exhaustion is strongly associated with turnover intention, and emotional exhaustion significantly mediates the relationship between workload and turnover intention. These findings are consistent with the central demand–strain–withdrawal logic of JD-R theory.

At the same time, the non-significant moderation effect suggests that the presence of a job resource does not automatically mean that the resource will buffer a specific job demand. This provides a more nuanced interpretation of JD-R theory within heterogeneous contract-based and non-permanent employment settings. The effectiveness of organizational resources may depend on whether the available support directly addresses the source of employees' demands and whether employees can access support in ways that are relevant to their actual work conditions.

The unexpected positive structural association between POS and emotional exhaustion further reinforces the need for caution when interpreting organizational resources as uniformly protective. Because the study employed a cross-sectional design, this result cannot establish that organizational support increases emotional exhaustion. Instead, the finding may reflect contextual or multivariate dynamics that cannot be fully disentangled using the present data. Future research should therefore examine the temporal ordering and contextual conditions underlying this relationship.

Beyond the explanatory interpretation of the hypothesized relationships, the PLSpredict results provide complementary evidence regarding the model's out-of-sample predictive relevance. All assessed endogenous indicators produced positive Q^2_{predict} values, indicating positive predictive relevance. Comparisons with the linear-model benchmark were generally favourable, with the PLS-SEM model producing lower prediction errors for most indicators. However, the predictive advantage was not uniform. BO3 was predicted more accurately by the linear-model benchmark according to both RMSE and MAE, while TO4 produced mixed evidence depending on the prediction-error metric used. Accordingly, the predictive findings should be interpreted as demonstrating positive predictive relevance with generally favourable benchmark performance, rather than uniformly strong predictive performance.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that organizational interventions should not rely solely on generalized support initiatives. Reducing excessive workload, improving task allocation, providing adequate recovery opportunities, and addressing the conditions associated with emotional exhaustion may be particularly relevant to reducing turnover intention. At the same time, the unexpected POS result indicates that organizational support initiatives should be examined not only in terms of their availability but also in terms of their timing, form, accessibility, and relevance to employees' actual work demands.

Overall, the results indicate that emotional exhaustion is a central mechanism associated with turnover intention, whereas perceived organizational support does not appear to function as a significant workload-buffering mechanism in the present sample. The contribution of the

study therefore lies not in suggesting that organizational support is universally ineffective, but in showing that the expected resource-buffering mechanism is context-dependent and should be empirically tested rather than assumed. The predictive assessment further indicates that the model provides positive out-of-sample predictive relevance, although its performance relative to the linear-model benchmark is not uniformly superior across all indicators.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the relationships among workload, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and perceived organizational support among contract-based public employees in Makassar, Indonesia. The findings support the health-impairment pathway proposed by the Job Demands–Resources theory. Higher workload was associated with greater emotional exhaustion and stronger turnover intention, while emotional exhaustion showed a particularly strong relationship with employees' intention to leave.

The mediation analysis further indicates that emotional exhaustion represents an important mechanism through which workload is associated with turnover intention. Because the direct relationship between workload and turnover intention remained significant, the findings suggest that workload is related to turnover intention both directly and through emotional exhaustion. This highlights the importance of addressing psychological strain rather than focusing only on employees' workload levels.

In contrast, perceived organizational support did not significantly moderate the relationship between workload and emotional exhaustion. This finding should not be interpreted as evidence that organizational support is unimportant. Rather, the result indicates that generalized perceptions of organizational support did not significantly buffer the workload–emotional exhaustion relationship in the present sample. The effectiveness of organizational resources may depend on the type of support provided, the nature of the job demand, and the specific employment context.

The study contributes to the JD-R literature by providing evidence for the demand–strain–withdrawal pathway among contract-based public employees, while also showing that the resource-buffering effect of POS should not be assumed to operate uniformly across employment contexts. Practically, the findings suggest that local government institutions should pay particular attention to workload management, staffing adequacy, task allocation, recovery opportunities, and early signs of emotional exhaustion. Such interventions may contribute to workforce stability and reduce the organizational costs associated with employee withdrawal and potential turnover.

Overall, the main implication is that managing workload and preventing emotional exhaustion may be more directly relevant to employee retention than relying on generalized organizational support as a buffering mechanism.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study employed a cross-sectional design, meaning that all variables were measured at one point in time. Consequently, the results demonstrate statistical associations rather than temporal or causal relationships. The findings should therefore not be interpreted as definitive evidence that workload causes emotional exhaustion or that emotional exhaustion causes turnover

intention. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine whether changes in workload precede changes in emotional exhaustion and subsequent turnover intention.

Second, the study used purposive sampling and obtained 195 valid responses from contract-based or non-permanent employees across selected organizational settings in Makassar. The sample included regional public hospitals, regional education offices, municipal water utilities, regionally owned enterprises, and regional market-management enterprises. These organizational settings may differ in their legal status, governance arrangements, service mandates, managerial autonomy, employment systems, and specific contractual practices. Although respondents shared the broader eligibility characteristic of working under a contract-based or non-permanent employment arrangement, the study did not assume that they operated within institutionally identical employment environments. Moreover, the available data did not permit a systematic distinction among more specific contractual categories. Therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable either to all contract-based employees in Indonesia or to each participating organizational category individually. Future studies could use probability-based sampling, include organizations from different cities, provinces, and administrative contexts, and collect more detailed information regarding employment status and contractual arrangements to improve external validity and contextual precision. In addition, the final structural model did not include demographic or employment-related control variables. Therefore, the estimated relationships may partly reflect unobserved differences in respondent characteristics, employment conditions, or workforce composition. Future research should incorporate theoretically relevant demographic and employment controls and compare controlled and uncontrolled model estimates to assess the robustness of the substantive relationships.

Third, respondents were drawn from multiple and institutionally heterogeneous organizational settings. Employees may therefore have been exposed not only to different supervisors, workload systems, employment policies, and organizational climates, but also to different governance arrangements, managerial structures, and contractual conditions. Consequently, the participating organizational categories should not be assumed to represent an identical institutional environment. However, an organization-level identifier was not retained at the individual respondent level in the analytical dataset. Therefore, formal estimation of between-organization variance, cluster-level effects, or systematic differences in the structural relationships across organizational categories was not possible. In addition, the available data did not provide sufficiently detailed classifications of specific employment or contract arrangements to conduct subgroup analyses based on the type of contractual relationship. This issue does not invalidate the individual-level analysis, but it limits the ability to determine whether some of the observed relationships reflect organizational or employment-context differences. Future research should collect organization-level identifiers and more detailed information regarding employment and contract status, and should consider subgroup sensitivity analysis, multigroup analysis, cluster-robust procedures, or multilevel analysis when the data structure and sample size permit.

Fourth, respondents were asked to provide self-reported questionnaire data at the same time, which creates the possibility of common-method variance and response bias. Although the measurement assessment indicated acceptable reliability and discriminant validity, statistical controls cannot completely eliminate the possibility that respondents' general perceptions influenced multiple measures. Future research could combine survey responses with objective workload indicators, supervisor assessments, attendance records, or actual turnover data.

Separating the measurement of predictors and outcomes across different time points would also help reduce common-method concerns.

Fifth, the mediator was operationalized as emotional exhaustion rather than burnout as a multidimensional syndrome. This distinction is important for construct validity. The findings therefore apply specifically to employees' emotional exhaustion and should not automatically be generalized to all dimensions of burnout, such as cynicism or reduced professional efficacy. Future studies could employ a multidimensional burnout instrument when the objective is to examine burnout as a broader psychological syndrome.

Sixth, the study had limited statistical power for detecting small moderation effects. The *a priori* power analysis indicated that approximately 395 respondents would be required to detect a small interaction effect of $f^2 = 0.02$ with 80% statistical power, whereas the present study included 195 respondents. A sensitivity analysis further indicated that, with the available sample size, the study could reliably detect interaction effects of approximately $f^2 = 0.041$ or larger at 80% power. Therefore, the non-significant workload $\times$ POS interaction should not be interpreted as conclusive evidence that the JD-R resource-buffering mechanism is absent. Rather, the study found no statistically detectable interaction in the observed sample, while its ability to detect very small interaction effects was limited. At the same time, the observed interaction coefficient was extremely small ($\beta = 0.009$) and the effect size was negligible ($f^2 = 0.000$), suggesting little substantive evidence of moderation in the present data. Future studies with larger samples are needed to provide a more adequately powered test of whether perceived organizational support buffers the relationship between workload and emotional exhaustion.

Seventh, the interpretation of the direct POS–emotional exhaustion relationship requires particular caution. Although POS showed a statistically significant positive association with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.606$, $p < 0.001$), the direction was contrary to the theoretically expected negative relationship. Because the study is cross-sectional and the estimated coefficient represents a multivariate structural association, the result should not be interpreted as evidence that organizational support causes emotional exhaustion. Future research should examine the temporal and contextual conditions under which perceived organizational support may be associated with emotional exhaustion, including whether support becomes more salient among employees who are already experiencing greater psychological strain.

Eighth, future research could extend the model by incorporating additional factors that may explain emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, such as job insecurity, autonomy, role ambiguity, psychological contract breach, organizational justice, and career development opportunities. Such extensions would help determine why some employees remain resilient under high workload while others develop stronger withdrawal intentions.

In summary, the limitations primarily arise from the cross-sectional research design, purposive sampling strategy, institutional and employment heterogeneity across the participating organizational settings, self-reported measurement, limited statistical power for detecting small interaction effects, and the absence of organization-level and detailed contract-type information required for formal clustering or subgroup analysis. These limitations constrain causal inference, external generalizability, and the ability to determine whether the observed relationships operate similarly across different organizational and contractual contexts. The limited power for detecting small moderation effects means that the non-significant POS moderation result should be interpreted cautiously rather than as definitive evidence against the JD-R resource-buffering mechanism. At the same time, the negligible

observed interaction effect provides little substantive evidence of moderation in the present sample. Nevertheless, these limitations do not negate the observed statistical relationships within the analyzed sample. Future research that incorporates longitudinal designs, broader and more systematically selected samples, detailed employment classifications, organization-level identifiers, and sufficiently powered subgroup or multilevel analyses would provide stronger evidence regarding the processes underlying employee retention across heterogeneous contract-based employment settings.

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Declaration of AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with language editing, improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript, and supporting the organization and refinement of the academic writing. The use of this tool was limited to writing assistance. The authors independently reviewed, verified, and edited the generated content as needed and take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, interpretation, and final content of the publication.

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