

# **In search of the ‘buffering’ effect in the job demands–control model: The role of teamwork HRM practices and occupations**

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## RESEARCH QUESTION

The job demands–control/support (JDC/JDCS) models are highly influential in the HRM and employee well-being literature. Despite the high face validity, however, research has failed to find convincing empirical support for the ‘buffer’ hypothesis suggested by the JDC/JDCS models. In this article the authors explore this issue from three perspectives. First, they test the controversial ‘buffer’ hypothesis using a large nationally representative matched employer–employee sample from Britain. Second, they examine the role of teamwork HRM practices as a moderator of the buffering effect of job control against job demands on employee well-being. Finally, incorporating occupational level data into the analysis, the authors further explore the moderating effects of teamwork under different occupation-specific work intensity.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Using a cross-classified multilevel model on a large UK nationally representative employer–employee matched sample, we found strong evidence which supports the ‘buffer’ hypothesis proposed by the JDC model. That is, there is a positive and highly significant interaction effect between job demand and control on employee intrinsic job satisfaction and psychological well-being even after controlling for a wide range of individual and organizational characteristics.
- In contrast to previous research which viewed teamwork as a double-edged sword (improving productivity at the expense of employee well-being), we found that teamwork can enhance the ‘buffering’ effect of job control against job demands on employee well-being. However, this pattern is only observed for intrinsic job satisfaction.
- The moderating effects of teamwork are positive and significant on both intrinsic job satisfaction and psychological well-being for those working in occupations with high work intensity, suggesting that teamwork can play an even more prominent role in maintaining employee wellbeing in an increasingly demanding working environment.



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