

Supported employment and job outcomes. Typicalness and other related variables

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to improve supported employment programs analyzing the relationships between different variables involved in its development on job outcomes. One important variable is typicalness (understood as the degree to which the job of the person with a disability is similar in its different characteristics to that of co-workers without a disability). It also compares sheltered employment and supported employment in employment outcomes. The results showed more length of service in the job and salary for supported employment workers. As regards the developmental variables, time of external support, type of support, and adaptations are critical to get better outcomes. Finally, the need to finely balance the typicalness of the job and the characteristics of the worker involved is stressed.

Keywords: Supported employment, typicalness, job outcomes

1. Introduction

Supported employment development needs a continuous improvement of its practices to get the best job outcomes possible. Research can arise these critical elements.

Supported employment is a modality of job integration for persons with a disability that arose in the 1980s in the US and has been defined and studied by different researchers [9,14,24,25,27,29]. It implies the placement of a worker with disability, who is not able to get or maintain an integrated employment, in a normalized job site, providing him training and long term support.

Job outcomes are the set of results derived from performing a job that a worker can achieve to a greater or lesser degree. Job outcomes have been used by different authors as an element of analysis and comparison regarding the employment of persons with a dis-

ability [4,5,8,10,12,20,22,28]. Mank specifies job outcomes by referring to hours of work per week, length of service, salary and job benefits [7,13,15–19,23].

Natural supports are considered one of the key aspects of the practical development of supported employment, and there are many authors who have dealt with this [2,3,6,11,21,24,27]. By natural support we mean any strategy, resource, relation, or interaction provided by persons, procedures, instruments or equipment that (a) is typically available and/or is culturally suitable in the community environments surrounding a person, (b) facilitates the obtaining of positive results in the professional and social spheres and (c) increases the quality of life of the person.

In relation to the natural supports we have *typicalness or similarity in employment* as a relatively recent concept, and which is understood as the degree to which the characteristics of job accessibility, the job itself (duties, benefits, etc.) and the job environment (places, co-workers, etc.) are similar to those of co-workers without a disability in the same company. Research developed by David Mank et al. shows the importance of enhancing typicalness to improve job outcomes and

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integration [7,13,15–19,23]. Typicalness is defined according to the four elements that comprise it: job acquisition and hiring, job characteristics, management of human resources and social aspects. These four characteristics provide a general index of similarity. It should be said with respect to this concept that typical and similar do not necessarily mean better, since we are working with a population with even more pressing difficulties (within the group of persons with a disability) in obtaining employment in an ordinary company within the community. Thus, the balance between typical and specifically adapted always remains in the hands of the professional who must establish the proper criteria in each case.

2. Approach

Our objective was to carry out research for practical applications that would analyze which employment variables (independent variables such as type of job, typicalness, as well as variables having to do with the worker, the position and the employer) were related to the highest job outcomes (dependent variables such as hours of work per week, length of service, salary and job benefits). We thus posed the following hypotheses:

- (H1) Workers in supported employment will have better job outcomes than those in sheltered employment
- (H2) Workers in more typical jobs will have better job outcomes.
- (H3) Job outcomes vary according to the characteristics of the support offered to the workers with an intellectual disability and their co-workers.
- (H4) Job outcomes also vary according to the characteristics of the workers, the jobs and the employers.

At the same time we wished to find out what types of jobs are associated with the highest levels of typicalness and what the characteristics are of the companies that hire workers with an intellectual disability by means of supported employment services.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

To carry out this research, contact was established with 9 different organizations, 6 of which have job

programs or services with support and 3 have sheltered employment centers.

The total group comprised 232 participants distributed in two groups: 160 in supported employment (SE) and 72 in sheltered employment centers (SEC). All the participants had an intellectual disability, which was slight in 56.9% of the participants in both groups. The rest of the participants characteristics can be seen in Table 1. We must indicate that the supported employment group, according to previous studies, makes up 6.62% of the total population under study, which in Spain comprised 2,417 people at the end of 1999 [8, 27].

3.2. Instrument

To carry out this research the Typicalness Questionnaire was used. The Typicalness Questionnaire was translated and adapted to Spanish based on that developed by David Mank and his colleagues [7,10,12–16, 19]. It is designed to be completed by a person close to the worker with a disability who is deeply familiar with his/her job situation and the aspects surrounding it. The Typicalness Questionnaire has 75 items divided into 5 sections: A. Confidential Information, B. General Information, C. Information concerning the Disability, D. Information on the Job and E. Information on the Company Personnel.

3.3. Design and procedure

Our research combined two kinds of study [1]. On the one hand, a *descriptive study* was made to respond to questions about the characteristics of the sample based on information collected in the questionnaires. On the other hand, a *correlational causal-comparative study* was carried out in which the participants in the sample were compared in different dependent variables with regard to different independent variables (see Table 2). The differences between groups determined by presence or not of the variables were examined using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), which also allowed us to control for the correlations among the dependent variables. Consequently, if significant differences appeared, it was possible to eliminate the inter-correlation between the dependent variables as a possible explanation of the differences observed. Univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was subsequently carried out when Hotelling's T was statistically significant.

The steps followed to carry out the research consisted of: 1. Selection of participants, taking as a fundamen-

Table 1
Sample characteristics

Supported employment (160)	Sheltered Employment Centers (72)
Male (71.3%)	Male (86.1%)
Age 22 to 30 (54.4%)	Age 31 to 40 (47.2%)
Living at family home (88.8%)	Living at family home (77.8%)
3 to 5 members (73.2%)	2 to 4 members (80.5%)
Primary studies (46.3%)	Occupational training (58.3%)
Intellectual disability (100%)	Intellectual disability (100%)
Mild (56.9%)	Mild (56.9%)
Associated disabilities (29.4%)	Associated disabilities (44.4%)
Behavioral problems (25%)	Behavioral problems (12.5%)
Mild problems (16.3%)	Mild problems (8.3%)

Table 2
Type of variables analyzed

Independent	Dependent
Type of employment	Job outcomes
– Sheltered employment	– Hours of work per week
– Supported employment	– Length of service
Individual variables (age, gender, ...)	– Salary
Employment variables (Type, adaptations, ...)	– Job benefits
Company variables (size, sector, ...)	Typicalness variables (as dependent)
Support to coworkers variables (hours, type, ...)	– Acquisition
Support to worker variables (hours, type, ...)	– Job characteristics
Typicalness variables (as independent)	– Management
– Acquisition	– Social aspects
– Job characteristics	
– Management	
– Social aspects	

tal criterion that their main disability had to be an intellectual one, and in the case of supported employment that they have individual jobs, 2. Training of those who were to give the questionnaire, with two day sessions in each organization in which administering the questionnaire was modeled with several participants, to then arrive at a consensus and resolve any questions, thus unifying the procedure, and 3. The questionnaires were administered by the trained questionnaire givers.

4. Results

As regards the hypothesis that *workers in supported employment will have better job outcomes* than those in sheltered employment, the results showed significant differences in three of the four variables considered. Table 3 shows that those in supported employment had longer length of service, higher salary, but lesser job benefits. There was no difference in weekly work hours between the two groups.

With respect to the hypothesis that *workers in more typical jobs will have better job outcomes* (see Table 4), it was observed that overall typicalness is not related to job outcomes, although relationships do appear when

components of typicalness are considered separately. These results show that the most typical job characteristics are positively correlated to weekly work hours, length of service and job benefits. On the other hand, the most typical human resources management is negatively related to work hours and length of service and positively to job benefits. Finally, the most important relationships are established with regard to job benefits, which are positively correlated to all the components of typicalness, with the exception of job acquisition, with which it has a negative relationship.

As to the hypothesis that *job outcomes vary according to the characteristics of the support offered to the workers with an intellectual disability and their coworkers*, it can be seen in Table 5 that a greater number of hours of support per week for co-workers is positively associated with length of service in the job, but negatively associated with job benefits. Likewise, a greater number of support hours provided to the worker by a professional is associated with fewer job benefits.

It can also be seen how the support provided by the work coach or specialist is associated with longer length of service. The opposite occurs with generic training or guidance concerning disabilities provided

Table 3
Differences in job outcomes related to belonging to SE or SEC

Variables	N	Mean	s. d.	F
Weekly job hours				0.082
SE	153	37.32	6.14	
SEC	69	37.04	7.76	
Length of service in the job (no of months)				9.768**
SE	159	47.74	49.83	
SEC	69	27.71	28.20	
Monthly wage				13.010**
SE	155	92761.25	41362.76	
SEC	72	75007.42	7972.29	
Job benefits				30.462**
SE	160	3.35	1.00	
SEC	72	4.00	0.00	

** $p < 0.01$ / * $p < 0.05$.

Table 4
Relationship between typicalness and job outcomes

	Weekly job hours	Length of service in the job (no of months)	Monthly wage	Job benefits
General Typicalness				
Acquisition				-0.362**
Characteristics	0.199*	0.185*		0.268**
Management	-0.181*	-0.215**		0.299**
Social aspects				0.245**

** $p < 0.01$ / * $p < 0.05$.

to the co-workers, which are associated with a shorter length of service, but a greater number of job benefits.

The formal support provided to co-workers by means of staff meetings is associated with a longer length of service, higher salaries and greater number of job benefits. When the support is offered at the beginning of the job there is longer length of service, the same as when it is offered on a continual basis.

Finally, with respect to this group, the support provided by co-workers is positively related to the highest salaries as well as to the greatest job benefits, and the support provided by supervisors or managers is associated with longer length of service in the job.

Focusing on the hypothesis that *job outcomes vary according to the characteristics of the workers, the jobs and the employers* we first look at the relationship between personal characteristics and job outcomes. Table 6 shows that gender is related to salary and job benefits, the men earning significantly higher salaries with better job benefits. Age is also related to job benefits, these being better in the older age groups, particularly the 22 to 30 year-olds. Significant differences were also found as regards the level of previous training, as it was shown that except for special education, the highest educational levels were associated with a longer length of service.

As regards the presence of other disabilities, significant relationships were found between these and job benefits, the benefits decreasing in the presence of other disabilities. A relationship was also found between behavioral problems and weekly work hours, the latter increasing in the presence of these problems and the more severe they are. There were no significant differences regarding the level of intellectual disability.

With regard to the relationship between the job characteristics and job outcomes, it can be seen in Table 7 that there are significant differences regarding length of service, the latter being longer in the presence of adaptations, the opposite being the case with salary and job benefits. There are also significant differences regarding the nature of the job, newly created jobs being associated with longer length of service, while jobs made up from parts of others are associated with fewer job benefits. The number of daily contacts with the public is associated significantly with job benefits in the sense that the more contact the greater the job benefits, as well as with monthly salary, this being higher when there are between 6 and 15 daily contacts with the public. Finally in this group, the presence of contact with the public is related to weekly work hours, which increase as the contact increases.

Finally, respect to the relationship between the characteristics of the company or employer and job out-

Table 5
Summary of significant relationships of some support variables with job outcomes

Variables	Job outcomes			
	Weekly job hours	Length of service in the job (no of months)	Monthly wage	Job benefits
Weekly hours of support to coworkers (1=< once a week, 2=< 1 hour, 3=1 to 3 hours)		Mean 1=35.42 Mean 2=54.05 Mean 3=75.73 F=10.544**		Mean 1=3.68 Mean 2=3.11 Mean 3=2.65 F=19.174**
Weekly hours of direct support to the disabled worker provided by external professionals (1=less than 1 hour, 2=more than 1 hour)				Mean 1=3.61 Mean 2=3.01 F=14.972**
Support provided by job coach or specialist		Mean SI=50.79 Mean NO=16.56 F=6.974**		
Training or orientations about disability to coworkers		Mean SI=33.77 Mean NO=59.89 F=11.126**		Mean SI=3.51 Mean NO=3.19 F=4.177*
Information about how to train or support to workers with disabilities		Mean SI=51.77 Mean NO=29.14 F=4.924*		Mean SI=3.26 Mean NO=3.69 F=4.326*
Support to coworkers provided formally (meetings with company staff)		Mean SI=64.05 Mean NO=40.74 F=6.940**	Mean SI=104410.21 Mean NO=87570.32 F=5.160*	Mean SI=3.60 Mean NO=3.23 F=4.333*
Support at the beginning of the job		Mean SI=53.00 Mean NO=33.33 F=4.851*		
Ongoing support		Mean SI=53.11 Mean NO=33.05 F=5.051*		
Support provided by coworkers			Mean SI=96049.28 Mean NO=78977.66 F=4.255*	Mean SI=3.48 Mean NO=2.82 F=11.641**
Support provided by supervisors or managers		Mean SI=53.54 Mean NO=35.39 F=4.757*		

** $p < 0.01$ / * $p < 0.05$.

comes, significant relationships were observed between the activity sector of the company and length of service, which is greater in the industrial sector followed by the trade and service sectors. As regards the number of employees, there are significant differences relating to job benefits, such that benefits are greater in companies of 51 to 100 employees followed by those with 26 to 50. Concerning the number of employees with a disability in the immediate environment, there are significant differences regarding length of service, which is longer when there is only one co-worker instead of two. Finally, with respect to this group, a relationship was observed between the company's providing guidance for new workers and length of service, which is longer when this guidance is offered. These results can be seen in Table 8.

Although they were not previously included in the hypothesis, data obtained allowed us to address two additional questions. The first concerned *characteristics of the job that are, to some degree, related to typicalness*. In this sense, the absence of adaptations in the job (see Table 9), and whether it is an already existing job and not one of new creation, are associated with more typical human resources management and social aspects. As to support, our findings indicate that fewer hours of external support is also associated with more typical management of human resources and social aspects. The typicalness of social aspects is associated with a greater number of contacts with co-workers who do not have a disability. Job acquisition is more typical in the industrial sector, followed by services and trade, but this is reversed in the typicalness of human

Table 6
Summary of significant relationships of some individual variables with job outcomes

Variables	Job outcomes			
	Weekly job hours	Length of service in the job (no of months)	Monthly wage	Job benefits
Gender (1=male, 2=female)			Mean 1=97102.66 Mean 2=81453.40 F=4.550*	Mean 1=3.48 Mean 2=3.02 F=7.258**
Age (1=16 to 21, 2=22 to 30, 3=31 or +)				Mean 1=2.92 Mean 2=3.49 Mean 3=3.30 F=3.307*
Educational level (1=special education, 2=primary, 3=job skills, 4=occupational training or secondary or vocational training)		Mean 1=25.26 Mean 2=59.00 Mean 3=53.04 Mean 4=40.84 F=2.753*		
Presence of other disabilities				Mean SI=2.91 Mean NO=3.53 F=13.653**
Presence of behavioral problems	Mean SI=39.43 Mean NO=36.36 F=7.208**			
Severity of behavioral problems (1=none, 2=mild, 3=medium or severe)	Mean 1=36.41 Mean 2=39.35 Mean 3=39.57 F=3.588*			

** $p < 0.01$ / * $p < 0.05$.

Table 7
Summary of significant relationships of some job variables with job outcomes

Variables	Job outcomes			
	Weekly job hours	Length of service in the job (no of months)	Monthly wage	Job benefits
Presence of job adaptations		Mean SI=67.25 Mean NO=35.60 F=16.666**	Mean SI=83282.64 Mean NO=98428.88 F=4.993*	Mean SI=2.93 Mean NO=3.61 F=19.028**
Nature of the job (1=existent, 2=made up of parts of others, 3=newly created)		Mean 1=41.17 Mean 2=68.48 Mean 3=71.90 F=4.794*		Mean 1=3.48 Mean 2=2.70 Mean 3=3.50 F=7.356**
Number of daily contacts with coworkers without disabilities (1=1 to 5, 2=6 to 15, 3=16 or +)			Mean 1=79213.98 Mean 2=106244.21 Mean 3=97989.61 F=4.860**	Mean 1=2.83 Mean 2=3.48 Mean 3=3.52 F=6.924**
Presence of contact with the public	Mean SI=39.12 Mean NO=36.35 F=7.425**			

** $p < 0.01$ / * $p < 0.05$.

resources management, which is greater in the trade sector followed by services and industry. The fewer co-workers with a disability in the immediate surroundings of the worker (1 as opposed to 2), the greater the overall typicalness, as well as that of human resources management and social aspects. Concerning guidance provided by the company, the fact that new workers are provided with guidance is associated with higher scores in the typicalness of job characteristics, human

resources management and social aspects. The second question was what *characteristics have the companies that hire workers with a disability by means of supported employment*. These are service sector companies, with between 2 and 25 employees, and only one worker with a disability in the immediate environment, which had previously hired workers with a disability, which in 50% of the cases provide guidance to new workers and which do not provide guidance for their

Table 8
Summary of significant relationships of some company variables with job outcomes

Variables	Job outcomes			
	Weekly job hours	Length of service in the job (no of months)	Monthly wage	Job benefits
Activity sector of the company (1=industrial, 2=trade, 3=services)		Mean 1=66.38 Mean 2=50.61 Mean 3=40.62 F=3.812*		
Number of employees (1=2 to 25, 2=26 to 50, 3=51 to 100, 4=101 to 500)				Mean 1=2.95 Mean 2=3.57 Mean 3=3.73 Mean 4=3.40 F=5.632**
Number of employees with disability in immediate environment (1 or 2)		Mean 1=57.91 Mean 2=35.32 F=8.159**		
Company provides guidance for new workers		Mean SI=59.76 Mean NO=33.60 F=5.666**		

** $p < 0.01$ / * $p < 0.05$.

workers either about diversity or about disability.

5. Conclusions

The data obtained allow us to extract certain conclusions of interest for improving the development of programs of supported employment as we noted at the beginning of the article. The participants who are working in supported employment show longer length of service and better salaries than those working in sheltered employment centers, but receive fewer job benefits.

Our data showed important relationships between some of the components of typicalness and job outcomes but giving contradictory results, and no relationship was obtained when typicalness was considered as a whole, in contrast to previous research data [7, 13, 15–19, 23]. Only job benefits seem to be related to the components of typicalness, the former being greater the more typical the job characteristics, human resources management and social aspects, but decreasing the more typical the job acquisition. This indicates the need to establish a timely balance between more and less typicalness, or in other words, between the advisability of following typical processes for workers with a disability and the need to adapt them according to their specific needs.

This divergence also appears with respect to the different characteristics of the support provided both for workers with disabilities and their co-workers and their relationship to the job outcomes obtained by the worker in supported employment. Thus, an outstanding element is the negative relationship between the hours of

direct support provided by external professionals for both the worker and co-workers and job outcomes, although the opposite happens with length of service. Also important is the positive relationship between the support provided by co-workers and supervisors and the obtaining of greater benefits and length of service. In any case, once again it is clear that it is advisable to establish a suitable balance between typical and adapted in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The data referring to the individual variables and their relationship to job outcomes suggest the need to fight against sex discrimination and to foster prior training as well as reduce the occurrence of behavioral problems.

Length of service is greater when the job is adapted and when it is newly created. On the other hand, wages and benefits are greater when such adaptation is not made and the worker has greater contact with the public. Once again we must consider the need to find the right point between typical and adapted.

The job outcomes, mainly length of service, are greater in firms in the industrial sector with not more than one co-worker with a disability in the immediate environment and which provide initial guidance for new workers. Likewise, the job benefits are greater in companies with between 51 and 100 workers.

Finally, typicalness is greater when fewer adaptations are made, less direct support provided, there is more contact with co-workers without disabilities and fewer co-workers with disabilities.

Before concluding we feel we should point out some aspects of this study that may be debatable. As regards the participants, the sample used was not ran-

Table 9
Summary of significant relationships of job variables with typicalness

Variables	Typicalness				
	General Typicalness	Acquisition	Characteristics	Management	Social aspects
Presence of job adaptations				Mean SI = 27.2609 Mean NO = 38.3359 F = 25.237**	Mean SI = 14.1500 Mean NO = 17.2977 F = 11.335**
Nature of the job (1 = existent, 2 = made up of parts of others)				Mean 1 = 38.2797 Mean 2 = 30.8400 F = 10.974**	Mean 1 = 17.2689 Mean 2 = 15.5000 F = 3.897*
Weekly hours of external support (1 = < once a week, 2 = < 1 hour per week, 3 = 1 to 3 hours per week)				Mean 1 = 42.4571 Mean 2 = 33.0625 Mean 3 = 31.1304 F = 26.265**	Mean 1 = 18.7681 Mean 2 = 15.8125 Mean 3 = 15.6087 F = 14.054**
Number of daily contacts with coworkers without disabilities (1 = 1 to 5, 2 = 6 to 15, 3 = 16 or +)					Mean 1 = 16.2059 Mean 2 = 15.4375 Mean 3 = 17.7800 F = 4.703*
Activity sector of the company (1 = industrial, 2 = trade, 3 = services)		Mean 1 = 13.4118 Mean 2 = 8.6000 Mean 3 = 9.5814 F = 3.367*		Mean 1 = 31.9697 Mean 2 = 38.2500 Mean 3 = 37.8687 F = 4.327*	
Number of employees with disability in immediate environment (1 or 2)	Mean 1 = 112.3125 Mean 2 = 101.8333 F = 6.704*			Mean 1 = 38.4337 Mean 2 = 34.0213 F = 4.937*	Mean 1 = 17.7619 Mean 2 = 15.7609 F = 8.105**
Company provides guidance to new workers			Mean SI = 50.7414 Mean NO = 48.5714 F = 5.099*	Mean SI = 32.7049 Mean NO = 37.6897 F = 8.684**	Mean SI = 17.3934 Mean NO = 15.4407 F = 8.345**

** $p < 0.01$ / * $p < 0.05$.

domly selected. Instead, using specific criteria we selected all the workers possible from among those capable of being chosen. With respect to the questionnaire on typicalness or similarity, the replies were provided by persons who supported and worked for the participants who were in supported employment, with the possible bias that this could generate. Nonetheless, the professionals were trained to attempt to avoid bias. Although no retest was made to ensure the stability of the measurements, with regard to the questionnaire on typicalness or similarity, Mank obtained data in his research works that guarantee the test-retest reliability of the instrument.

To conclude, we believe that although typicalness has proved to be a novel and useful concept for operationalizing what we call natural support, it is important not to lose sight of individual needs and the advisability of adapting job characteristics as necessary to achieve the objective set, which is none other than the success of the worker with a disability in employment.

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