

Consumer Satisfaction: A Survey of Individuals with Severe Disabilities who Receive Supported Employment Services

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Abstract

Supported employment has been demonstrated to be a successful rehabilitation model for individuals with severe disabilities. This study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of this employment model from the perspective of the individuals with severe disabilities whom it serves. A Consumer Satisfaction Survey, developed by individuals with disabilities and found to be a valid and reliable instrument, was administered to 110 persons with disabilities in Virginia through face-to-face interviews. The results indicate that the majority of consumers like their jobs. Most are happy with supported employment services and would use them again if they lost their job or decided to change jobs. Close to half of the consumers would like to change some aspect of their job to make it better and more than half feel their current job is not the career they would have permanently. The findings suggest the need to increase consumer involvement in all phases of supported employment service delivery. Strategies to insure consumer choice and respond to desires to change parts of their job or pursue career advancement opportunities are discussed.

Supported employment has been the vehicle through which individuals with severe disabilities have demonstrated their ability to acquire and maintain meaningful employment. Traditionally, individuals with severe disabilities had limited vocational options from which to choose and were restricted from working with persons without disabilities. Supported employment emerged to give persons with disabilities an opportunity to access employment options that had previously been unavailable to them. Through supported employment, individuals with severe disabilities are able to work in real businesses in the community with persons without disabilities, earn competitive wages, and receive individualized, ongoing support services to help them successfully maintain their employment.

Supported employment has proven to be a viable employment option for persons with severe disabilities (Rusch, 1990; Wehman, Sale, & Parent, 1992). Its growth and impact in the last decade have been phenomenal. From 1986 through 1993, the number of participants expanded from 10,000 to more than 105,000 persons with severe disabilities (Wehman & Revell, 1996). Today, it is estimated that more than 120,000 persons with severe disabilities have selected supported employment as their preferred employment option (Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Supported Employment, 1996). Average earnings are reported to be \$4.53 an hour, with the number of hours individuals are working averaging 22.5 per week. Through supported employment, individuals with disabilities are repeatedly demonstrating their ability to be positive contributors to their work environment. Numerous studies have documented the success of supported employment in helping individuals with disabilities to achieve wages, work hours, and fringe benefits similar to those of their nondisabled coworkers (Revell, Wehman, Kregel, West, Rayfield, 1994; Rusch, 1990). Mank, O'Neill, & Jensen (1996) reported that 55 individuals with developmental disabilities working in King County government in Seattle, Washington earned an average of nearly \$1200 per month, worked more than 30 hours a week, and received full benefits.

In order for persons with disabilities to continually achieve success in supported employment, supported employment programs are increasingly emphasizing consumer choice as the driving force behind their service delivery. Ironically, supported employment programs often overlook consumers when evaluating how effectively supported employment is meeting their needs. In addition, many of the instruments available for assessing consumer satisfaction are not targeted for individuals with severe disabilities and may not offer a meaningful mechanism for capturing the true opinions of those individuals participating in supported employment. A tremendous source of program evaluation feedback is lost when consumers are not given an opportunity to evaluate the services that they receive (Kregel, 1992; Wehman & Kregel, 1996). Supported employment cannot continue to meet the needs of persons with severe disabilities without relying on its consumers for feedback on whether the program is successfully fulfilling its mission.

Research studies on supported employment have also underutilized consumer feedback when measuring the success of supported employment. Most studies aimed at assessing the success and quality of supported employment have compared

outcomes such as wages earned (Kregel, Wehman, Revell, & Hill, 1990; Wehman, Kregel, & Shafer, 1989), hours worked (Kregel et al., 1990; Shafer, Revell, & Isbister, 1991; Wehman et al., 1989), benefits received (Kregel et al., 1990; Wehman et al., 1989), physical and social integration (Parent, Kregel, Metzler, & Twardzik, 1992), and long-term employment retention (Lagomarcino, 1990). Research has tended to not rely on supported employment participants for feedback, because it was often thought to be too challenging to measure the success and quality of supported employment from the perspective of persons with severe disabilities (Budd, Sigelman, & Sigelman, 1981). Some of the problems involved in assessing this population include definition ambiguity, lack of valid and reliable measures, communication limitations of respondents, and positive response bias (Heal & Sigelman, 1990).

A few studies have measured the success of supported employment from the perspective of persons with severe disabilities, by looking at outcome measures such as job satisfaction and quality of life (McAfee, 1986; Parent, 1994; Sandow, Rhodes, Mank, Ramsing, & Lynch, 1990; Schalock, Keith, Hoffman, & Karan, 1989). Test and his colleagues (Test, Alford, & Keul, 1991; Test, Hinson, Salow, & Keul, 1993) have been leaders in research aimed at determining the overall job satisfaction of supported employees. Test, et al. (1991) investigated the job satisfaction of 18 individuals who were working in the individual placement or enclave models of supported employment. The majority of individuals reported that they liked their job and job coach and were satisfied with their wages and coworker relationships. Test et al. (1993) reported similar findings in a second study, involving 34 individuals working in supported employment. Participants were found to like their jobs and job coaches and were more satisfied with their current job than their previous workshop placement. In both of these studies, the participants' responses were verified for accuracy by supported employment staff.

An extensive, three year, longitudinal study conducted in Illinois was designed to evaluate the impact of supported employment by comparing employment outcomes such as personal growth, wages, integration, and consumer satisfaction for 53 individuals in sheltered employment to the employment outcomes of 53 individuals who had moved from sheltered to supported employment (Corporate Alternatives, Inc., 1990). Results from the study suggested that the individuals who moved to supported employment were more satisfied overall with their present placements and their families reported that they were more happy in their supported employment situation. Moseley (1988) conducted a qualitative study to assess the job satisfaction and quality of life of individuals with severe mental retardation in supported employment who had previously been in sheltered workshops. He reported that the workers were more satisfied with their competitive employment situation due to factors related to job tasks, better pay, more consistent work, and fewer distractions.

Coker, Osgood, & Clouse (1995) compared the job satisfaction and economic benefits of persons with disabilities participating in the sheltered employment, enclave, affirmative industry, and job coach employment models. The study evaluated several components of job satisfaction, including consumer choice over taking the job, preference with the type of work they were doing, satisfaction with where they worked, and satisfaction with their pay. Results from the study indicated that a majority of the employees chose to work at their current placement, were doing the type of work that they wanted, liked where they worked, and were content with their pay. Overall, however, the sheltered employees were less satisfied with their job than were workers in more integrated service delivery models.

Quality supported employment services are best measured by the effect they have on the people they serve and the level of satisfaction experienced by those individuals (Bradley & Bersani, 1990; Mank, Sandow, & Rhodes, 1991; National Council on Disability, 1995). Supported employment was created for persons with severe disabilities and should, consequently, rely on consumers for feedback on how the program is serving and can better serve their needs. Consumer feedback on the success and quality of supported employment can provide supported employment provider agencies and vocational rehabilitation with vital information regarding whether the program has assisted consumers in achieving their career goals. The Consumer Satisfaction Survey (Parent, 1994) was developed to give individuals with disabilities an opportunity to voice their satisfaction with their employment situation and the supported employment service delivery system. The tool can be used as an evaluation instrument to assess the quality and success of supported employment services as well as a mechanism for determining individual choices and feedback.

This study was designed to investigate the supported employment experiences of persons with disabilities to determine what they like and dislike about their jobs and the services they receive, and how much involvement they had or would like to have had in choosing their jobs and support services. It expands upon earlier efforts in several ways. First, individuals with disabilities were involved in all aspects of its development and implementation including designing the instrument, establishing administration procedures, conducting face-to-face satisfaction interviews, and completing the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. Second, it takes a broad view of the concept of satisfaction, which includes the individuals' perceptions

of their pay and benefits, supervisor and coworker relations, job and work conditions, job coach, and supported employment. Third, the study developed and validated instrumentation and interview protocols for evaluating supported employment services that include individuals with severe disabilities. Fourth, the investigation provides important feedback for service providers, policymakers, and rehabilitation professionals regarding consumer choice and satisfaction in supported employment for individuals who are working and receiving services. The findings from this study and their implications for supported employment will be discussed.

Participants

One hundred ten individuals with severe disabilities, 66 men and 44 women were randomly selected from the total population of 3,431 of persons who participated in supported employment in Virginia during the period between July 1988 and August 1992. Each individual who was selected was employed in the individual placement model of supported employment (Wehman & Kregel, 1985). In addition, each individual was working at his or her first supported employment job and was currently working in only one competitive employment situation. A stratified random sampling procedure with substitution was used to select 110 individuals for participating in the study. Four disproportionate groups stratified by primary disability label were randomly selected from the population including: mental retardation, mental illness, traumatic brain injury, and cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities.

Instrumentation

The Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) was administered through face-to-face interviews with all of the individuals in the sample. The CSS contains multiple choice and open-ended items that are generally organized into eight categories. These categories are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Categories of Items on the Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Consumer and Job Demographics
Pay and Benefits
Supervision
Relationship and Teamwork
Job Conditions
Job Satisfaction
Job Coach Satisfaction
Service Satisfaction

The CSS was designed by persons with disabilities who assisted in all phases of its development. Specifically, individuals with disabilities indicated what was important to them in examining consumer and job satisfaction; provided input into specific items to be included; assisted in the design of administration protocol; reviewed the instrument for content, design, and useability; and conducted interviews with study participants. General content areas and specific items were generated from a variety of additional sources, including information provided by individuals with disabilities who had received supported employment services; a review of the business, psychology, and education literature; and input by experts in the field of supported employment or survey development.

The items were summarized on the instrument in a format, structure, and wording that would be suitable for someone with a severe disability (Flynn, 1986; Sigelman, Budd, Spanhel, & Schoenrock, 1981; Sigelman, Budd, Winer, Schoenrock, & Martin, 1982). The instrument contained multiple choice and open-ended items with 10 pairs of items reworded in alternative formats to assess for systematic response bias. The CSS was pilot-tested with 24 individuals who were identified from a listing of 67 who had received supported employment services from the Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Supported Employment (RRTC). A total of 39 persons did not participate because they could not be located, were not currently working, chose not to participate in the interview process, or were no longer receiving supported employment services. Participants reported a disability label of traumatic brain injury, mental retardation, and cerebral palsy. The instrument was revised based upon the responses of participants and the feedback they provided.

Procedure

All of the programs who were serving individuals selected for the study were contacted to obtain his or her permission. Each consumer was then contacted to explain the purpose of the study and obtain their informed consent to participate. Six primary interviewers were selected and trained to administer the CSS. One interviewer was a parent of an individual with a severe disability, two individuals had a disability themselves, one had previously worked for an independent living center, one worked for a local advocacy organization, and one was a researcher with RRTC. Six additional persons were employed as employment specialists and research assistants with RRTC conducted interviews with those persons who lived in geographical locations beyond where the primary interviewers resided and also assisted with collecting reliability data. A six hour training session was provided for the interviewers to explain the process, the procedures for conducting the interviews, and anticipated problems and responses, followed by ongoing personal and telephone contact to address any issues as they arose.

The interviewers contacted each consumer to explain the study again, verify his or her willingness to participate, and arrange a time and location for conducting the interview. The instrument was administered verbally by the interviewer or adapted to meet the individual communication needs of each participant. Interview time varied from 15 minutes to over one hour, with the average time being 30 minutes. Data was collected over a one year period beginning in the fall of 1992 and continuing until September 1993.

Data Management

All of the forms were reviewed for completeness and data accuracy by RRTC research staff, and coded for analysis. The instrument contains 25 open-ended and 44 multiple choice questions organized into qualitative and quantitative items. Qualitative information was obtained from 24 of the 25 open-ended questions. Each of these items was coded based upon the responses obtained from participants. All completed instruments were reviewed and participant responses to these items were logged in order to identify common themes and related content. A smaller number of much broader response categories were developed for each of the questions, which sufficiently covered all of the responses identified for that question. The similar responses for each question were grouped together according to the broader categories developed for that item. A numerical code from one to ten was assigned to each of the broad categories; that was used to code the responses to each of the qualitative items.

Quantitative information was obtained from the one open-ended and 44 multiple choice questions. The three response choices for each of the multiple choice questions were assigned numerical values of one, two, or three. One open-ended question (e.g., "Do you like your job?") was also coded in this way, with responses grouped under one of three major categories: "yes," "no," and "somewhat" or "it's OK." The three response choices assigned to this question were coded numerically in a manner similar to that for the other multiple choice items.

Scale Development

Three scales, job satisfaction, service satisfaction, and choice making in the workplace, were created from the CSS for data analysis. Each of these categorical variables was converted to continuous variables by developing three subscales and scoring system for each.

Data Analysis

Frequency distributions and percentages were completed for each of the questions related to job and consumer demographics, job satisfaction, service satisfaction, and choice making at the workplace. Univariate analyses were performed for several key variables. Analysis of variance and Pearson product moment correlations were completed to determine the relationship between specific variables and levels of job and service satisfaction and choice making.

Validation Analysis. The validity of the data was assessed by comparing items of similar content to check for response consistency and bias. Cell chi square analyses were performed for each of the ten pairs of items, which were related but worded differently to present a similar scenario. These pairs of questions were related to pay and benefits, supervision, relationships/teamwork, job conditions, job satisfaction, job coach satisfaction, and service satisfaction.

Significant chi square values ($p < .001$, $p < .005$) indicate a high correspondence between pairs of questions. A valid chi square analysis was prohibited due to the small sample size, which yielded cell counts of less than five on all of the items. The validity of the data was verified by reviewing the completed instruments and talking with the interviewers. None of the interviewers reported difficulty on the part any participant in completing the entire instrument.

Reliability Analysis. Test-retest reliability was calculated to determine the CCS consistency of measurement when administered by two different interviewers on two different occasions. Reliability measures were gathered on 27% of the interviews, or 30 of the 110 instruments administered. A Pearson product moment correlation was completed to determine if there was a relationship between the responses obtained on the multiple choice questions during the first and second administrations. This approach was selected to account for the three-point rating scale used in each of the multiple choice items. A Pearson correlation coefficient of .82 was obtained. This correlation was significant at the $p < .0001$ level. The results indicated a strong direct relationship between individual responses on the CSS during the first and second administrations conducted up to two months apart by two different interviewers.

Consumer and Job Demographics

Consumer Characteristics. Table 2 on the following page summarizes the demographic information describing the characteristics of the consumers who participated in the study. Individuals reported having a disability label of mental retardation (30.0%), mental illness (19.1%), traumatic brain injury (20.0%), and cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities (30.9%). Close to two-thirds of the consumers (60.0%) were male and more than one third of the individuals (40.0%) were female. The ages of participants ranged from 19 to 52 with the mean age of the group being 32 years. Prior to working at their current job, consumers reported having had a previous work experience, such as having a nonsupported employment job prior to their disability (37.7%), attending a sheltered workshop (17.0%), having no primary daytime activity (17.0%), or receiving vocational training (9.4%).

Job Characteristics. Demographic information describing the characteristics of the jobs held by study participants are summarized in Table 3. Individuals reported working for a variety of different types of businesses, including commercial--for example, retail, store, shop--(37.3%), food--for example, restaurant, fast food, cafeteria-- (22.7%), and public agencies--for example, church, park, service provider--(15.5%). The job titles or positions held by consumers were most often reported to be clerk/office worker (26.9%), dishwasher/food prep (18.5%), and stock clerk/ warehouse worker (16.7%). Individuals worked between 6 and 44 hours per week, with the mean number of hours reported to be 28 per week. Earnings varied, with the lowest paid consumer receiving \$20.00 a week and the highest paid person reporting \$368.00 per week. The mean wage for participants was \$159.38 per week.

Participants reported working at their jobs between one month and six years, with a mean length of employment of 2.3 years. In order to determine the effect of length of employments a Pearson product moment correlation was performed. The results indicate no relationship between length of employment and level of job satisfaction, level of service satisfaction, or degree of choice making at the workplace; therefore, this variable was not used as a covariate in the study.

Job and Service Satisfaction

Tables 4 - 10 present participant responses to key questions on the Consumer Satisfaction Survey related to pay and benefits, supervision, relationships and teamwork, job conditions, job satisfaction, job coach satisfaction, and service satisfaction. Each of these sections is briefly summarized below.

Pay and Benefits. Almost two-thirds of the consumers (62.8%) reported that the earnings from

Table 2

Consumer Demographics (N = 110)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage

<i>Type of Disability</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cerebral Palsy & Other Physical Disabilities 	34	30.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mental Retardation 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Traumatic Brain Injury 	33	30.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mental Illness 		
	22	20.0
Sex	21	19.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Male 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Female 	66	60.0
	44	40.0
<i>Age</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 21-30 years 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 31-40 years 	55	50.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 41-50 years 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 20 years or less 	27	24.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More than 50 years 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not reported 	23	21.1
	2	1.8
	2	1.8
	1	
<i>Previous Activity Prior to Working at This Job</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Previous work experience (e.g., non-supported employment job) 	40	37.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sheltered Workshop (e.g., facility-based job preparation program) 	18	17.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No primary daytime activity 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocational Training 	18	17.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Volunteer work 	10	9.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Psychosocial clubhouse (e.g., psychiatric rehab. program) 	8	7.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Day activity program (e.g., nonvocational training program) 	6	5.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not reported 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enclave (e.g., group S.E. model) 	4	3.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Odd jobs (e.g., Avon, yard work) 		
	4	3.8

	4	1.9
	2	1.9
	2	1.9

NOTE: For previous activity, more than one response allowed; percentages sum to more than 100.

Table 3

Job Demographics (N = 110)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Type of Company</i>		
● Commercial	41	37.3
● Food		
● Service Provider	25	22.7
● Industrial		
● Education	17	15.5
● Health Care		
● Lodging	8	7.3
● Other		
● Janitorial	5	4.5
<i>Job Title/ Position (n=108)</i>		
	5	4.5
● Clerical/Office worker	4	3.6
● Food (dishwasher, back utility)		
● Stockclerk/Warehouse	3	2.7
● Food (server, front dining)		
● Janitor/Housekeeping		
● Human Service	1	0.9
● Laborer		
● Machine Operator		
● Assembler/Benchwork		
● Laundry	29	26.9
● Other (van driver)		
● Groundskeeper/Landscaper	20	18.5
<i>Hours Worked per Week</i>		

- 20 hours or less
- 21-30 hours
- 31-40 hours
- More than 40 hours

Wages Earned per Week (n=105)

- \$100.00 or less
- \$101.00 to \$200.00
- \$201.00 to \$300.00
- \$301.00 to \$400.00

Length of Employment (n=109)

- 1 year or less
- More than 1 - 2 years
- More than 2 - 3 years
- More than 3 - 4 years
- More than 4 - 5 years
- Greater than 5 years

18	16.7
9	8.4
9	8.3
6	5.6
5	4.6
4	3.7
3	2.8
2	1.9
2	1.9
1	0.9
40	36.4
20	18.2
49	44.5
1	0.9
35	33.3
39	37.1
23	21.9
8	7.6
27	24.8
40	36.7
15	13.8
16	14.7
9	8.3

their job were enough or more than enough for them. Approximately half of the participants (53.7%) stated that they had received a raise since they started working at their job. Over three-fourths of the individuals (81.9%) felt that their company medical benefits were inadequate as indicated by reports that their benefits did not meet any of their health-care needs or met only some of their health-care needs without supplemental assistance (e.g., Medicaid or Medicare). When asked about moving to a better job within the company, less than half of the consumers (41.2%) reported that there were plenty of jobs for anyone who wanted to change jobs within the company, including themselves. Table 4 on the following page provides a complete listing of participants' responses to these questions.

Supervision. All but one of the consumers felt they had a positive relationship with their boss, as indicated by reports that they got along great or OK with their supervisors. Approximately half of the participants (51.8%) felt that their boss treated them no differently than anyone else. The majority of the consumers (86.4%) felt that they could ask their supervisor for help if they had a question or problem about their job. More than three-fourths of the individuals (81.8%) reported that their boss was always available whenever they needed him or her.

Consumers most frequently reported that they liked their boss's management style--for example, takes time to explain, fair, good listener, jokes--(46.6%) and his or her treatment of the individual--for example, doesn't talk down to me, shows me how to do things, good to me--(37.9%). More than two-thirds of the consumers (70.4%) reported that there was nothing that they didn't like about the way their boss worked with them. For those individuals who indicated that they disliked something about their supervisor, the most frequent responses were the supervisor's treatment of the consumer (e.g., talks about me behind my back, yells at me, treats me like a child) and something lacking in his or her management style (e.g., doesn't show up, doesn't give clear instructions, not always available, never any "pats on the back"). Participants' responses to each of these questions are shown in Table 5.

Relationships and Teamwork. Approximately half of the individuals (52.3%) stated that they got along great with their coworkers. The majority of consumers (82.4%) stated that their coworkers treated them the same as all of the other employees. When asked how they felt when they were at work, more than half of the individuals (55.6%) reported that they were happy because they could see their friends. Approximately three-fourths of the consumers (73.4%) reported that they were satisfied with the amount of time they spent working together with their coworkers throughout their workday. When asked about lunch and breaks, close to three-fourths of the individuals (73.5%) stated that they spent as much time with their coworkers as they would like. Two-thirds of the individuals (66.0%) reported they spent as much time as they would like with their coworkers after work hours. Table 6 on the following page provides a listing of participants' responses to these questions.

Job Conditions. Close to half of the consumers (46.4%) thought their job was a lot of fun. Approximately two-thirds of the individuals (61.8%) stated that they liked their job duties a lot. Approximately half of the participants (54.5%) reported that they would like to be able to learn how to do more new things at their job. More than half of the individuals (55.5%) indicated that the hours they worked at their jobs were fine. When asked about the time of day that they worked, the majority of consumers (85.5%) reported that they were satisfied with their work schedule. The majority of participants (86.4%) reported that transportation to and from work was easy and did not present any problems for them. A listing of participants' responses to these questions is located in Table 7.

Consumer Responses to Job Satisfaction Items Related to Pay and Benefits (N = 110)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Is the money you earn from your job?</i>		
a. more than enough for you?		
b. enough?	7	6.4
c. not enough?	62	56.4
	41	37.3
<i>Since you have worked here, do you</i>		
a. expect a raise sometime		
b. think you won't ever get a raise		
c. have already received a raise	32	29.6
d. not reported	18	16.7
	58	53.7
<i>Do you feel that the company medical benefits</i>		
a. meet all of your health care needs	2	
b. meet some of your health care needs (i.e., need to supplement with Medicaid or Medicare)		
c. do not meet any of your health care needs (i.e., do not receive benefits)		
d. not reported	19	18.1
	16	15.2
<i>Some people think about getting a better job.</i>		
	70	66.7
<i>What do you think?</i>		
a. Nobody here gets to move to a different job.	5	

b. Some people get different jobs here, but I probably won't.		
c. There are plenty of different jobs in this company for those who want to change jobs, including me.	23	
d. Not reported	37	22.5
	42	36.3
	8	41.2

Table 5

Consumer Responses to Job Satisfaction Items

Related to Supervision (N = 110)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Do you feel that you and your bosses get along</i>		
a. great?	62	56.4
b. O.K.?	47	42.7
c. not very well?	1	0.9
<i>Does your boss treat you</i>		
a. good, couldn't ask for anything better?	52	47.3
b. alright, no different than anyone else?	57	51.8
c. badly, different from all of the others?	1	0.9
<i>When you have a question or problem about your job</i>		

a. can you ask your boss for help?	95	86.4
b. can you go to your boss for help but would rather not?	10	9.1
c. do you have to find someone else to help you out?	5	4.5
<i>Do you feel that your boss</i>		
a. is always available when you need him or her?		
b. is not available as much as you would like?	90	81.8
c. is around more than you would like him or her to be?	15	13.6
What do you like about the way your boss works with you?*		
Nothing	5	4.5
Like something		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervisor's management style (e.g., easy-going, takes care of problems) ○ Supervisor's treatment of the consumer (e.g., shows me how, says I do a good job) ○ Supervisor is helpful to employees (e.g., helps when needed) ○ General satisfaction with supervisor (e.g., like everything, pleased) ○ Consumer's relationship with the supervisor (e.g., friends, get along well) ○ Supervisor leaves the consumer alone (e.g., as long as I do my work he leaves me alone) ○ Not reported 	5	4.6
	103	95.4
	48	46.6
	39	37.9
	15	14.6
	15	14.6
	13	12.6
	4	3.9
	2	

What don't you like about the way your boss works with you?*		
Nothing		
Don't like something		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervisor's treatment of the consumer (e.g., doesn't tell me stuff in a nice way, not equal opportunity for advancement) 	76	70.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Something lacking in the supervisor's management style (e.g., not enough meetings, doesn't follow through) 	32	29.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervisor's behavior (e.g., mean sometimes, irritated when busy) 	13	40.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Issues related to consumer's disability (e.g., doesn't assist as needed) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervisor's lack of experience (e.g., not enough training) 	12	37.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not reported 		
	7	21.9
	2	6.3
	1	3.1
	2	

NOTE: **More than one response allowed; percentages sum more than 100

Job Satisfaction. The vast majority of individuals (90.0%) reported that they did like their job. More than half of the consumers (55.5%) stated that they felt their current job was OK for now but not the permanent job they would like to have. Almost three-fourths of the consumers (71.7%) stated that they liked their present job more than what they were doing before. When asked what they liked better about this job, participants most frequently reported the following: the pay--for example, more money, getting paid-- (42.2%), the work conditions--for example, flexible hours, full-time, own boss, daytime hours-- (34.9%), and the people--for example, friends, coworkers, supervisors, customers--(31.3%). The majority of participants (87.3%) stated that they had played a major role in choosing their jobs. Approximately three-fourths of the consumers (74.5%) reported that they found their jobs with assistance from their job coaches. More than half of the participants (55.5%) stated that, if given the choice, they would prefer to keep their same job just the way it is.

In identifying what aspects of their job that they liked, consumers most often reported the following: the people they interact with, including coworkers, supervisors, and customers--for example, nice, understand disability, supportive-- (47.2%); the job duties/type of work--for example, using computers, office work, physical labor-- (45.4%), the work conditions--for example, keep busy, positive atmosphere, hours, not high pressure--(32.4%); and just having a job (22.2%). Of the 57 individuals (52.8%) who indicated that they disliked some part of their job, the most frequently reported reasons were as follows: the people encountered in the work setting, including coworkers, supervisors, and customers (e.g., patronizing, customer complaints, boss not dependable, coworkers who have a bad day), the work conditions (e.g., no chance for advancement, pressure, environment), and their work schedule (e.g., work every weekend, not enough hours). Table 8 provides a listing of participants' responses to these questions.

Job Coach Satisfaction. The majority of consumers (84.5%) reported that their job coach

Table 6
Consumer Responses to Job Satisfaction Items
Related to Relationships and Teamwork (N = 110)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Are the people you work with		
a. nice?	78	70.9
b. alright?	32	29.1
c. mean?	0	0.0
Do you feel that you and your coworkers get along		
a. great?		
b. OK?	57	52.3
c. not very well?	52	47.7
d. not reported	0	0.0
Do your coworkers treat you	1	
a. the same as everyone else?	89	82.4
b. somewhat differently than other employees?	18	16.7
c. very differently from other employees?	1	0.9
d. not reported	2	
How do you feel when you are at work?		
a. I feel lonely at work	2	

b. I'm happy because I can see my friends	60	1.9
c. I feel OK at work, nothing special	46	55.6
d. not reported	2	42.6
During lunch and break, do you		
a. spend as much (or little) time with coworkers as you would like?	72	
b. wish you could spend more time with coworkers?	21	73.5
c. want to spend less time with coworkers than you do.	5	21.4
d. not reported	12	5.1
When people from work get together or go out after work, do you		
a. go along with them as much (or little) as you would like?		
b. wish you could get together with them more often than you do?	68	
c. want to go out with them less than you do?	32	
d. not reported	3	66.0
	7	31.1
		2.9

Table 7

Consumer Responses to Job Satisfaction Items

Related to Job Conditions (N = 110)

Item	Frequency	Percentage

Do you feel that your job is		
a. a lot of fun?		46.4
b. sometimes boring and sometimes fun?	51	49.1
c. boring most of the time?	54	4.5
Do you enjoy the kind of work that you do?	5	
a. I like my job duties a lot		61.8
b. My job duties are OK	68	35.5
c. I don't like my job duties	39	2.7
Would you say that your job is teaching you how to do new things?	3	
a. I am learning as many new things as I would like to		
b. I would like to be able to learn more new things at work		44.5
c. I wish I did not have to learn as many new things at my job	49	54.5
How do you like the number of hours you work?	60	0.9
a. I wish I could work more or less hours	1	
b. The hours of work here are fine		
c. I would like to work different hours		38.2
How do you like the time of day you work?	42	55.5
a I wish I could work earlier or later in the day	61	6.4
b. I wish I could work at a different time of day	7	
c. The time of day that I work is fine		10.0
How easy is it to get to your job?	11	4.5
a. Very easy, no problem at all	5	85.5
b. Sometimes I miss work because of transportation problems	94	
c. I worry a lot about transportation problems		86.4

	95	6.4
	7	7.3
	8	

had been very helpful. When asked how they got along with their job coach, more than two-thirds (68.2%) stated that their relationship was great. Close to three-fourths of the participants (72.7%) reported that they would not like to change the amount of assistance received from their job coach. The majority of consumers (80.0%) reported that their job coach was always available whenever they needed help. Approximately three-fourths of the individuals (73.6%) stated that they would like their job coach to continue visiting them at the job site. Most of the consumers (87.2%) stated that, if given the choice, they would like to keep the same job coach.

When asked how their job coach had assisted them, participants most often reported the following types of assistance: learning how to do the job--for example, getting settled on the job, on-the-job training, suggestions about getting the job done--(60.2%); help with getting a job--for example, filling out applications, job interviews, preparing for a job--(58.3%); help with work-related issues--for example, case management, Social Security, transportation, personal problems-- (30.6%); and general support--for example, checks on me, helps me, makes sure I'm happy, keeping my job--(26.9%). Of the 44 consumers (40.4%) who would like more help from their job coach, the following types of assistance were reported most frequently: help getting another job (e.g., finding a better job, full-time job), help with case management (e.g., housing, transportation, Social Security, budgeting), and help learning how to do something at work (e.g. different job responsibilities, learning how to do a new task, show how to make biscuits). Table 9 on the following pages summarizes participants' responses to these questions.

Service Satisfaction. Almost all of consumers (96.4%) stated that they were satisfied with the supported employment services they had received. Approximately three-fourths of the individuals felt that supported employment was helpful in finding them a job (77.8%) and that supported employment assisted them as much as could be expected (79.8%). Approximately three-fourths of the individuals (65.4%) stated that they were properly trained for their job. The vast majority of participants (91.7%) indicated that they were happy with supported employment and would recommend the services to a friend. Similarly, most of the consumers (92.6%) felt that if they lost their job or decided to change jobs, they would like to use supported employment services again.

More than two-thirds (76.3%) of the individuals stated that they were receiving all of the services that they needed. The 28 participants (26.7%) who reported a need identified the following services most often: assistance with changing jobs, improved benefits, transportation, and other services, such as GED tutoring, recreational activities, or how to access information. When asked about their life since they started working at this job, approximately three-fourths of the consumers (73.4%) felt that their life was now better. Those participants who reported that their life was better stated that since they started working they had more money, felt more productive (e.g., busy, something to do, getting out, accomplishing something), received personal rewards (e.g., more confidence, secure, self-esteem, stable), and experienced significant life changes or events (e.g., having a boyfriend, taking a cruise, moving into my own apartment, making major purchases). Table 10 on the following page provides a listing of participants' responses to each of these questions.

Group Comparisons

A significant difference was not found in levels of job satisfaction, service satisfaction, and degree of choice making at the workplace between groups of individuals with different disability labels (e.g., mental retardation, mental illness, traumatic brain injury, and cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities).

Table 8

**Consumer Responses to Items Related to
Job Satisfaction (N = 110)**

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Do you like your job?		
a. yes	99	90.0
b. no	4	3.6
c. somewhat	7	6.4
Which of these statements says how you feel about your job?		
a. This is the best job I could get	38	34.5
b. This job is OK for now	61	55.5
c. I wish I could have a different job	11	10.0
Do you like this job as much as what you were doing before working here?		
a. Yes, I like this job more		
b. No, not as much	76	71.7
c. I like them both about the same	13	12.3
d. Not reported	17	16.0
What do you like better about this job? or What did you like better about the other job?*	4	
Like them both the same		
Like one job better		
o Pay		
o Work conditions		
o Coworkers, supervisors, customers	17	17

- Type of work
- Job duties
- Having a job
- Personal rewards
- Generally like job
- Location
- Not reported

Did you choose this job?

a. yes

b. yes, with assistance

c. somewhat

d. no

83	83
35	42.2
29	34.9
26	31.3
15	18.1
12	14.5
9	10.8
8	9.6
3	3.6
2	2.4
10	
28	25.5
68	61.8
4	3.6
10	9.1

Who decided you should work at this job?

a. by yourself, unassisted

b. by yourself, with assistance

c. with assistance from family and friends

d. with assistance from your job coach

e. with assistance from other professionals

f. with assistance from your job coach and family

If you had the choice, would you like to:

8	7.3
9	8.2
7	6.4
82	74.5
3	2.7
1	0.9

a. keep your job just the way it is?	61	55.5
b. change your job to make it better?	28	25.5
c. have a different job?	21	19.1
What kinds of things do you like about your job?**		
Nothing		
Like something	1	0.9
○ The people I work with	108	99.1
○ My job duties		
○ The work conditions		
○ I like having a job	51	47.2
○ The amount of money I earn		
○ Personal satisfaction (e.g., I'm successful)	49	45.4
○ The location of the company		
○ The job is fun	35	32.4
○ Not reported		
What kinds of things don't you like about your job?**	24	22.2
Nothing I don't like	14	13.0
Don't like something	5	4.6
○ The people I work with	3	2.8
○ The work conditions		
○ My work schedule	1	0.9
○ The pay and benefits		
○ The job is boring	1	
○ Something about the job (e.g., unstable, no air conditioning)		
○ Personal issues related to the job (e.g., feet hurt)		
○ My job duties		
○ Not reported		
	51	47.2
	57	52.8
	19	33.3
	15	26.3
	14	24.6
	9	15.8
	7	

		6	12.3
		4	10.5
		4	7.0
		4	7.0
		2	

NOTE: **More than one response allowed; percentages sum to more than 100.

Table 9

Consumer Responses to Service Satisfaction Items

Related to Job Coach Satisfaction (N = 110)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Would you say that your job coach has been		
a. very helpful?		84.5
b. sometimes helpful?	93	15.5
c. not helpful at all?	17	0.0
How do you get along with your job coach?	0	
a. great		68.2
b. OK	75	31.8
c. not very well	35	0.0
Would you like your job coach to have assisted you	0	
a. less?		4.5
b. more?	5	22.7
c. about the same?	25	72.7

How would you describe the availability of your job coach?	80	
a. always available when I need assistance		
b. sometimes available, but not often enough		80.0
c. never available when I need him/her	88	17.3
Would you like your job coach to visit you at your job site	19	2.7
a. more often than he/she does?	3	
b. about the same?		
c. less often?		18.2
If you had a choice, would you like to:	20	73.6
a. keep your same job coach?	81	8.2
b. get a different job coach?	9	
c. have one of the job coaches you used to work with?		18.2
d. not reported	95	73.6
	2	8.2
	12	
	1	
What kinds of things has your job coach helped you with?*		
o Learning how to do the job	65	60.2
o Getting a job		
o Dealing with work-related issues	63	58.3
o Providing support		
o Handling problems at the job site	33	30.6
o Developing relationships		
o Gaining personal confidence	29	26.9
o General satisfaction with job coach		
o Implementing compensatory strategies	12	11.1
o Developing new skills		
o Not reported	8	7.4
What kinds of things would you like your job coach to help you with?*		

Nothing	6	5.6
	5	4.6
Help with something	3	2.8
○ Getting another job	2	1.9
○ Providing case management services		
○ Learning how to do something at work	2	
○ Teaching new skills		
○ Changing the work schedule		
○ Maintaining more frequent communication		
○ Solving problems at work		
○ Career advancement		
○ Other (e.g., anything related to the job, getting automatic doors)		
○ Not reported		
	65	59.6
	44	40.4
	13	29.5
	9	20.5
	8	18.2
	5	11.4
	4	9.1
	4	9.1
	3	6.8
	3	6.8
	2	4.5
	1	

NOTE: **More than one response allowed; percentages sum to more than 100.

No relationship was found between length of employment, amount of wages earned, or number of hours worked per week with level of job satisfaction, service satisfaction or choice making at the workplace.

Neither the results indicate a significant difference between persons working in different types of jobs in the level of job satisfaction, level of service satisfaction, and degree of choice making at the workplace.

This study was conducted to investigate the opinions of supported employment consumers to find out how satisfied they are with their jobs, the services they receive, and the amount of involvement they have in decisions regarding their employment. The results from this study reflect

Table 10

Consumer Responses to Items Related to

Service Satisfaction (N = 110)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
How satisfied are you with the supported employment services you have received?		
a. very satisfied		
b. satisfied	0	0.0
c. dissatisfied	106	96.4
d. very dissatisfied	3	2.7
e. no opinion	0	0.0
Do you feel that supported employment was helpful in finding you a job?	1	0.9
a. Somewhat, but I think they could have done better		
b. Yes, I don't think I would be working now without their help		
c. No, they didn't help me at all	16	14.8
d. Not reported	84	77.8
Were you well prepared for this job?	8	7.4
a. I was properly trained for this job	2	
b. I knew most of what I needed to know by the time my job coach left		
c. My job coach left too soon	70	65.4

d. Not reported	31	29.0
Are you happy with supported employment?	6	5.6
a. yes	3	
b. sort of		
c. no	100	91.7
d. not reported	8	7.3
Would you recommend supported employment to a friend?	1	0.9
a. yes	1	
b. no		
c. maybe	100	91.7
d. not reported	0	0.0
If you lost your job or decided to change jobs, do you think you would	9	8.3
a. like to use supported employment services again?	1	
b. use them if a few things could be different?		
c. definitely not use supported employment again?		
d. not reported	100	92.6
	6	5.6
	2	1.9
	2	

What type of services do you need now that you are not receiving?*

None

Need some services

- Assistance with changing jobs
- Other (e.g., budgeting, GED tutoring, how to access information)
- Transportation
- Better benefits
- Help solving problems on the job
- Housing
- Medical services
- More money
- Counseling
- More hours at work
- Not reported

77 **76.3**

28 **26.7**

8 28.6

7 25.0

6 2.14

Since you have started working at this job, do you feel that your life has

6 21.4

a. become worse?

4 14.3

b. stayed about the same?

3 10.7

c. gotten better?

2 7.1

d. not reported

1 3.6

How is your life better now that you are working at this job? **or** How was your life better before you started working at this job?

1 3.6

1 3.6

Life is the same

5

Life is different

- I have more money
- I'm more productive
- Personal benefits (e.g., more confident, better peace of mind, self-respect)
- I've had major life changes (e.g., moved into own apartment, took a cruise, bought things)
- I'm more independent
- I like the people
- I'm happier
- I like my job
- I'm learning new things
- I just like it better
- Not reported

3 2.8

26 23.9

80 73.4

	26	25.5
	76	74.5
	33	43.4
	21	27.6
	17	22.4
	14	18.4
	12	15.8
	12	15.8
	9	11.8
	8	10.5
	5	6.6
	4	5.3
	8	

NOTE: **More than one response allowed; percentages sum to more than 100.

the views of those individuals who are actually working in competitive jobs and receiving supported employment services. The findings from this study indicate that individuals with disabilities in Virginia who are competitively employed and receiving supported employment services are overwhelmingly satisfied with their jobs. Similarities between Virginia and national supported employment service delivery and outcomes, as well as the representativeness of the sample of participants, suggest that these findings may be generalized to the population of persons working in supported employment. The primary reasons why people like their jobs are not unlike those often identified by the general working population. These findings support previous research which suggests that workers with disabilities, as a group, are satisfied with their jobs and like them for many of the same reasons as nonhandicapped employees (McAfee, 1986). Similar positive feelings have also been reported by the few studies examining job satisfaction for individuals with disabilities who are working in supported employment (Corporate Alternatives, Inc., 1990; Test, et al., 1991).

It is likely that a major factor contributing to the high levels of job satisfaction reported by individuals with disabilities is simply that they are working. This is not surprising considering the high unemployment and underemployment rates repeatedly documented for this population (Davis, 1993; Louis Harris and Associates, 1994; Louis Harris Poll, 1986; President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, 1992). Most of the participants in this study indicated that prior to

working at this job they had had a previous work experience, had attended a sheltered work-shop or day program, had had no primary daytime activity, or had received vocational training. It is important to note that those consumers who reported having a previous work experience may have been involved in an unpaid (volunteer) employment situation or other type of vocational rehabilitation placement other than competitive employment, as indicated during the interviews. Those individuals who were employed or were participating in activities that resembled employment tended to eagerly tell the interviewer that they had previously worked even though the description of their prior work experience did not always suggest competitive employment.

Although consumers felt positive about work, a common feeling expressed by many was their desire to change their job or find a different job some time in the future. These findings suggest that individuals with disabilities who receive supported employment services like their jobs and are happy to be working. Yet, like anyone else, they may not feel that their current job is their preferred permanent career. This is not surprising considering that many individuals with severe disabilities have never worked before or were involved in vocational activities in preparation for competitive employment with little opportunity to decide their job preferences or perhaps, more importantly, to act upon them. As with the entire population, actually working at a real job provides one of the best ways of gaining personal insight into the type of career and job characteristics that one is interested in.

The vast majority of individuals who are receiving supported employment services in Virginia are satisfied with those services and would recommend them to a friend, and would use them again themselves if needed. According to participants, one of the most attractive features of supported employment is the job coach, who assists with all aspects of their employment. The diversity of the job coach's role is reflected clearly evident by the respondents' reports of the many different types of services provided. It is important to note that more than half of the consumers felt they were receiving all the services they needed both from their job coach and other providers. This is quite a remarkable accomplishment for any service modality, particularly supported employment, which is targeted to serve those individuals who have more extensive support needs. Additionally, consumers were satisfied with the availability of their job coach and did not indicate a preference for changing the amount of assistance provided or the time spent visiting the job site.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings of this study is confirmation that the lives of individuals with severe disabilities get better once they receive supported employment services and enter the competitive labor force. Although this assumption has been the driving force behind the development and expansion of supported employment services, investigations aimed at documenting this phenomenon have been largely inconclusive due to the methodological challenges associated with measuring quality of life (Conte, Murphy, & Nisbet, 1989; Inge, Banks, Wehman, Hill, & Shafer, 1988; Moseley, 1988). The changes attributed to improved quality of life for consumers of supported employment are remarkably similar to those frequently reported by individuals who do not have a disability (Flanagan, 1978; Taylor, 1987; Zautra & Goodhart, 1979).

In general, consumers of supported employment in Virginia have a moderate degree of choice in selecting their jobs and the services they receive. The primary area where this appears to be most evident is in choosing the jobs that they would like to have. As indicated by previous research, individual involvement in choosing one's job greatly enhances quality of work, job satisfaction, and quality of life for workers with and without a disability (Brown, 1988; Kiernan & Knutson, 1990; Mittler, 1984). This study supports these findings as demonstrated by the major role consumers played in choosing their job and the high degree of job satisfaction they experienced.

Consumers were extremely satisfied with supported employment services and did not indicate that they would like to change their job coach if given the choice. However, in regard to their jobs, close to half of the individuals felt that they would rather change their job to make it better or find a different job if they had the choice. One explanation may be that individuals with severe disabilities are not provided with true choices about where they want to work but rather the better of two alternatives (e.g., "Do you want to work?", "Would you like to work at this job?") giving the impression that they have choices and therefore positively influencing their response to this question (West & Parent, 1992). A second explanation may be that individuals are working in jobs that don't offer opportunities for career advancement or job mobility. Perhaps the lack of job flexibility is a reflection of the job market and types of positions individuals are employed in that may provide only minimal movement for any employee to move up the career ladder. Finally, it may be that consumers are choosing their jobs; however, these choices are likely to be based upon limited experiences and few opportunities to develop job preferences. Therefore, it is not uncommon for individuals to develop new preferences and change their job choices once they become exposed to real work settings and actually see what different employment situations have to offer.

The latter suggestion supports the need for increased assistance by job coaches in addressing the specific aspects of a job that consumers do not like so that desired modifications in their job situation can be made. The importance of persons being able to choose jobs that match their interests and then to make changes in their jobs in response to their developing desires and needs is clearly documented in the literature related to job satisfaction for persons who do not have a disability (Henne & Locke, 1985; Rosenthal, 1989). Reports by consumers that they don't like everything about their job and lack the opportunity to be included in decision making about their work suggests that these issues are not being adequately addressed in many supported employment service delivery systems.

Several methodological considerations are identified that may limit the application of these findings to all supported employment participants. First, only consumers who were receiving supported employment services from programs in Virginia were selected to participate. Although similarities between Virginia and national supported employment outcomes are noted, unique features in Virginia's service delivery system may result in consumers' feeling differently about their jobs and services compared to supported employment participants in other states (Kregel et al., 1990; Rehabilitation Research & Training Center, 1992). Second, all of the consumers who participated in this investigation were employed in their first supported employment job and working at the time of the study. It is possible that very different findings might result if the study included individuals with varied work histories. Third, the focus of this study was on determining the absolute satisfaction of individuals with disabilities who are working with assistance from supported employment services. Interpretation of these findings are limited due to the lack of participation by persons who are not in supported employment which would establish a basis for comparison.

Future research is needed to compare the employment experiences of workers with and without a disability to determine if supported employment consumers like their jobs more or less than nonhandicapped employees. Research in this area would provide a baseline measure for evaluating the effectiveness of supported employment in comparison to the job satisfaction of the general

population of people who are working in similar positions at the same types of jobs. Additional research investigating the opinions of a large number of individuals with a variety of different disabilities is needed to determine the specific elements of their work situations that influence their feelings about their jobs. A study examining specific job types will assist with the identification of the unique characteristics and issues within different industries as well as their impact on the employment experiences and levels of satisfaction felt by employees of the company. A longitudinal study designed to investigate consumer satisfaction in supported employment repeatedly over time needs to be conducted. A study of this nature would describe the effects of job and service satisfaction and consumer choice on the employment outcomes of workers with disabilities. In addition, future research should assess the relationship between local program efforts to improve consumer involvement in supported employment and the impact these strategies have on satisfaction and job retention.

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