

Job Control, Demand and Moral Distress among Social Care Workers in England

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Background: The LTC sector

- Moved 'slowly' and to some extent 'organically' from the informal to the formal sphere
 - Retaining some qualities and characteristics
- Quantitatively and qualitatively feminised sector
 - Psychological contract
 - Emotional labour
- Dealing with a special kind of 'commodity'
- Secondary labour-market position
 - Low wages, low status, can be devalued by society
- Migration and labour mobility key in meeting demand
- Policy sensitive
 - Welfare and immigration policies; Personalisation agenda

Characteristics of the English LTC sector

- Escalating demands for formal LTC due to population ageing
 - One of the fastest growing sectors offering 2M jobs in the UK
- High turnover (24% vs. an average of 15%) and vacancy rates (4% vs. 1.7%)
- Highly gendered; low paid; significant contribution from migrant and other vulnerable workers
- Increased levels of outsourcing and fragmentation of work

LTC and psychological job demand

- Several studies focused on human service workforce as emotionally taxing
 - Usually reflecting the experience of professional staff (e.g. social workers) in areas of adult and children protection
 - Highlighting relatively high stress levels
- Few studies focused on frontline practitioners
 - Less skilled; have fewer decision power
 - Two studies identified prevalence rate of staff distress (wide range from 5% to 37% of those 'at risk')
 - Four studies reported mean stress scores (all were low)
 - Majority of studies are small scale and used instruments with unsatisfactory psychometric properties

Aims and Data

- To examine the nature of care work as 'emotionally taxing' and its impact on psychological job stress and its contributing and mitigating factors using the demand-control framework
- Use data from LoCS study including a multi-mode survey and one-to-one interviews
- A total of 1342 frontline care practitioners took part in two rounds of surveys – nested sampling design in four areas
 - T1: 2010-11 and T2: 2012-13
- 300 interviews over two phases with social care workforce, employers, and service users/carers
- A third wave of data collection is currently underway

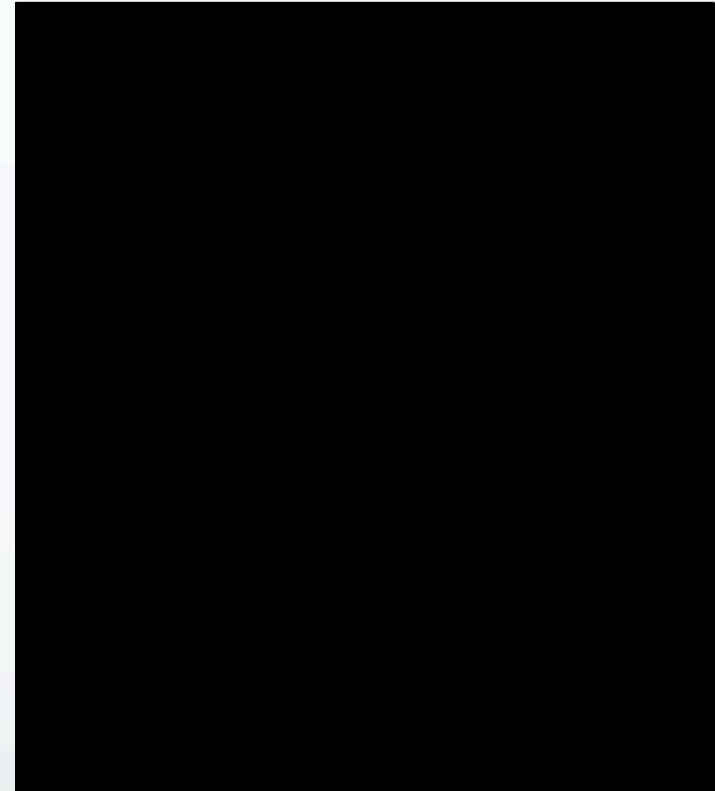


Dilemmas and Stress in LTC work

Qualitative analysis of interview data (119 frontline worker; 121 manager/employer and 60 service users)

Potential causes of moral distress

- Perceived tension between rights and protection;
- Challenging behaviour;
- Discrepancies between a required course of action and level of decision authority;
- Administrative tasks eating into 'care' – both in duration and quality;
- Training and support from co-workers and supervisor as mitigating factors



Administrative and care tasks: weighing up risk and quality of care

There is so much paperwork. If a resident falls or trips over a pair of steps, it's not because oh he's tripped up. They don't do that any more. Look where you are going. You can't say that. You have to write a risk assessment out. You can't tell them that. It does, [she points to her heart] that's exactly how it makes you feel. They can't go out in the snow, because they might fall over and hurt themselves. The joy that of running in the snow and rolling in the snow and that sort of thing is lost for them.

(Home care worker, 2105008)

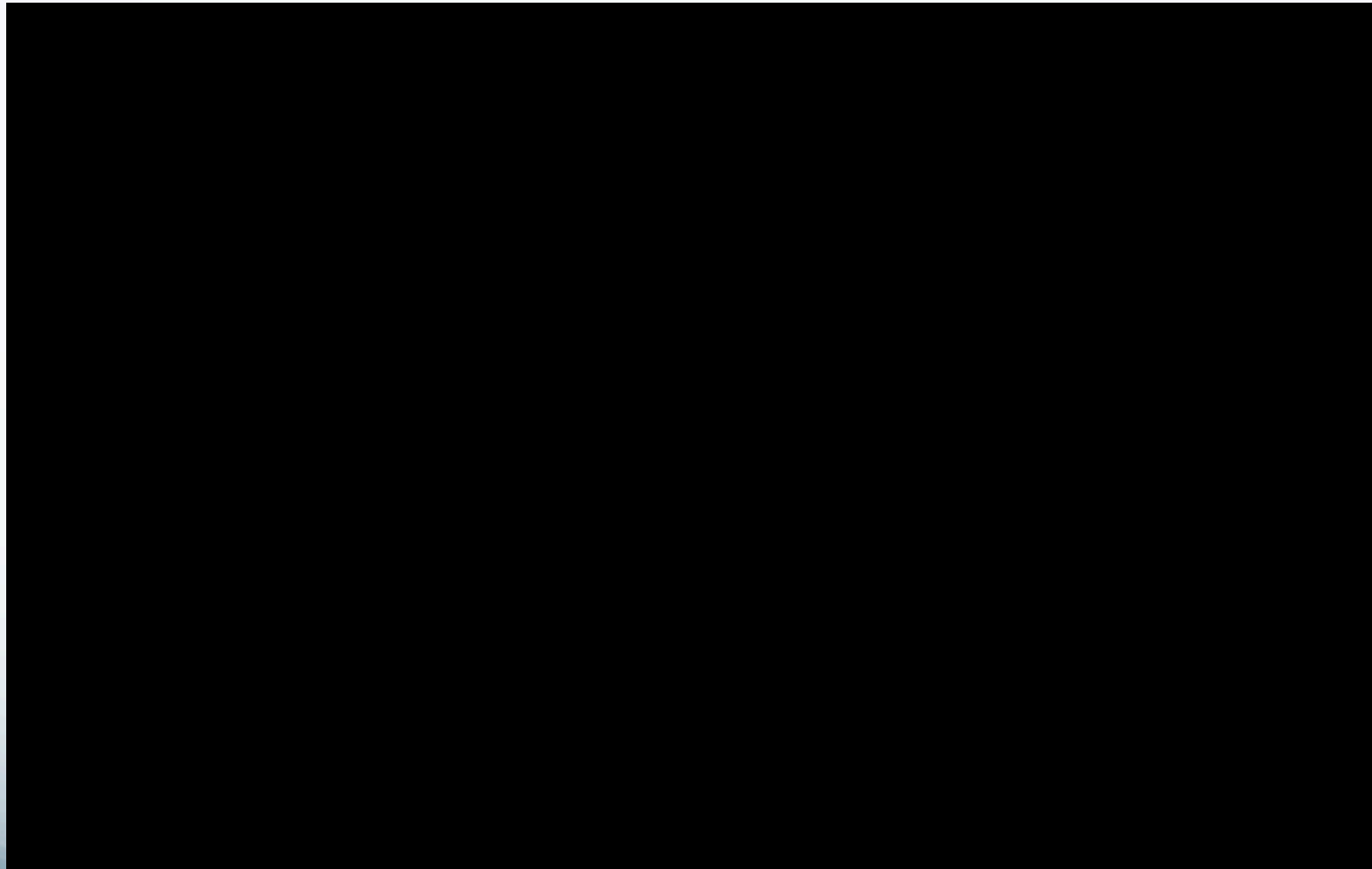
Interpreting challenging behaviour

I've worked in mental institutes and there are high risks and it used to be called, danger money, because you could expect to either spend your whole day restraining somebody or going through this intensive training programme that teaches you how to be abusive to save your own life

having worked with learning disabilities and autism, I disregard challenging behaviour completely. I think it's a form of communication. I think when we experience behaviours from individuals it's because we haven't communicated appropriately.

(day centre worker, 2277005)

Conflicting views and perceptions



Rights & protection: Care workers in-between

We took Paul to the doctors and again because of the autism in that communication obstacles, he couldn't translate the actual problem to the doctor very well and Paul had—with [specific] Syndrome they bruise easily. They can just accidentally walk into a table and they get a massive bruise. The doctor decided making an investigative questions and enquiries about abuse.

(Residential care worker, 2105012)

Lack of Decision Authority

There has been recently a situation where I thought a client that I support was actually in danger. But, the services out there that I can contact thought differently. Then I have to accept it. And then I know that the responsibility is no longer mine, because I have handed it over and I've given somebody all of the information. So, in that situation I have no alternative but to accept what they say, because they are more senior than me.

(Frontline care worker, T2)

Implications of emotional strain

[What is bad about the job] Constant rushing. Racing from one house to the next. You've got a deadline to be there and panic, usually. Breaking the rules of the road, because you want to get there very quick.

(home care worker, 2288001)

People just resign ... at times, after a year, even huge turnover in management, it's affected in that house as well, because of the workload, staff conflict. Staff not feeling they are supported enough.

(Employer, 1072001)

Job demand and control in LTC work

Based on quantitative analysis of 1342 survey responses of LTC practitioners in England

it is **not only** for
what we do that
we are held
responsible, but
also for what
we do not do.

Moliere

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Survey content

- Detailed data on personal and work characteristics
- Karasek Job Content Questionnaire
 - Job demands
 - the stressors existing in the work environment
 - Job decision latitude
 - the extent to which employees have the potential to control their tasks and conduct throughout the working day
 - Social support: co-workers and supervisor support level
 - Job insecurity
- Information on motivations, work history, job satisfaction and future plans

LoCS Survey Sample Characteristics

Participants characteristics	Statistics
Age: Mean (μ)	44.7
Standard deviation (σ)	9.4
Valid N	1342
Gender	
Man	19.0%
Woman	81.0%
Valid N	1128
Nationality	
British	86.0%
Migrant	14.0%
Valid N	1342
Ethnicity	
White British	81.0%
BME	19.0%
Valid	1110
Nature of Work	
All or mostly direct care work	40.6%
Combination of care and administrative work	34.3%
Mostly administrative work	25.2%
Valid N	1324
Main Place of work†	
Care Home (including nursing homes)	40.7%
Home care	39.4%
Valid N	1326
Survey time	
T1 (2010-11)	66.9%
T2 (2012-13)	33.2%
Valid N	1342

Individual Characteristics		Karasek JCQ Scales				
		Job control	Job Demand	Job Insecurity	Social Support	
Gender			*			
Male	μ	70.8	34.2	6.2	24.2	
	N	202	205	202	201	
	σ	11.2	6.4	2.1	3.8	
Female	μ	71.1	35.2	5.9	24.3	
	N	880	884	894	880	
	σ	11.3	6.6	2.1	3.8	
Nationality						
British	μ	71.0	35.1	6.0	24.4	
	N	912	917	924	909	
	σ	11.4	6.4	2.1	3.8	
Migrant	μ	71.1	34.5	5.9	24.2	
	N	179	181	182	181	
	σ	10.6	7.0	2.1	3.5	
Ethnicity						
White British	μ	71.2	35.0	5.9	24.4	
	N	859	863	873	860	
	σ	11.3	6.4	2.1	3.8	
Black and minority	μ	70.4	34.7	6.1	23.9	
	N	204	207	205	203	
	σ	11.1	7.1	2.1	3.5	
Managing own finance						
Living very comfortably or doing alright			***	*	*	
	μ	72.9	35.2	5.8	24.6	
	N	493	501	505	501	
	σ	11.3	6.5	1.9	3.6	
Just about getting by						
	μ	70.1	34.6	6.1	24.1	
	N	360	359	362	356	
	σ	11.0	36.4	2.3	3.8	
Finding it quite or very difficult						
	μ	68.5	34.9	6.2	24.0	
	N	229	226	226	220	
	σ	11.1	6.8	2.2	4.1	
Total‡		μ	71.0	35.0	6.0	24.3
		N	1149	1156	1156	1143
		σ	11.2	6.5	2.1	3.7

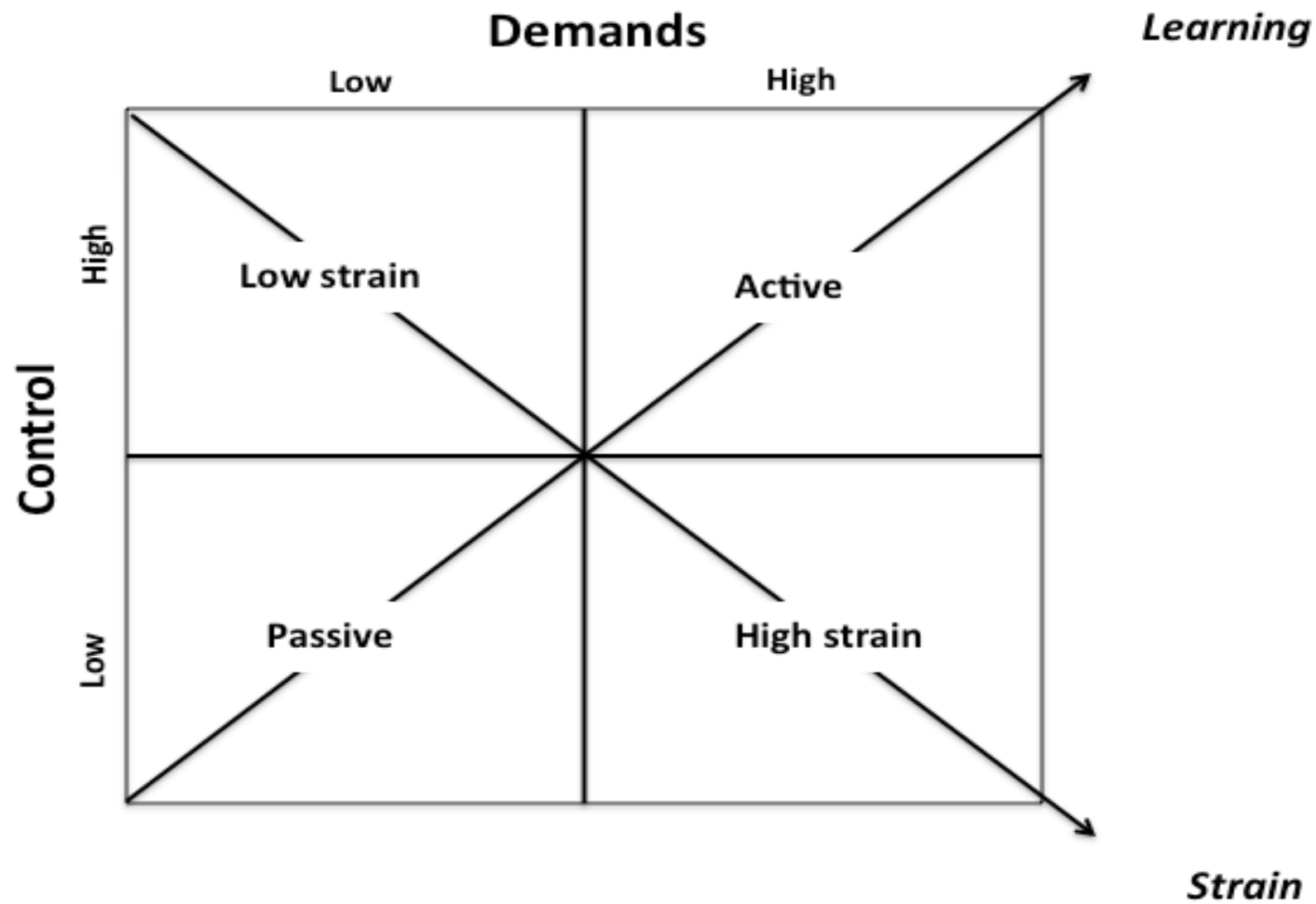
JCQ Scales by workers' Personal Characteristics

Job characteristics	Karasek JCQ Scales				
		<i>Job control</i>	<i>Job demand</i>	<i>Job insecurity</i>	<i>Social support</i>
Nature of Work		***	***	*	
All or mostly care work					
	μ	69.6	32.8	5.8	24.5
	N	465	472	476	464
	σ	10.7	6.5	2.2	3.8
Combination (care & admin)					
	μ	71.2	36.5	6.1	24.2
	N	384	382	378	378
	σ	10.9	6.0	2.0	3.7
Mostly admin work					
	μ	73.1	36.5	6.2	24.2
	N	292	294	294	293
	σ	12.0	6.1	2.1	3.8
Trade Union member		**	***	***	***
Yes					
	μ	72.0	36.9	6.3	24.0
	N	598	599	598	596
	σ	11.5	6.1	2.1	3.7
No					
	μ	70.0	32.7	5.7	24.7
	N	496	502	510	497
	σ	10.8	6.2	2.1	3.8
Survey Time point			***		
Time 1					
	μ	70.6	34.0	6.0	24.2
	N	765	771	772	760
	σ	11.1	6.4	2.2	3.7
Time 2					
	μ	71.9	36.8	6.0	24.6
	N	384	385	384	383
	σ	11.4	6.5	2.0	3.9
Place of Work: Care Home		*		***	
Yes					
	μ	70.2	34.7	5.6	24.3
	N	485	490	491	482
	σ	10.2	6.6	1.8	3.7
No					
	μ	71.7	35.2	6.3	24.3
	N	664	666	665	661
	σ	11.8	6.5	1.8	3.8
Place of Work: Home Care		***		*	
Yes					
	μ	71.5	36.1	6.2	24.5
	N	478	479	478	476
	σ	10.3	6.5	2.3	3.7
No					
	μ	70.7	34.2	5.9	24.2
	N	671	677	678	667
	σ	11.8	6.4	2.0	3.8

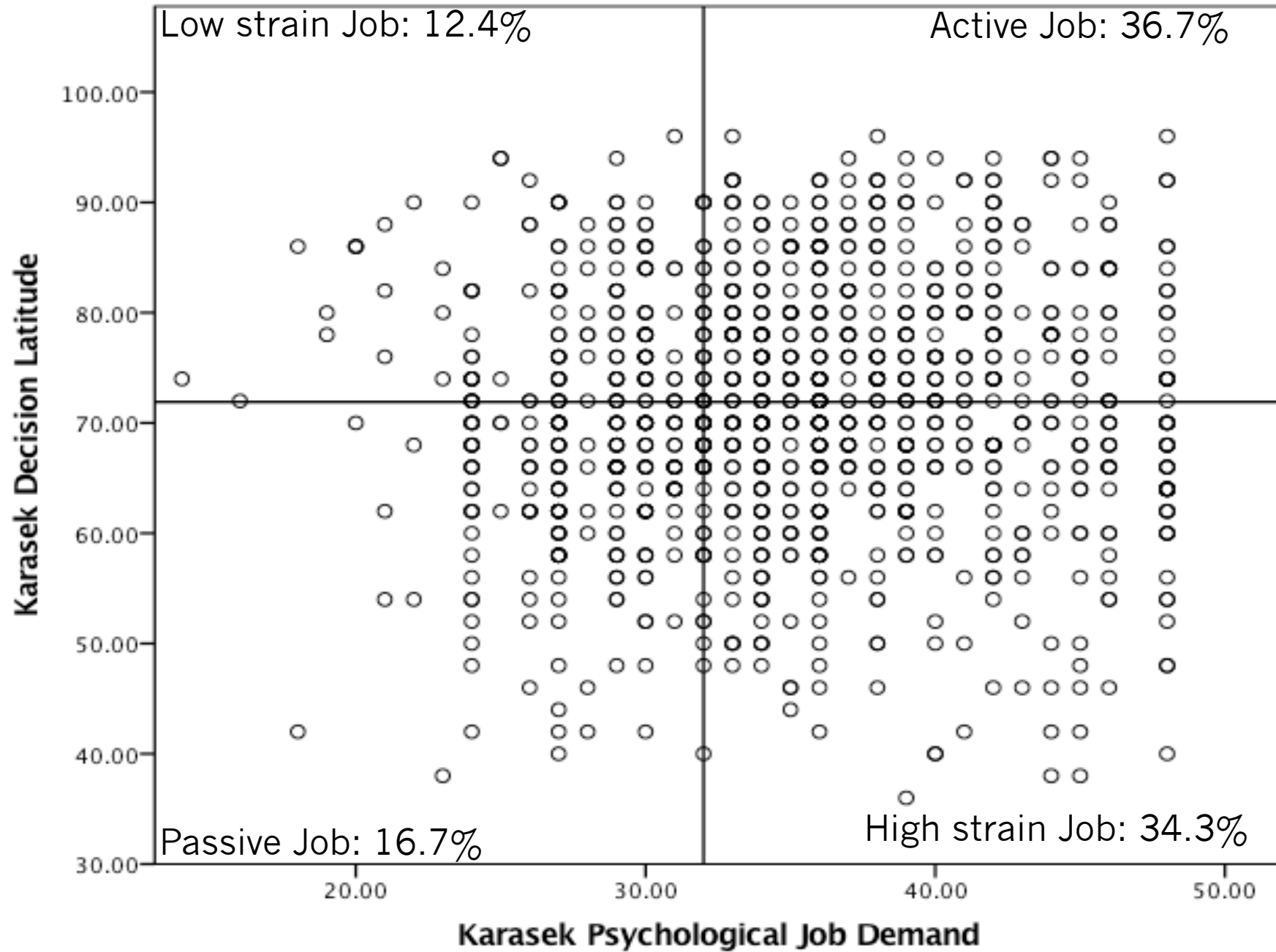
JCQ Scales by
Job
Characteristics

Job Demand-Control Model

- Having higher decision latitude over the work process reduces worker's stress but increases learning,
- Psychological demands increase learning as well as stress.
- Two direction of travel:
 - Strain hypothesis: most adverse impact observed in 'high strain jobs'
 - Learning hypothesis: active job lead to motivation and development of skills
- Both elements interact and impact on the job experience and consequently on workers' health and wellbeing & potentially quality of care



Karasek 'norm' for SS



Individual and workplace Characteristics	Classification according to JDC model				Valid N
	Low Strain	Passive	Active	High Strain	
Survey time point***					
T1	14.3%	18.8%	32.8%	34.0%	749
T2	8.6%	12.5%	44.1%	34.7%	383
Gender					
Male	13.4%	19.8%	35.1%	31.7%	202
Female	12.5%	15.2%	37.0%	35.3%	863
Age*					
μ	46.6	42.7	45.3	45.2	45.0
σ	10.7	12.0	9.5	10.7	10.6
Ethnicity					
White	12.3%	16.4%	37.7%	33.6%	844
BME	14.9%	16.3%	33.2%	36.1%	202
Nationality					
British	11.6%	16.8%	37.0%	34.6%	957
Migrant	16.6%	16.0%	34.9%	32.6%	175
Place of Work					
Care homes*	11.0%	18.8%	32.8%	37.4%	473
Home care***	11.8%	11.0%	39.0%	38.2%	474
Nature of work***					
All or mostly care	15.9%	28.3%	26.0%	29.8%	453
Combination	9.4%	9.4%	40.4%	40.7%	381
Mostly admin	9.7%	7.6%	49.3%	33.4%	290
Trade Union Membership***					
Yes	8.5%	8.0%	44.9%	38.5%	597
No	17.9%	26.0%	26.3%	29.8%	480
Managing own finance***					
Alright/very well	13.5%	12.5%	41.8%	32.2%	488
Just about	13.4%	16.8%	33.0%	36.9%	352
Difficult/very difficult	9.9%	24.7%	29.1%	36.3%	223
Karasek Social Support Score ***					
μ	26.5	24.0	25.1	22.8	24.3
σ	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.8
N	140	189	415	388	1132
All participants	12.4%	16.7%	36.7%	34.3%	1132

Multinomial regression analysis: each category compared to 'low strain'

- As workers get older they are significantly more likely to have a 'passive' job experience
- Social support at work significantly reduces the risk of having a high strain experience
- Nature of work
 - Those more involved in hands-on care work are significantly more likely to have a passive job over a low strain job experience
 - Those with combined care and admin work are significantly more likely to have high strain job experience
- Place of work: workers in care homes more likely to have a high strain job experience
- Time points: participants in later years more likely to have either high strain or active work experience
- Members of trade unions more likely to have high strain or active job
- Those managing their own finance are less likely to have a high strain job experience

Conclusion

- A clear risk of high strain for over a third of the sample
- Consistent results from qualitative and quantitative analysis in relation to
 - Factors associated with the risk of high strain: particularly nature of work and place of work
 - The importance of in-work social support as a significant mitigating factor
- Personal characteristics (except for age) make no significant difference
- Significant time effect – policy and funding role?

Discussion Points

- The context of emotional work and implications on workers' stress:
 - surface acting: modifying emotional displays without changing internal feelings → high demand
 - vs. deep acting: the ability of changing one's feelings in order to elicit the appropriate emotional display and involves internalizing the organizational expectations → personal accomplishment
- Relationship with social care policy and organisation context – including under-funding and changes to working conditions
- Implications on workers' wellbeing and care quality

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Thank you
for
listening!

