

**A SURVEY ON JOB COACHES' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TO
FACILITATE COWORKER NATURAL SUPPORTS FOR PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

by

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ABSTRACT

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This survey was conducted to identify job coaches' perceptions and attitudes toward coworker natural supports in supported employment. A total of 202 job coaches working in Wisconsin and Minnesota responded to the questionnaire.

The results shows job coaches strongly agree that coworker natural supports are important for people with disabilities. There was disagreement among job coaches about their priority role as a facilitator for coworker natural supports. Job coaches highly agree that there are many obstacles to facilitate natural supports such as coworker's lack of knowledge, work environment, and employer indifference. Job coaches service about 15 clients on average. About 10 clients out of 15 clients receive coworker natural supports. The most frequent natural support is emotional support. Physical supports, social supports, training supports were provided by coworkers and employers.

Recommendations were suggested by the researcher. Both job coaches and service agencies have to make the effort to improve coworkers' understanding and empathy for people with disabilities. In addition, the efforts should be done promptly before the client works or at early stages of employment. More comprehensive and systematic approaches are required to facilitate coworker natural supports. Future research dealing with macro level cooperation among many stakeholders is also recommended.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Since its inception as a federal/ state vocational rehabilitation program with the 1986 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 99-506), supported employment has afforded an increasing number of individuals with severe disabilities who were previously believed to be unemployable the opportunity to enter and compete in the workforce (Unger, Parent, Gibon, Kane-Johnston, & Kregel, 1998). Within less than a decade, the number of people participating nationally in supported employment in the United States has increased from 9,800 to over 140,000 (Wehman, Revell, and Kregel, 1998). In addition, compared to activity centers and sheltered workshops, supported employment offered dramatic improvement in integration and wage outcomes (Wehman & Kregel, 1995).

The supported employment model is intended to provide ongoing assistance to the person and employer to help deal with problems, provide retraining, develop job accommodations, and assist with personal issues (Peterson, 1995).

Regarding ongoing support, traditionally the job coach model of supported employment was the primary means through which individuals with severe disabilities were able to participate and succeed in community-based employment. A distinguishing characteristic of the job coach model is that the employment

specialist provided individualized ongoing assistance to the person with a disability in supported employment.

However, supported employment based on the job coach model is having some unintended negative results. While the availability of job coaching services is useful in obtaining agreements from employers to hire individuals with disabilities, employers and employees may become dependent upon the job coach on an ongoing basis (Peterson, 1995). In addition, the individual with a disability may not develop relationships and interdependent working relationships with coworkers and may not receive supervision typically provided by employers (Peterson, 1995).

Not long after the implementation of supported employment, another perspective began to gain attention and favor in rehabilitation, a redefinition of roles for employers and traditional supported employment personnel. Based on studies of characteristics of natural work environments, alternative support options were suggested that involved the active participation of supervisors and coworkers (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988).

The natural support model is another approach regarding ongoing supports for people with disabilities. In supported employment, coworker natural supports means coworkers help people with disabilities in the integrated work setting as advocates, observers, and trainers, especially for generalization and maintenance and long-term follow-up (Shafer, 1986).

When the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 introduced the concept of natural supports as an "extended service" option, a reexamination of how we promote independence for people with disabilities began in earnest. Enhancing independence was related to the principles of normalization, the ADA, and the support services that are readily available to any new employee (Hanley-Maxwell & Millington, 1992).

Employers and coworkers supporting employees with disabilities have significant potential for improving supported employment outcome. In addition, job coach roles to facilitate coworker natural supports are very important. Thus, some supported employment service organizations were beginning to go beyond the traditional job coach model of support and were experimenting with strategies that develop the capacity of work environments to provide supports (Rogan, Hanger, & Murphy, 1993). Such strategy may be the basis for the next evolutionary steps in development of job support strategy and redefining job coach roles.

However, there is little research dealing with job coach attitudes and perceptions to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities in supported employment.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this survey was to identify job coaches' present perceptions and attitudes toward facilitating coworker natural supports for people with disabilities in supported employment. The subjects in this survey were job coaches who work in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The data was collected by mailed questionnaires.

Specifically, the research questions of this study were as follow;

1. What are the job coaches' perceptions and attitudes toward coworker natural supports in supported employment?
2. What kinds of natural supports are provided by coworkers for people with disabilities in supported employment?
3. How many clients receive services from a job coach?
4. How many clients receive coworker natural supports among total clients?
5. Are there any problems or obstacles to facilitate coworker natural supports?

Chapter II

Literature Review

Historical origin of natural supports

Although the movement towards natural supports has its roots in the work place literature demonstrating coworker supports for both individuals with and without disabilities. This also appears to be some generated by dissatisfaction with both supported employment services provided by supported employment specialist as well as unsatisfactory consumer outcome (Test & Wood, 1996).

Specifically, one research (Brown et al., 1991) mentioned that;

the attention to the potentially valuable role that employer and coworkers can play in the success of supported employment results from: (a) a realization that job coaches may actually hinder the inclusion of employees with disabilities by usurping typical work-place practice (Hanger, 1989); (b) a growing understanding of common business training and support procedures used with employees who are not disabled that were previously disregarded (Mank, Orthuys, Rhodes, Sandow, & Weyer, 1992); and (c) concern with the lack of social integration of some supported employees on the job (p 275).

The definitions of natural supports

The concept of “natural supports” was formally first introduced to the field of supported employment by Nisbet and Hagner (1988). After that the

concept has been discussed and applied with varying interpretations (West, Kregel, Hernandez, & Hock, 1997).

Rogan and et al. (1993) described natural supports as:

any assistance, relationships, or interactions that allow a person to secure, maintain, and advance in a community job of his or her choosing in ways that correspond to the typical work routines and social actions of other employees and that enhance the individual's social relationships. Within this description there is a clear intent to adhere to the unique, natural flow of worksite routines, rhythms, and relationships, rather than impose human service values, roles, and methods on employment situations. Facilitating worksite supports is approached as both a process and an outcome.

(p. 275)

Storey and Certo (1996) defined Natural supports as; “natural supports are people who are not disability service providers but who provide assistance, feedback, contact, or companionship to enable people with disabilities to participate independently, in integrated settings or in community settings.”

(p. 63)

But there is ambiguity in definitions of “natural supports” among the authors. Parent, Wehman, & Bricout (2001) indicated as:

authors in supported employment literature do not appear to have a consensus on two basic issues. First, what distinguishes natural supports

from other workplace or work-related supports, a question that is some times framed in terms of what the qualifier “natural” means. Second, what is the contribution of the job coach as a paid service provider versus the contribution of coworkers, supervisors, or employers to the integration of supported employees?” (p. 94)

To reduce ambiguity, in this research we will define the natural supports as coworker natural supports, and job coaches as facilitators on natural supports.

Types of natural supports

Natural supports within the Vocational Rehabilitation service context were intended to include (a) individuals at the job site, such as employers, supervisors, or co-workers; (b) friends or family members in supportive roles; and (c) volunteers or mentors from work or the community (S. Rep. No. 357, 1992). Recently, several writers in the field have further broadened the context of natural supports to include other types of community and workplace resources, such as employee assistance programs, transportation providers, community service organizations, recreational and social associations, and governmental supports that are not limited to persons with disabilities, such as subsidized housing, income tax assistance, and so forth (Albin & Slovic, 1992; Parent, Unger, Gibson, & Clements, 1994; Rheinheimer, Van-Covern, Green, Revell, & Inge, 1993; Rogan et al., 1993; as cited West, Kregel, Hernandez, & Hock 1997).

One study (Trach & Mayhall, 1997) categorized the types of natural supports utilized during job placement and development (see Table 1).

Table 1

Types of natural supports

Support	Definition
Organization	Preparing and organizing activities in the setting, including but not limited to scheduling, order of tasks, and location of materials
Physical	Design and function of physical objects and equipment in a setting, including technical and nontechnical supports
Social	Interacting with nondisabled individuals in an environment
Training	Extending personal competence and skill through direct training and instruction
Service	Accessing professional and nonprofessional disability-related services
Community	Accessing community agencies and services that are available to all individuals

(reprinted from Trach & Mayhall, 1997)

Regarding coworkers' natural supports, Shafer (1986) presented specific use of coworkers in the roles of advocates, observers, and trainers, especially for generalization and maintenance and long-term follow-up.

The outcomes of coworker natural supports in workplaces

In the last 5 years, some researchers have pursued a line of research that has focused on typical features of employment and employment outcomes, including wages, benefits, integration, and coworker involvement (Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff, 1997, 1998, 1999). Results of this research has suggested that employees with disabilities who had more typical employment features when compared to their coworkers, also experienced higher levels of work site interactions, and as work site interactions increased, so did wages and typicalness (Mank et al., 1997).

In the second study (Mank et al., 1998) they reported that:

employees who made higher wages were more likely to have a more typical job acquisition process, compensation package, orientation and training process, and greater similarity in work roles compared to coworkers without disabilities. Those same employees whose coworkers were trained were more likely to earn higher wages, participate in non-work social activities, participate in at-work social activities, and have more positive relationships with coworkers. (p. 214)

In addition, this research showed that training provided to coworkers by supported employment personnel (job coaches) was related to increased employment outcomes for employees with more severe disabilities and behavioral issues (Mank et al., 1998).

Finally, the study (Mank et al., 1999) reported on several implications revealed about the involvement of coworkers in supported employment and natural supports. A positive relation to both wage and integration outcomes was linked to coworkers and supervisors in the immediate work area receiving specific information about an employee with disabilities in small, informal group sessions before the employee starts the job. In addition, a positive relation was found between coworkers who received general disability training and the typicalness of an employee with disabilities job acquisition process, orientation, and training.

Employers' attitude toward natural supports in worksites

Despite the proliferation of practical information on developing and using natural supports, empirical data on the use of natural supports in supported employment has only recently begun to emerge.

In only one study (Trach, Betty, & Shelden, 1998) employers who have used natural supports in providing accommodations to supported employees were interviewed to determine their perceptions regarding the accommodation process. Results indicate that the employers did not provide any natural supports to supported employees beyond those they would offer to other employees, nor did

the additional supports change the current work environment, except in a positive manner.

Service provider attitudes toward natural supports in work sites

One survey conducted a large-scale examination of the current status of natural support technology in supported employment programs (West et al., 1997). The major findings from that survey include:

1. Over 85.2% of respondents indicated that their agency emphasized natural supports in the delivery of supported employment services;
2. Natural supports appear to be used with most consumers in all stages of service, including job development and placement, time-limited services, and extended services;
3. Over 80% of respondents indicated that they had found natural supports a viable support option for every member of their caseload;
4. There was tremendous variability on what constituted a "natural support;"
5. For those indicating otherwise, the primary reason that natural supports were not viable were related to conditions at the work site (i.e., fast-paced, highly competitive, or unfriendly workplaces), and secondary reasons were characteristics of consumers (disability labels, learning or behavioral problems, etc.); and

6. Despite the benefits of this strategy, more than half had experienced difficulties in utilizing them, such as resistance from coworkers, difficulty in locating natural support agents, and reduced program effectiveness and efficiency. (p. 180)

These findings emphasize that the use of natural supports as a viable support option, while promising, is still in its infancy.

Rogan, Banks, and Michelle (2000) investigated the way in which workplace (natural) supports are conceptualized and implemented by four organizations that provide supported employment services. The findings indicate that the involvement of workplace (or natural) supports was promoted in each organization, but there were a wide variety of interpretations and practices among staff.

Issues between coworker natural supports and job coach roles

There is some controversy regarding effect of job coach interventions or supports. Chadsey, Linneman, Rusch, and Cimera (1997) examined the effect of two interventions--contextual and coworker--and the presence of job coaches on the social integration of five workers with mental retardation in employment settings. The results revealed that neither of the interventions had a significant effect on the frequency of interactions but that job coach presence seemed to suppress interaction rates.

Another study analyzed the effects of mentoring versus job coach training on the integration of workers with severe disabilities in supported employment settings (Lee, Storey, Anderson, Goetz, & Zivolich, 1997). The results of this study indicate that workers who received training with the mentoring model had more reciprocal interactions with nondisabled coworkers than supported employees who received training in the job coach model. These data also indicate that although the nondisabled comparison group had more interactions than either the job coach or mentoring group, the type of interactions did not vary among any of the groups. Studies showed that those increased interactions between employees with disabilities and coworkers resulted when coworkers were taught to be supporters, trainers, or mentors (Lee et al., 1997).

But, a recent study found that although greater hours of direct support are negatively related to typicalness, job change, length of employment, and wages, the individuals who receive greater amounts of direct supports and have had their coworkers trained have better outcomes than if there was not coworker training (Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff, 2000). That is, it appears that, in most cases, the presence of coworker training moderates the negative effects of direct support. Direct support is not necessarily a negative input if it is truly needed and coworkers are involved.

Redefining job coach roles in supported employment

Rogan et al. (1993) reconceptualized job coach roles to include collaborating with work site personnel, providing consultation to employers and increasing personal connections and preferences in the work environment. In this study the authors proposed job coach role to facilitate involvement of employer and coworker in developing accommodation and natural supports.

Another piece of research (Unger, Parent, Gibson, Kane-Johnston, & Kregel, 1998) presented the results of a study to catalog the kinds of service delivery activities employment specialists actually engage in when working in an employment program emphasizing the use of community and workplace supports. With the identification and utilization of supports that exist in one's community and work environments, it is critical that the role of the employment specialist and other natural support providers, such as co-workers, educators, family members and friends, be examined so that successful support strategies can be replicated and validated. The authors suggested that employment specialists might still be involved in orchestrating, arranging, providing, or overseeing the supports that are provided.

Natural supports and extended services

Extended services offered for as long as an individual is employed, is one of the unique features of supported employment, contributing to the model's success for persons who have significant support needs (Brooke, Revell, & Green,

1998). The idea of receiving ongoing assistance from natural supports as opposed to a paid service provider may be an attractive option. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 (PL 102-569) define extended services and add that if it is not possible to identify a source for the extended services, a statement may be included describing the basis for concluding that “a reasonable expectation that such sources will become available.” (Parent, Wehman, & Bricout, 2000)

Extended services may include natural supports.

Paraent and et al. (2000) recommend that a job coach should consider using natural supports for extended services delivery beginning the very first day of employment. Keeping track of all those support resources in the workplace that are already helping or have been identified as potential supports can prove to be a valuable source of assistance at a later time as needs arise or preferences change. The authors suggest that providing the supervisor or co-worker mentor with skills to effectively train the individual will prepare these individuals for continuing that support long after the initial training period has lapsed. Another advantage of establishing extended services supports early on is that the job coach is afforded the opportunity to monitor the supports, work out any problems that arise, and arrange any additional supports that are needed while the job coach is still actively involved with service delivery.

Chapter III

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects in this survey were job coaches who now work at supported employment service providers in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Instruments

A quantitative survey questionnaire was developed. To improve content validity before the questionnaire was developed, the researcher met two job coaches and listened to their opinions regarding the survey topic. Then, the research questionnaire was developed with consultation from one professional who works at the vocational rehabilitation field. Lastly, the primary designed questionnaire was revised after finishing pilot testing with 3 samples.

The survey's final version included 18 question items covering three areas, general demographic information, the perceptions and attitudes, and actual extent of experience regarding natural supports.

The demographic questions were consisted of gender, age, and working years. These questions used multiple-choice scale. Information about job coach perceptions and attitudes toward natural supports contained 10 questions. Items were rated on a 5-point scale (Likert scale).

Actual contexts contained two parts, 4 questions. Questions about total number of clients job coach is contacting and total number of clients receiving coworker natural supports were rated on a ratio scale.

Other two questions, types of coworker natural supports and obstacles regarding coworker natural supports, were asked using multiple-choice scale.

Procedures

To collect data, the mailed questionnaire was used. At first, the researcher obtained the lists of rehabilitation service providers and supported employment service agencies in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Two cover letters were prepared. One was for a director of human resources, and the other was for the job coach. On cover letters the purpose of the survey and confidentiality was specifically addressed.

The mail sent to each agency contained two response envelopes put stamps and a cover letter for the director. To improve the diversity of sample population, only two questionnaires were sent to each agency. A total 280 packets were sent to agencies, with a total of 560 questionnaires. The survey was conducted from October 1 to October 15 in 2001.

Sampling methods

In the survey the purposive sampling method was used to select samples for the population.

Limitations

This survey was conducted in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Thus, these results cannot be interpreted as the general results in U.S.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed by SPSS software as follows.

- 1) To analyze the demographic data, the scales such as frequency and percentage were used.
- 2) To analyze job coaches' perceptions and attitudes, mean and standard deviation were used.
- 3) To analyze actual extents such as total number of clients the job coach is contacting and total number of clients receiving coworker natural supports mean and standard deviation were used.
- 4) To analyze actual extents such as types of natural supports and problems to facilitate natural supports, frequency and percentage were used.
- 5) To analyze correlation between job coaches' perceptions (e.g. the degree of importance) and the client's ratio of receiving natural supports), correlation coefficients and Pearson R were used.
- 6) To analyze the relationship between demographic variables and job coaches' perceptions and attitudes the client's ratio of receiving natural supports, t-test or anova were used.

Chapter IV

Results

Rate of response

Surveys were mailed to 560 job coaches. Useable Responses were obtained from 202 job coaches for a rate of response of 36 %.

Demographics

Respondents were asked to indicate 4 demographics in the questionnaire. Gender, age, and work period as job coach were requested in multiple choice items, yielding data at the nominal scale of measurement. Tables 2, 3, and 4 report how many and the percent of the sample for those item. Eighty one point two percent of the job coaches were female in this survey.

Table 2

Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	38	18.8
Female	164	81.2
Total	202	100.0

About 55 percent of the job coaches were 40 and more years old (see Table 3).

Table 3

Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
Under 20	4	2.0
20 - 29	43	21.3
30 - 39	43	21.3
40 and more	112	55.4
Total	202	100.0

Their working years as a job coach were various. But about 60 percent of them worked 3 and more years as a job coach.

Table 4

Working years as a job coach

Working year	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	21	10.4
1 year ~ less than 2 years	33	16.3
2 years ~ less than 3 years	25	12.4
3 and more years	133	60.9
Total	202	100.0

Job coaches' perceptions and attitudes toward coworker natural supports

10 items in the questionnaire requested rating of perceptions and attitudes toward coworker natural supports for people with disabilities. These items were scored on five-point Likert scales of agreement (5=Strongly Agree), creating data at the interval scale of measurement. Table 5 reports mean and standard deviations for those rating of perceptions.

Table 5

Job coaches' perceptions and attitudes toward coworker natural supports

Job coaches' perceptions and attitudes	Mean	Standard Deviation
In supported employment coworker natural supports are indispensable for people with disabilities.	4.24	.86
In supported employment coworker natural supports are more important than job coach's support for people with disabilities.	3.33	1.11
The most important job coach role is to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities	3.56	1.01
Even though coworker supports are insufficient, there are no serious problems for people with disabilities if job coach supports effectively.	2.88	2.16

*(table continues)*Table 5 *(continued)*

Job coaches' perceptions and attitudes	Mean	Standard Deviation
In supported employment, there are many obstacles for job coaches to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities.	3.82	0.88
When my client brought some troubles in the work site, I tried to solve the problem with coworker supports rather than by myself.	3.35	1.09
Whenever I visit client's workplace, I usually talk to coworkers to give or receive information for my clients.	3.86	1.00
To facilitate coworker natural supports, much time and efforts are needed.	3.78	0.96
It's impossible for me to facilitate coworker natural supports for my clients, if the employer does not consent.	3.33	1.10
It is a very difficult task for coworker to help my clients, because they do not have knowledge about people with disabilities.	2.38	1.10

To analyze job coaches' perceptions and attitudes more meaningfully, the interval scale of measurement was converted to a nominal scale of measurement. That is if respondent answers were agree or strongly agree, these respondents were classified as an agree group. If respondent answers were disagree or strongly disagree, these respondents were classified as a disagree group. And the respondents who answered neutral, these respondents were classified as a neutral group. Table 6 next page reports percent of each group regarding importance of coworker natural supports and job coaches' roles.

Table 6

Job coaches' perceptions to coworker natural supports (importance & job coach roles)

	In supported employment coworker natural supports are indispensable for people with disabilities. (%)	In supported employment coworker natural supports are more important than job coach's support for people with disabilities. (%)	The most important job coach role is to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities. (%)
Agree	84.8	60.5	45.7
Neutral	9.6	21.0	29.1
Disagree	5.6	18.5	25.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Majority of the job coaches (84.8 %) agreed that coworker natural supports are indispensable for people with disabilities. And about 60 percent of the job coaches thought that coworker natural supports are more important than job coach's support. But, nearly 20 percent of the respondents disagreed to the opinion and another 20 percent reserved their opinions. Regarding the most important job coach's role, 45.7 percent of the job coaches agreed that facilitating

coworker natural supports is the most important role, but the rest of the job coaches (55 %) disagreed or reserved their opinions.

Table 7 below reports job coaches' responses regarding attitudes for facilitating coworker natural supports. The results show that the majority of job coaches (75%) talk to coworkers about clients. However, when their clients bring some troubles in the work site, only half of the job coaches try to solve the problems with coworker supports. Twenty four percent of the job coaches solve the problems by herself or himself without coworker supports. The 25 percent of responded neutrally.

Table 7

Job coaches' attitudes for facilitating coworker natural supports

	Whenever I visit client's workplace, I usually talk to coworkers to give or receive information for my clients. (%)	When my client brought some troubles in the work site, I tried to solve the problem with coworker supports rather than by myself. (%)
Agree	75.0	51.0
Neutral	12.5	25.0
Disagree	12.5	24.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 8 below reports job coaches' perceptions regarding difficulty to facilitate coworker natural supports. Nearly 70% of the job coaches agreed that there are many obstacles for them to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities. And they also responded that to facilitate coworker natural supports, much time and efforts are needed (68.8%).

Table 8

Job coaches' perceptions regarding difficulty to facilitate coworker natural supports

	In supported employment, there are many obstacles for job coaches to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities. (%)	To facilitate coworker natural supports, much time and efforts are needed. (%)
Agree	71.9	68.8
Neutral	18.6	17.6
Disagree	9.5	13.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Regarding the difficulties to facilitate coworker natural supports, two questions were asked. Majority of the job coaches (69.3 %) were not concerned about coworkers' lack of knowledge about the people with disabilities. In addition, nearly 50 percent of the job coaches agreed that employer consents are essential for natural supports. However, 30.7 % of the job coaches did not agree to the statement. It means that nearly one third of the job coaches positively believe that even though without employer supports, they can facilitate coworker natural supports.

Table 9

Job coaches' perceptions regarding specific difficulties to facilitate coworker natural supports

	It is a very difficult task for coworker to help my clients, because they do not have knowledge about people with disabilities. (%)	It's impossible for me to facilitate coworker natural supports for my clients, if the employer does not consent. (%)
Agree	19.1	49.7
Neutral	11.6	19.6
Disagree	69.3	30.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Relationships between gender and job coaches' perceptions and attitudes

A variety of inferential statistics were used to examine relationships among the survey variables. Gender and job coaches' perceptions were examined by a t-test for independent samples. Table 10 reports mean score of perceptions for male and female job coaches. There was not a statistically significant difference between gender on variables of perceptions and attitudes.

Table 10

Relationships between gender and job coaches' perceptions and attitudes

Job coaches' perceptions to coworker natural supports (importance & job coach's role)			
	Gender	Mean	p
In supported employment coworker natural supports are indispensable for people with disabilities.	Male	4.05	.141
	Female	4.28	
The most important job coach role is to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities	Male	3.45	.447
	Female	3.59	
In supported employment coworker natural supports are more important than job coach's support for people with disabilities.	Male	3.24	.582
	Female	3.35	

(table continues)

Table 10 (*continued*)

Job coaches' attitudes for facilitating coworker natural supports	Gender	Mean	p
When my client brought some troubles in the work site, I tried to solve the problem with coworker supports rather than by myself.	Male	3.24	.449
	Female	3.37	
Whenever I visit client's workplace, I usually talk to coworkers to give or receive information for my clients.	Male	3.95	.550
	Female	3.84	
Job coaches' perceptions regarding difficulty to facilitate coworker natural supports	Gender	Mean	p
In supported employment, there are many obstacles for job coaches to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities.	Male	4.03	.115
	Female	3.78	
To facilitate coworker natural supports, much time and efforts are needed.	Male	3.63	.296
	Female	3.81	
It's impossible for me to facilitate coworker natural supports for my clients, if the employer does not consent.	Male	3.34	.948
	Female	3.33	
It is a very difficult task for coworker to help my clients, because they do not have knowledge about people with disabilities.	Male	2.53	.371
	Female	2.35	

Relationships between age groups and job coaches' perceptions and attitudes

Age and job coaches' perceptions were examined by an anova test for independent samples. Table 11 reports mean score of importance for job coaches' age groups. There was not a statistically significant difference between age groups on variables of perceptions.

Table 11

Relationships between age groups and job coach's perceptions

Job coaches' perceptions to coworker natural supports (importance & job coach's role)			
	Age	Mean	p
In supported employment coworker natural supports are indispensable for people with disabilities.	-29	4.16	.388
	30-39	4.12	
	40 +	4.32	
The most important job coach role is to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities	-29	3.61	.716
	30-39	3.64	
	40 +	3.50	
In supported employment coworker natural supports are more important than job coach's support for people with disabilities.	-29	3.57	.120
	30-39	3.07	
	40 +	3.34	

(table continues)

Table 11 (*continued*)

Job coaches' attitudes for facilitating coworker natural supports	Age	Mean	p
When my client brought some troubles in the work site, I tried to solve the problem with coworker supports rather than by myself.	-29	3.20	.492
	30-39	3.31	
	40 +	3.42	
Whenever I visit client's workplace, I usually talk to coworkers to give or receive information for my clients.	-29	3.61	.150
	30-39	3.96	
	40 +	3.94	
Job coaches' perceptions regarding difficulty to facilitate coworker natural supports	Age	Mean	p
In supported employment, there are many obstacles for job coaches to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities.	-29	3.91	.402
	30-39	3.93	
	40 +	3.76	
To facilitate coworker natural supports, much time and efforts are needed.	-29	3.70	.539
	30-39	3.69	
	40 +	3.85	
It's impossible for me to facilitate coworker natural supports for my clients, if the employer does not consent.	-29	3.11	.275
	30-39	3.45	
	40 +	3.37	
It is a very difficult task for coworker to help my clients, because they do not have knowledge about people with disabilities.	-29	2.28	.680
	30-39	2.33	
	40 +	2.42	

Relationships between working years and job coaches' perceptions and attitudes

Working years and perceptions were examined by a t test for independent samples. Table 12 reports mean score of perceptions and attitudes for job coach working years. There were two variables with a statistically significant difference between working years on variable of perceptions.

Table 12

Relationships between working years and job coaches' perceptions

Job coaches' perceptions to coworker natural supports (importance & job coach roles)	Working		p
	Years	Mean	
In supported employment coworker natural supports are indispensable for people with disabilities.	Less 3	4.13	.151
	3 & +	4.31	
The most important job coach's role is to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities	Less 3	3.56	.973
	3 & +	3.56	
In supported employment coworker natural supports are more important than job coach's support for people with disabilities.	Less 3	3.18	.135
	3 & +	3.42	

(table continues)

Table 12 (*continued*)

Job coaches' attitudes for facilitating coworker natural supports	Working		
	Year	Mean	p
When my client brought some troubles in the work site, I tried to solve the problem with coworker supports rather than by myself.	Less 3 3 & +	3.11 3.50	.015 **
Whenever I visit client's workplace, I usually talk to coworkers to give or receive information for my clients.	Less 3 3 & +	3.76 3.93	.251
** Difference is significant at the 0.05 level.			

Comparing to the job coach who worked less than 3 years, the job coaches who worked 3 years and longer are more actively solving client problems with coworkers' natural supports rather than by themselves ($t = -2.449$, $df = 198$, $p = .015$).

And to the question that much time and efforts are needed to facilitate coworker natural supports, the job coaches who worked 3 and more years more strongly agreed than the job coaches who worked less than 3 years (below Table 12) ($t = -2.243$, $df = 197$, $p = .026$).

Table 12 (*continued*)

Relationships between working years and job coaches' perceptions

Job coaches' perceptions regarding difficulty to facilitate coworker natural supports	Working Year	Mean	p
In supported employment, there are many obstacles for job coaches to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities.	Less 3 3 & +	3.69 3.91	.089
To facilitate coworker natural supports, much time and efforts are needed.	Less 3 3 & +	3.59 3.90	.026 **
It's impossible for me to facilitate coworker natural supports for my clients, if the employer does not consent.	Less 3 3 & +	3.18 3.43	.109
It is a very difficult task for coworker to help my clients, because they do not have knowledge about people with disabilities.	Less 3 3 & +	2.40 2.37	.874

** Difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Number of clients the job coach serves

Total number of clients whom the job coach provided service was asked on the ratio scale. Table 12 reports the average number of clients the job coach currently serves. Average number of clients was 15.38 persons and standard deviations was 12.41. Forty three point four percent of the job coaches served 10 and fewer clients, and 33.8 percent served between 11 and 20. More than 20 percent of the job coaches served 21 and more persons.

Table 12

Number of clients the job coach serves

Mean	Standard Deviations		Frequency	Percent
15.38 persons	12.41	0 – 10 persons	89	43.4
		11- 20 persons	67	33.8
		21 - 30 persons	29	14.6
		31+ persons	16	8.1
		Total	198	100.0

Relationships between demographic variables and the number of clients the job coach serves

Demographic variables and number of clients the job coach serves were examined by t test and anova for independent samples. Table 13 reports mean score of number of clients each job coach serves for demographic variables.

There was not a statistically significant difference between genders on number of clients the job coach serves. In addition, there was not a statistically significant difference between age groups on number of clients the job coach serves (refers to table 13). But, a statistically significant difference was found between working years on number of clients the job coach services. Job coaches worked 3 and more years serviced more clients than job coaches worked fewer 3 years did.

Table 13

Relationships between demographic variables and the number of clients the job coach serves

	Mean	Standard Deviations	Statistics
Gender			t= -1.232
Male	13.16	9.14	df=196
Female	15.91	13.04	p=.220
Age			
-29	12.60	9.50	F=22.1
30-39	18.14	15.91	df=2
40+	15.45	11.75	p= .111
Working Year			t= -2.790
Less 3	12.35	10.68	df=196
3 & +	17.31	13.07	p= .006***

*** Difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

The ratio of clients receiving coworker natural supports

Table 14 reports ratio of clients receiving coworker natural supports. On the survey job coaches responded that on average 71.1 % of the clients out of total clients served by them receives coworker natural supports. The median score was 79.3 and the standard deviation was 30.7.

Table 14

The Ratio of clients receiving coworker natural supports

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
The ratio of clients receiving coworker natural supports*	71.1%	79.3%	30.7

*(Number of client receiving natural supports / No. of clients served) *100

Relationships between demographic variables and the ratio of clients who receive coworker natural supports

Demographic variables and the ratio of clients who receive coworker natural supports were examined by t test and anova for independent samples. Table 15 reports mean score of the ratio for demographic variables.

There was not a statistically significant difference between demographic variables such as gender, age groups, and working years on the variable ratio of clients who receive coworker natural supports (refers to Table 15).

However, a statistically significant difference was found between the groups of job coaches divided by number of clients served on the variable ratio of clients who receive coworker natural supports.

The ratio of clients receiving coworker natural supports was higher (77.1 %) in the group of job coaches serving fewer than 11 clients than of those serving 11 and more clients (67.5%).

Table 15

Relationships between demographic variables and the ratio of clients receiving coworker natural supports

	Mean	Standard Deviations	Statistics
Gender			T= -.109
Male	71.0	30.1	df=186
Female	71.6	31.1	p= .913
Age			
-29	67.1	32.0	F=. 805
30-39	75.7	31.0	df=2
40+	71.8	30.3	p= .449
Working years			T= -.744
Less than 3	69.5	31.8	df=186
3 and more	72.9	30.2	p=.458
N. of serving clients			t=2.127
Less than 11	77.1	77.1	df=186
11 and more	67.5	67.5	p= .035**

** Difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The correlation between job coaches' perception and the ratio of clients receiving natural supports

The correlation between job coaches' perceptions and the ratio of clients receiving natural supports was shown at table 16. There was a statistically significant relationship between job coach's perceptions and ratio of clients receiving natural supports ($r=.243$, $p < 0.05$)

Table 16

Correlation between job coaches' perceptions and the ratio of clients receiving natural supports

	The ratio of clients receiving natural supports
The most important job coach role is to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities.	.243
** Correlation is meaningful at the 0.05 level (p=.023**)	

Correlation between the number of clients the job coach served and the ratio of clients receiving natural supports

The correlation between the numbers of clients the job coach serves and the ratio of clients receiving natural supports was shown at table 17. There was no statistically significant correlation between the number of clients the job coach served and the ratio of clients receiving natural supports ($r = -.115$, $p = .205$).

Table 17

Correlation between the number of clients the job coach served and the ratio of clients receiving natural supports

	The ratio of clients receiving natural supports
Number of clients the job coach served	-.115
	($p = .205$)

Types of coworker natural supports done in supported employment

Respondents were asked to indicate types of coworker natural supports done in supported employment. The question was requested in the multiple choice item, and the job coach could choose more than one answer.

Table 18 below reports that the job coaches answered coworker emotional supports most frequently.

Table 18

Types of coworker natural supports done in supported employment

	Frequency	Percent
Physical supports	88	43.6
Emotional supports	116	57.4
Social supports	91	45.0
Training/Educations	89	44.1
Others	17	8.4
(Multiple Responses)		

The significant barriers to facilitate coworker natural supports in supported employment

Regarding the significant barriers to facilitate coworker natural supports in supported employment, job coaches responded as in table 19. Sixty one point four percent of the job coaches indicated coworkers' lack of knowledge for people with disabilities as one of the significant barriers. The workplace environments were mentioned (50 %). Employer's indifference and client's condition also were responded to nearly 40 % of job coaches.

Table 19

The significant barriers to facilitate coworker natural supports in supported employment

	Frequency	Percent
Employer's indifference	85	42.1
Co-workers' lack of knowledge for people with disabilities	124	61.4
Client's conditions	80	39.6
Workplace environments	50	50.0
Job coaches' time limitation	42	20.8
Others	32	15.8
(Multiple Responses)		

Chapter V

Conclusion

Summary, implications, and recommendations

Two hundred and two surveys were reviewed for job coaches' perceptions and attitudes regarding coworkers natural supports for people with disabilities in supported employment.

The job coaches working in Wisconsin and Minnesota strongly agreed that coworker natural supports are crucial for people with disabilities (4.24 on Likert scale). However, regarding the first priority of a job coach's role as a facilitator for coworker natural supports, there were conflicting opinions on this question (3.33).

The results say that among job coaches there is still disagreement about their priority role between educating (coaching) people with disability and facilitating coworker natural supports. Certainly, the issue is not the alternative but two sides of the same coin. However, according to the side the job coaches focusing, the approaching method and outcomes, especially client's integration at the work setting, might be quite different. Another survey result proves this proposition. Fifty one percent of the job coaches agreed with the statement that 'when my client brought some troubles in work site, I try to solve the problem with coworker supports rather than by my self.' Twenty four percent of the respondents expressed disagreement, another 25 % reserved their opinion.

As we found in some research during literature review, job coaches' attitude, solving problems by herself or himself rather than with coworker, can cause coworkers' reluctance to support the people with disabilities naturally.

The results indicate that the job coaches who work in Wisconsin and Minnesota serve about 15 clients on average. And according to the survey results about 10 clients (71%) out of 15 clients served by job coaches receive coworker natural supports in supported employment. The most frequent natural support was emotional support (57.4 %). Physical supports such as physical objects and equipment, social supports, and training supports are provided by coworkers and employers.

Job coaches agreed that there are many obstacles for them to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities (3.82). In addition, they responded that to facilitate coworker natural supports, much time and effort is needed (3.78). Regarding significant barriers to facilitate natural supports in supported employment, coworkers' lack of knowledge for people with disabilities (61.4 %), work environments (50%), employer's indifference (42.1 %), and client's conditions (39.6%) were pointed out by job coaches.

It can be recommended that both job coaches and service agencies need to make the effort to improve coworkers' understanding of the clients. These efforts should be done promptly before the client works or on the early stage of employment. Sometimes these tasks may be beyond the job coaches' capability or coworkers' understanding. Some visual materials such as videotapes and

pictures or explanation using best practices probably would be helpful for coworker's understanding.

Educating employers and coworkers, changing attitudes and work environment, and empowering their supports for clients are difficult tasks that consume time and money. Performing all these tasks successfully by job coaches and service agencies may be impossible. More comprehensive and systematic approaches are necessary through the cooperation of many stakeholders, including public rehabilitation administrators, legislators, professionals, service providers, job coaches, and employers and coworkers.

This topic is beyond this research area, so further research dealing with more macro level approaches are recommended.

Limitations of the survey

There are some limitations regarding this survey.

First, the survey was conducted in Wisconsin and Minnesota; thus the results could not represent all U.S situations. For example, survey results at metropolitan oriented states could be somewhat different from this result.

Second, as we mentioned during the literature review, there are some ambiguities in defining natural supports even among professionals. So it's impossible to remove the problem on the survey questionnaire entirely. This ambiguity in defining natural supports probably can cause somewhat of a difference in understanding among job coaches.

Third, the survey used the purposive sampling method. Thus, there are some risks, which is not representative of actual population. Careful interpretations are required in using the results especially ratio scale variables such as number of clients served and those receiving coworker natural supports.

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Appendices

Cover letters

September 30, 2001

Dear Job Coach:

Hello, my name is Jae H. Kim. I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in the Vocational Rehabilitation program. A requirement of the program is to design and complete a study to be presented in the form of a thesis. My chosen topic of interest is natural supports in supported employment. Enclosed is a simple survey that was sent out to job coaches who work in Wisconsin and Minnesota. I am hoping to identify job coaches' perceptions toward coworker natural supports in supported employment.

This survey is conducted anonymously so name and address information is not asked. And your answers for this survey will be confidential. Enclosed is a stamped envelope in which to mail the completed survey back for the purpose of analysis. **I hope you can take time out of your busy schedule to fill out the survey to the best of your ability and return it to me within the next 10 days (October 10).** Your feedback is greatly appreciated and I look forward to obtaining some useful data on the supported employment. Again, thank you so much for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Jae H. Kim

P.S. If you have any questions or concern about this survey, please contact with the researcher or research advisor.

Researcher;

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Research Advisor;

Dr. Robert Peters
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September 30, 2001

Dear Director:

Hello, my name is Jae H. Kim. I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in the Vocational Rehabilitation program. A requirement of the program is to design and complete a study to be presented in the form of a thesis. My chosen topic of interest is natural supports in supported employment. Enclosed is a simple survey that was sent out to job coaches who work in Wisconsin and Minnesota. I am hoping to identify job coaches' perceptions toward coworker natural supports in supported employment.

This survey is conducted anonymously so agency name and address information is not asked. Also questions regarding service agencies are not asked in the questionnaire. In addition, answers for this survey will be confidential. Enclosed are two stamped envelopes in which to mail the completed survey back for the purpose of analysis. **I hope you can take time out of your busy schedule to give these envelopes to two job coaches who work at your agency.** Your feedback is greatly appreciated and I look forward to obtaining some useful data on the supported employment. Again, thank you so much for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Jae H. Kim

P.S. If you have any questions or concern about this survey, please contact with the researcher or research advisor.

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Consent form

I understand that by returning the questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this survey. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realized that I have the right to refuse to participate this survey and that my rights to withdraw from participation at any time during the survey will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaint first to the researcher and research advisor and second to the Susan Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, University of Wisconsin-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (751) 232-2477.

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Survey Questionnaire

Please mark V on your proper answer.

I. Demographic questions

1. Gender

_____ Male

_____ Female

2. Age

_____ Under 20

_____ 20 – 29

_____ 30 – 39

_____ 40 and more

3. Working years as job coach

_____ less than 1 year

_____ 1 year ~ less than 2 years

_____ 2 years ~ less than 3 years

_____ 3 and more years

4. Do you work for job coach (or employment specialist) now?

_____ Yes , _____ No

II. Your opinions about coworker's natural support for people with disabilities in supported employment.

How much do you agree or disagree to the statement? Please, mark a V in the () according to your opinions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. In supported employment coworker natural supports are indispensable for people with disabilities.	()	()	()
2. In supported employment coworker natural supports are more important than job coach's support for people with disabilities.	()	()	()
3. I think that the most important job coach's role is to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities.	()	()	()
4. Even though coworker supports are insufficient, there is no serious problems for people with disabilities if job coach supports effectively.	()	()	()

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
6. When my client's brought some troubles in the work site, I tried to solve the problem with coworker supports rather than by myself.	()	()	()
7. Whenever I visit client's workplace, I usually talk to coworkers to give or receive information for my clients.	()	()	()
8. To facilitate coworker natural supports, much time and efforts are needed.	()	()	()
9. It's impossible for me to facilitate coworker natural supports for my clients, if the employer does not consent.	()	()	()
10. I think that it is a very difficult task for coworker to help my clients, because they do not have knowledge about people with disabilities	()	()	()

11. How many supported employment clients do you serve a month on an average? () persons

12. How many clients receive coworker natural supports out of your clients in supported employment? (Please, refer to your answer of question 11)
..... () persons

13. What type of coworker natural support is most frequently done for your clients in supported employment?

_____ Physical supports (physical objects and equipments)

_____ Emotional supports

_____ Social supports(car pool, lunch and break partners)

_____ Training/educations

_____ Others(please, write specifically ())

14. What are the significant barriers (obstacles) for you to facilitate coworker natural supports for people with disabilities in supported employment?
(You can mark more than one answer.)

_____ Employer's indifference

_____ Coworker's lack of knowledge for people with disabilities

_____ Client's conditions

_____ Workplace environments

_____ My time limitation (too many clients)

_____ Others (please, write specifically:_____)

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Please return this questionnaire to the researcher within next 10 days (Oct. 10).