


# Identifying the Pattern of Job Coaching Skills on Supported Employment in Adults with Intellectual Disability: A Thematic Analysis Study

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## ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**  
job coaching  
Supported employment  
Intellectual disability

## ABSTRACT

Supported employment is a successful approach in the vocational rehabilitation of individuals with intellectual disabilities that heavily relies on job coaching. As a result, this study aimed to identify the job coaching skills that impact supported employment in adults with intellectual disabilities. This qualitative study utilized thematic analysis to review all valid articles and dissertations published between 2005 and 2023 in reputable databases and publications. These sources included ScienceDirect, Sagepub, ERIC, Wiley Online Library, Springer, PubMed, ProQuest, Noormags, SID, Magiran, and Irandoc. A total of 43 eligible studies were identified based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The data was then analyzed using the Attride-Stirling network model. The results revealed 85 basic themes, 13 organizing themes, and five global themes, leading to the formation of a five-faceted job coaching model. In summary, the factors affecting supported employment can be categorized into emotional skills, general skills, specialized skills, understanding of culture and society, and income-generating skills. This study highlighted the effectiveness of a supported employment approach when considering various aspects of job coaching. Ultimately, this approach could help reduce unemployment among individuals with intellectual disabilities and improve their economic situation.

## Introduction

Individuals with intellectual disabilities have long existed throughout the world and form a part of every culture. They are a part of the vast diversity of human societies (Byrne, 2022). According to the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), this disability is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects the individual, family, and community (Niazi & Siadatian, 2023). According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD, 2022), intellectual disability involves significant limitations in intellectual functioning (such as reasoning, learning, and problem-solving) and adaptive behaviors (including conceptual, social, and practical skills), which become apparent during the developmental period before the age of 22. It's important to note that individuals with intellectual disability constitute around 1% of the total population (Totsika et al., 2022; Jabbari et al., 2023). Approximately 85% of individuals with intellectual disabilities fall into the mild category and require limited support throughout their lives. With the appropriate support, these individuals can achieve significant independence in life (Bjelland & Bruyère, 2023). These individuals face greater difficulties in learning and it takes longer for them to learn than their typically developing peers (Malekpour & Nasayi Moghadam, 2014). The primary goal of educating this group is to prepare them for their future job and to acquire the necessary skills for living in society. Rehabilitation efforts only succeed when they can play a role in society (Norouzi, 2014).

It was reported in 2023 that about 6.5 million people in the United States have intellectual disabilities, but only 19.1% of them are employed, compared to a 61.8% employment rate for those without disabilities. It means that less than half of working-age adults with intellectual disabilities are in the workforce, and 28% have never had a job. The unemployment rate for individuals with intellectual disabilities is four times higher than that of people without disabilities, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023. In Norway, less than 3% of individuals with intellectual disabilities are competitively employed (Sigstad & Garrels, 2023). Studies in Australia show that individuals with intellectual disabilities face more challenges in finding a job compared to those with other disabilities and often require additional support. Based on data from the Australian National Disability Insurance Agency (2021), 12% of individuals with intellectual disabilities are employed in this country, while around 32% of people with other disabilities and 55% of the general population are employed. In Iran, no official statistics on the employment status of this group has been published, but studies indicate that these individuals have not been able to achieve adequate job functioning (BeheshtiZadeh Bafghi & Pakmehr, 2020).

Employment is crucial for the physical and mental well-being of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Meaningful work helps adults live independently, get married, access healthcare, connect with others, and contribute to society (Fryers, 2006). Conversely, unemployment is associated with income inequality, poverty, poor physical and mental health, limited healthcare access, social isolation, mental illness, and suicide (McKee et al., 2005).

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Received 05 June 2024; Received in revised form 27 August 2024; Available online 07 September 2024



Supported employment is an effective intervention for helping individuals with mild intellectual disabilities to secure and retain jobs. It represents a significant paradigm shift from providing vocational services in day programs and sheltered workshops to competitive employment in mainstream workplaces (Yanos et al., 2018). Supported employment aims to assist people with severe disabilities obtain competitive employment in inclusive work settings (Wehman et al., 2014). The data from previous meta-analyses reveals that supported employment significantly increased the possibility of obtaining competitive employment by 2.4 times and finding a job through other means by 3.24 times (Kinoshita et al., 2013). Supported employment is a theory in vocational rehabilitation that aims to assist individuals with severe disabilities in securing competitive employment in society. It could be achieved through collaborative strategies to attain sustainable jobs. In recent years, the application of supported employment has broadened to include individuals with various severe disabilities such as spinal cord injuries, emotional disorders, ex-offenders, and those recovering from drug and alcohol addiction (Frederick & VanderWeel, 2019). Furthermore, supported employment follows a social approach. According to this approach, the individual does not need to change to adapt to a specific job. Rather, the focus is on finding a natural "fit" between the individual's strengths, experiences, and jobs in the community (Kawano et al., 2022). The support provided to individuals with intellectual disabilities should empower them to obtain and maintain suitable employment opportunities throughout their lives (McDonnall et al., 2017). Yanos and colleagues (2018) identified the following benefits of state-supported employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities: working in public environments can boost the individual's morale, enhance self-awareness and understanding of society, ensure earning at least the minimum wage according to labour laws, offer continued support for up to two years after employment, provide opportunities for self-employment, and offer internships. The supported employment method consists of five main steps. The first step is the agreement, where the key points should be discussed and decided upon between the job seeker and the coach. In the second step, the job coach creates a job file and thoroughly assesses the individual's abilities. In the third step, based on the evaluations and assessments of strengths, talents, and skills, the job coach starts searching for a job. The appropriate job should align with the individual's personality and interests. In the fourth step, after selecting a job and an employer, the job seeker is taught how to conduct a job interview and write a resume. In the final step, the job coach continues to provide the necessary support to the individual at and outside the work environment until the individual adapts to the work environment (Karbelai et al., 2020).

The success of supported employment relies heavily on the job coach, who plays a crucial role in helping individuals achieve their employment goals and long-term success. One of the most important tasks of the job coach is to assist individuals in finding real employment opportunities that provide wages (Wehman, 2007). They should help job seekers identify their interests and the way interests align with suitable jobs in society. It is important to recognize the value that individuals with intellectual disabilities can bring to the business community and to identify workplace supports that can help them quickly engage in meaningful work (Frederick & VanderWeele, 2019). The job coach must have a strong understanding of the principles of supported employment and be capable of effectively implementing all its stages, as improper implementation could jeopardize the immediate or long-term job stability of the job seeker (Wehman, 2018).

Research has indicated that job coaching has a significant positive impact on various aspects. The application of the coaching model leads to improved individual performance, enhanced self-regulation abilities, better job attitudes, increased well-being, and improved coping skills (Theeboom et al., 2014). Bozer and Jones (2018) discussed the outcomes of seven main coaching structures and found that job coaching is associated with increased self-efficacy, which plays a significant role in goal achievement, task completion, and overcoming challenges (Jo et al., 2018). Additionally, Jones et al. (2015) noted that coaching also has a significant impact on organizational outcomes, particularly for job seekers. Grover and Furnham (2016) highlighted the substantial return on investment for coaching and demonstrated its lasting and sustainable influence on organizations.

The study conducted by the issue that Obeng et al. in 2021 demonstrated, that the managerial coaching had significant effects on both organizational climate and job performance. Similarly, in Iran, Habashi Zadeh and colleagues (2006) examined how job coaching by supervisors affected the morale of nursing staff and patient satisfaction in a teaching hospital in Tehran, with the results indicating the effectiveness of this method. Furthermore, Ahmadi and Shafii-Abadi (2008) found that job counseling in a coaching style had a positive influence on university graduates' attitudes toward the job market and improved their job-seeking skills. Although the importance of job coaching in the context of supported employment has been studied, the specific components of job coaching have not been thoroughly examined. There is a lack of a comprehensive definition of job coaching and its role in employment, particularly for adults with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, there are few studies about applying state-supported recruitment in Iran, making this a relatively new topic. Additionally, there are limited studies on applying state-supported recruitment in Iran, making it a relatively new topic. Given the importance of job coaching in job orientation, particularly for individuals with intellectual disabilities, it is essential to define and clarify the coaching model for individuals, families, employers, and colleagues. Also, it is crucial to outline its role in helping individuals acquire unique and diverse skills. Therefore, identifying the necessary skills for job coaching is undeniable. This study aims to recognize the skills required for job coaching to guide individuals with intellectual disabilities toward stable and meaningful employment based on the supported employment model.

## Method

This qualitative research utilized a thematic analysis approach based on the Attride-Sterling (2001) network model. Thematic analysis involves identifying and organizing themes to summarize data from various sources in a networked manner. In the Attride-Sterling model, data are categorized as follows: 1) Basic themes: Initial themes derived from primarily related concepts. 2) Organizing themes: Second-level themes that re-summarize related basic themes. 3) Global themes: Final themes resulting from the grouping of organizing themes (Attride-Sterling, 2001). Accordingly, to obtain the themes, the steps were as follows:

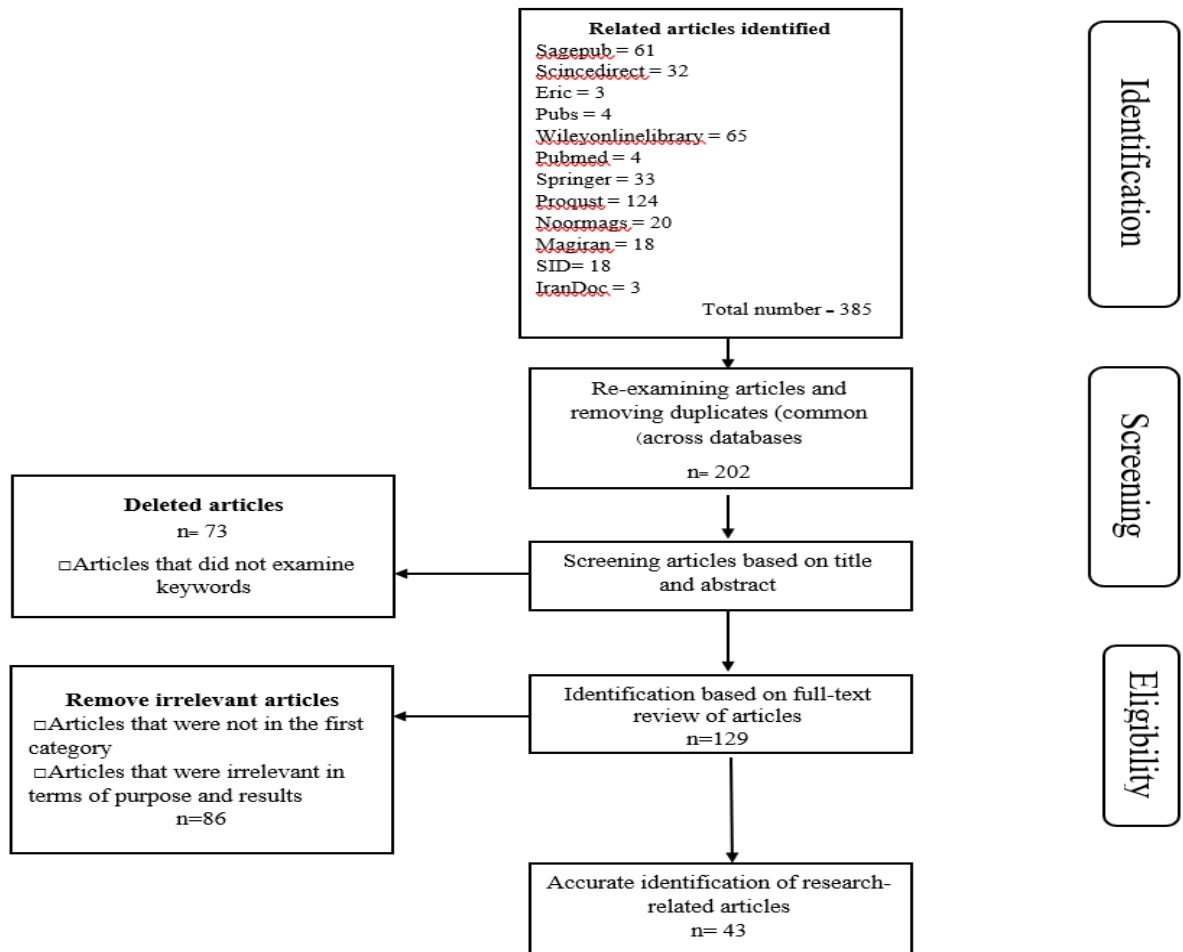
1. Reviewing the relevant research articles and dissertations in reputable Persian and foreign databases and publications such as ScienceDirect, Sagepub, ERIC, Wiley Online Library, Springer, PubMed, ProQuest, Noormags, SID, Magiran, and Irandoc. The search involved keywords like intellectual disability, supported employment, and job coaching to identify articles published between 2005 and 2023. Moreover, all sources cited in the identified articles were reviewed.

2. After the initial search, articles were screened through title and abstract review to eliminate irrelevant or duplicate sources.

3. The full text of all remaining articles was evaluated by two judges based on inclusion and exclusion criteria to identify eligible studies. Out of 385 research studies, 43 sources were selected.

4. The inclusion criteria were comprised: a) studies examining supported employment. b) studies focusing on job coaching. c) studies investigating the employment status of individuals with intellectual disabilities; and d) studies published in reputable scientific databases.

The exclusion criteria were: a) Articles published in conferences or non-reputable journals. b) Studies conducted with unrelated objectives and results. c) Inability to access the full text of the article or necessary information. The process of this research stage is in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Flowchart of identifying information sources

In the second stage, after data collection, the researcher carefully extracted all the semantic units from these information sources and started coding them. Codes were organized to align information. The implementation process was as follows:

**Data Preparation:**

1. All initial data were reviewed line by line and sentence by sentence, coded manually, and typed.
2. The initial codes were extracted.
3. After removing the duplicate codes, the "basic themes" were identified.

**Data Organization:** The basic themes were analyzed, and the conceptually similar ones were categorized based on shared content. In this way, "organizing themes" were created.

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of Specialists

Specialization	Gender	Educational Qualification	Position
Specialist in children with special needs	Male	PhD in Psychology and Education of Exceptional Children	Associate Professor at the University
Specialist in children with special needs	Male	PhD in Psychology and Education of Exceptional Children	Associate Professor at the University
Specialist in children with special needs	Male	PhD candidate in psychology and education of exceptional children	Specialist in exceptional disorder, education administration
Specialist in children with special needs	Male	PhD candidate in psychology and education of exceptional children	Teacher at professional high schools
Specialist in children with special needs	Male	Master's in Consulting	Teacher at professional high schools
Specialist in Supported Employment	Female	Master's in Family Counseling	Manager of the job Support Center, Welfare organization
Specialist in Supported Employment	Female	Bachelor's in Psychology	Manager of the job Support Center, Welfare organization
Specialist in Supported Employment	Female	Bachelor's in Clinical Psychology	Job Coach at the job Support Center
Specialist in Supported Employment	Female	Bachelor's in Counseling	Job Coach at the Job Support Center
Specialist in Supported Employment	Female	Bachelor's in Computer Science	Job Coach at the Job Support Center

**Data reporting:** Then, by examining the organizing themes, the researcher tried to place them in a more general category called "global themes" and integrated them into the process. This resulted in the development of the initial model for the pattern of career coaching skills in supported employment.

Finally, the Waltz and Basel content validity index (CVI) was used to assess the developed model's content validity. The complete content of the program, along with a Likert scale with four options —"Not relevant, score 1," "Relatively relevant, score 2," "Relevant, score 3," and "Completely relevant, score 4"— was provided to five professors and experts in the field of children with special needs and five experts in supported employment to judge the developed model and evaluate the appropriateness, efficiency, and comprehensiveness of each element according to the themes presented in it. After collecting the data from the experts' evaluations and using the Content Validity Index (CVI) to determine their agreement, the following thresholds were established: If the agreement obtained is less than 0.70, the content should be removed. If it falls between 0.70 and 0.79, it should be reviewed again, and if it is higher than 0.79, it is considered acceptable. This process led to the development of the final five-faceted model of career coaching skills for supported employment of people with intellectual disabilities. Demographic information related to the specialists can be found in Table 1.

**Results**

The themes were identified by carefully studying various information sources to extract important content and expressions. The utilized articles are specified in Table 2.

**Table 2.** List of Eligible Articles for Research

Article Title	Journal	Year of Publication	Authors
The Impact of Supported Employment on Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes for Transition-Age Youth with Intellectual Disabilities: A Case Study	Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	2014	Wehman et al.
Family Perspectives on Supported Employment for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities	Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities	2018	Gilson et al.
Employment Pathways: A National Survey of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities	Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	2014	Siperstein et al.
Towards Competitive Employment for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities: What Progress Have We Made and Where Do We Need to Go?	Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities	2018	Wehman et al.
Factors Associated with Early Work Experiences of Adolescents with Severe Disabilities and Intellectual Disabilities	Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	2011	Carter et al.
Job-Related Social Skills: Definitions and Interventions in General Vocational Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation Psychology	2014	Phillips
Twenty Years of Work for Individuals with Severe Disabilities: A Review of the Past	Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	2011	Callahan et al.
Job Retention Through Supported Employment: A Randomized Controlled Trial	Frontiers in Public Health	2016	Telle et al.

Article Title	Journal	Year of Publication	Authors
Supported Employment: An Assessment of the Evidence	Psychiatric Services	2014	Marshall et al.
Using Video Modeling to Teach Social Skills for Employment to Youth with Intellectual Disabilities	Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals	2020	Park et al.
Employer Perspectives on Barriers and Facilitators of Employment for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities: A Mixed-Methods Approach	Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities	2018	Kocman et al.
Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Skills Needed in Today's Workplace	Business Communication Quarterly	2012	Robles
The Impact of Video Modeling and Video Prompting Interventions on Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities: A Systematic Review	Journal of Special Education Technology	2018	Park et al.
Video Modeling to Teach Social Safety Skills to Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism	Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities	2016	Spivey & Mechling
Effects of Covert Audio Coaching on Job Performance of Supported Employees	Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities	2010	Bennett et al.
Using Literacy-Based Behavioral Interventions and Social Stories to Improve Work Behavior in Employees with Intellectual Disabilities	Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities	2008	Bucholz et al.
Key Employment Skills for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities in Singapore: Perspectives of Job Developers	International Journal of Developmental Disabilities	2019	Scheef et al.
Employer Perceptions: Employment of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities	Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	2005	Morgan & Alexander
Predictors of Sustained Job Participation for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities	Research in Developmental Disabilities	2013	Holwerda et al.
Creating Integrated Job Sites for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities	Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	2014	Brown & Kessler
The Importance of Soft Skills for Students with Intellectual Disabilities	International Journal of Recent Research Aspects	2016	Sethi
Criteria for Measuring Soft Skills in Students	Applied Measurement in Education	2018	Devedzic et al.
Structure and Understanding of the Coaching Industry: The Coaching Cube	Academy of Management Learning & Education	2011	Segers et al.
Supported Employment for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities: Promoting Job Equity	Journal of Occupational Science	2023	Engelbrecht et al.
Outcomes of Integrating a Supported Employment Program in Psychiatric Day Care with General Employment Services	Environmental and Occupational Health Practice	2022	Kawano et al.
Employment Status of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities	Review of Public Administration and Management	2013	Osa-Edoh
A Review of the Negative Impacts of Coaching: What We Know and What We Need to Know	An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice	2019	Schermuly & Graßmann
Employability of Individuals with Disabilities: Perspectives of Job Coaches	International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences	2018	Abd Manaf et al.
Job Opportunities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities	Choice, Preference, and Disability: Promoting Self-Determination Across the Lifespan	2020	Tøssebro & Olsen
Employer Perceptions of Workplace Benefits: Reasons for Hiring, Retaining, and Promoting Individuals with Disabilities	Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	2011	Hartnett et al.
Using Service Learning and the DEAL Model to Develop Soft Skills in Students After Job Entry	Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal	2022	Smith et al.

Article Title	Journal	Year of Publication	Authors
Exploring Paid Employment Options for Individuals with Severe Intellectual Disabilities and High Support Needs: An Exploratory Case Study	British Journal of Occupational Therapy	2015	Ineson
An Ethnographic Approach to Antecedents in the Coaching Process	Management of Public Organizations	2019	Moradi Shirazi et al.
Social Skills for Employment: What Skills Are Truly Valuable?	Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals	2016	Agran et al.
Job Coach in Supported Employment	Education and Science: Modern Trends	2016	Domanska & Chmyreva
Necessary Supports in Work Environments for Employees with Disabilities: A Systematic Review	Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	2020	Carlson, Morningstar & Munandar
Long-Term Effectiveness of Supported Employment: A 5-Year Follow-Up of a Randomized Controlled Trial	American Journal of Psychiatry	2014	Hoffmann et al.
Workplace Factors Associated with Obtaining and Maintaining Employment in a Competitive Employment Setting for Workers with Intellectual Disabilities: A Systematic Review	Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation	2016	Ellenkamp et al.
Facilitating Employment Opportunities for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities through Parents and Social Networks	Disability and Rehabilitation	2016	Petner-Arrey et al.
A Competency Framework for Coaches Working in Coaching Development Centers	SA Journal of Industrial Psychology	2021	Slabbert & Hoole
Enhancing Job Optimism and Job Security Through Job Coaching: Development and Testing of a Coaching Model	An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice	2021	Ebner
Trends in the Use of Supported Employment Services by Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in South Africa	Work	2015	Niekerk et al.
Which Factors Highlight the Success of Young People with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in Transition from School to Work Environments?	European Journal of Special Needs Education	2023	Sigstad & Garrels

The phrases and sentences were multiple times reviewed carefully and thoroughly to ensure that redundant and repetitive items were eliminated. The data that could potentially impact supported employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities were identified. As a result, 315 significant phrases and sentences were obtained. Consequently, initial concepts were extracted. The examples can be found in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The Examples of Extracting Initial Concepts from Important Phrases and Sentences

Examples of Important Phrases and Sentences	Sample Initial Concepts	Source
Coaching is a blame-free culture.	Ability to empathize	Schermuly & Graßmann (2019)
A job coach must interact with other professionals such as counselors, psychologists, and therapists to refer the case if necessary.	Interaction with professionals	Abd Manaf et al. (2018)
The coaching process should be conducted as a two-way conversation.	Interaction and mutual communication	Segers et al. (2011)
Supported employment services are usually provided on an individual basis with personalized support. However, due to resource limitations, these services may also be provided in both individual and group settings.	Methods of implementing coaching	Niekerk et al. (2015)
Job success for individuals with intellectual disabilities depends on having a supportive environment, including understanding coworkers and employers. Flexibility and tolerance from others are necessary for their success.	Necessary workplace adaptations	Sigstad & Garrels (2023)
Most individuals with disabilities and their families prefer competitive and integrated employment over segregated jobs or day center services.	Respecting individuals with intellectual disabilities	Carter et al. (2011)
A job coach should have sufficient knowledge about financing, employer relations, identifying jobs in the community, labor laws, insurance, transportation, and, most importantly, effective training.	Familiarity with labor laws	Wehman et al. (2014)

Examples of Important Phrases and Sentences	Sample Initial Concepts	Source
The self-determination of individuals with intellectual disabilities in finding a job should be appreciated, and appropriate compensation should be provided.	Self-determination	Sethi (2016), Tøssebro & Olsen (2020)
A job coach must be skilled in teaching the principles and foundations of the supported employment approach and capable of fully implementing all stages with fidelity. Any flaw or issue at any level can jeopardize the immediate or long-term job stability of the job seeker.	Understanding supported employment	Wehman et al. (2018), Carlson, Morningstar & Munandar (2020)
Supported employment requires high levels of competence and flexibility from the job coach to identify the employer's needs and match them with the individual's competencies and available resources.	The role of the job coach in supported employment	Wehman et al. (2018)
Soft skills or social skills in the workplace, such as greeting colleagues, engaging in appropriate conversation, and making eye contact, are essential.	Soft skills	Wehman et al. (2018)
Video modeling is an effective instructional method for supporting individuals with disabilities in learning various skills, including social skills in the workplace	Video modeling	Park et al. (2020)
To overcome employment barriers for individuals with intellectual disabilities, coaches should teach specific job skills (hard skills) and social skills (soft skills).	Hard and soft skills	Kocman et al. (2018), Park et al. (2020)
Skills related to asking for help, seeking clearer instructions, and responding to critical feedback are essential for job success.	Soft skills	Park et al. (2018), Agran et al. (2016)
The benefits of employing individuals with disabilities also extend to society, including social and economic benefits.	Benefits of employment for society	Bennett et al. (2010)
I value punctuality a lot. While people with intellectual disabilities may work at a slower pace, they can distinguish themselves through their reliability.	Belief in the abilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities	Gilson et al. (2018)
Today's job market is constantly evolving, and some jobs may soon become obsolete. The ability to transfer skills across different work environments is crucial.	Understanding jobs in the local community	Smith et al. (2022)
A variety of behaviors, skills, and qualities are necessary for coaching, including empathy and effective listening skills.	Empathy skills	Moradi Shirazi et al. (2019)
Supported employment is a significant paradigm shift from providing professional services in day programs and sheltered workshops to competitive employment in regular work environments.	Definition of supported employment	Kawano et al. (2022)
It seems that the success of a job coach is less influenced by academic qualifications and more by personal style and philosophy. Positive, energetic, and enthusiastic individuals with a "can-do" attitude tend to perform well.	Motivation to overcome challenges	Sigstad & Garrels (2023)

The initial concepts were grouped based on semantic similarities, and 85 basic themes were identified after multiple reviews. Basic themes were then organized and merged to form broader categories, resulting in 13 organizing themes. Finally, after discrimination of the organizing themes, the global themes were also determined to provide a comprehensive description of information. There were five global themes in total, which were related to job coaching skills for supported employment in individuals with intellectual disabilities. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Basic, Organizing and Global Themes Identified in the Research

No.	Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
1	Motivation to solve societal problems	Positive attitude	Emotional & Affective Skills
2	Benevolence	Positive attitude	Emotional & Affective Skills
3	Belief in the abilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities	Positive attitude	Emotional & Affective Skills
4	Ability to empathize	Social skills	Emotional & Affective Skills
5	Ability to communicate with families of individuals with intellectual disabilities	Social skills	Emotional & Affective Skills
6	Interaction and communication with psychologists, psychiatrists, and occupational therapists	Social skills	Emotional & Affective Skills
7	Interaction and communication with colleagues of individuals with intellectual disabilities	Social skills	Emotional & Affective Skills
8	Interaction and communication with individuals with intellectual disabilities	Social skills	Emotional & Affective Skills
9	Communication with employers	Social skills	Emotional & Affective Skills
10	Confidentiality and privacy of information	Ethical principles	Emotional & Affective Skills
11	Labeling Avoidance	Ethical principles	Emotional & Affective Skills
12	Respect for individuals with intellectual disabilities	Ethical principles	Emotional & Affective Skills
13	Advocacy for the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities in the workplace	Ethical principles	Emotional & Affective Skills
14	Definition of job coaching	Knowledge of job coaching	General Skills
15	Goals of job coaching	Knowledge of job coaching	General Skills
16	Attitudes of the job coach towards the coaching process	Knowledge of job coaching	General Skills
17	Understanding various methods of job coaching	Knowledge of job coaching	General Skills
18	Familiarity with the practical process of job coaching	Knowledge of job coaching	General Skills
19	Scope of job coaching	Knowledge of job coaching	General Skills
20	Principles of job coaching	Knowledge of job coaching	General Skills
21	Familiarity with interview techniques	Familiarity with guidance and counseling principles	General Skills
22	Good listening skills	Familiarity with guidance and counseling principles	General Skills
23	Familiarity with behavior observation techniques	Familiarity with guidance and counseling principles	General Skills
24	Ability to use questionnaires	Familiarity with guidance and counseling principles	General Skills
25	Familiarity with data analysis methods	Familiarity with guidance and counseling principles	General Skills
26	Familiarity with behavior modification principles	Familiarity with guidance and counseling principles	General Skills
27	Ability to design individual education programs	Familiarity with guidance and counseling principles	General Skills
28	Computer skills	Application of technology	General Skills
29	Video Coaching	Application of technology	General Skills
30	Virtual interviews	Application of technology	General Skills
31	Covert audio coaching	Application of technology	General Skills

No.	Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
32	Definition of intellectual disability	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
33	Classification of individuals with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
34	Characteristics of individuals with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
35	Understanding comorbid disorders with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
36	Understanding the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
37	Understanding the employment status of individuals with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
38	Understanding barriers to employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
39	Understanding the education, training, and rehabilitation status of individuals with intellectual disabilities in Iran	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
40	Talent identification in individuals with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
41	Self-determination in individuals with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	Specialized Skills
42	Definition of supported employment	Knowledge of supported employment	Specialized Skills
43	Goals of supported employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities	Knowledge of supported employment	Specialized Skills
44	Understanding the stages of supported employment	Knowledge of supported employment	Specialized Skills
45	Benefits of supported employment for society	Knowledge of supported employment	Specialized Skills
46	Benefits of supported employment for employers	Knowledge of supported employment	Specialized Skills
47	Benefits of employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
48	Skill in asking for help	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
49	Requesting clearer instructions	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
50	Responding to critical feedback	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
51	Job-related technical skills	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
52	Applied academic skills	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
53	Ability to work in a team	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
54	Decision-making skills	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
55	Problem-solving skills	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
56	Verbal communication	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
57	Planning	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
58	Positive attitude	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
59	Ability to follow instructions	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
60	Respect for others	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
61	Reliability	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
62	Perseverance	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills

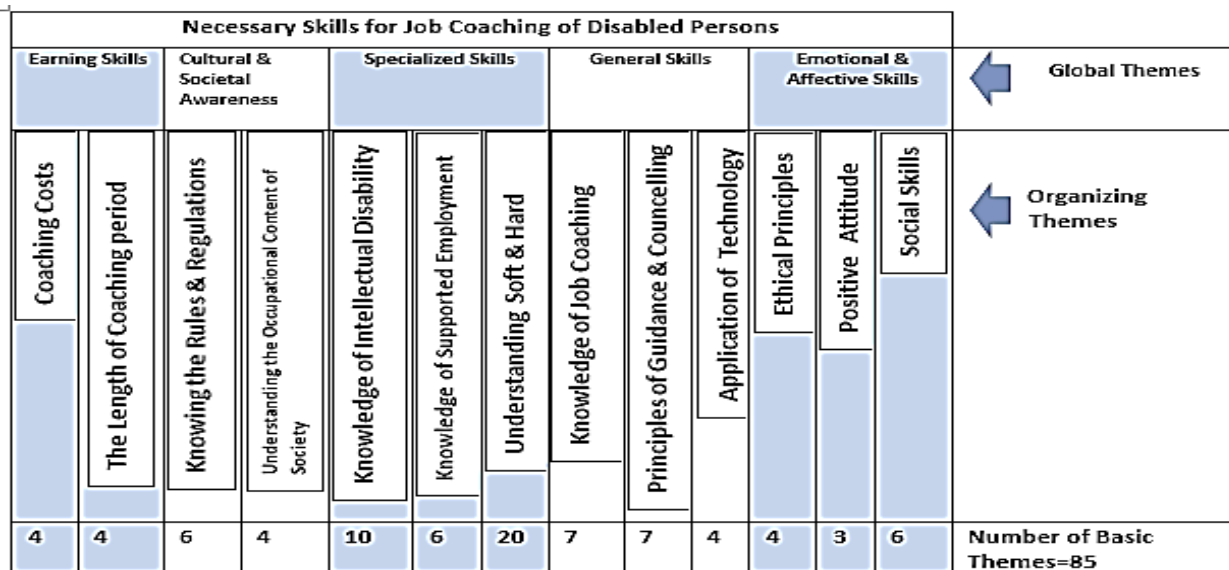
No.	Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
63	Flexibility	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
64	Ability to introduce oneself	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
65	Punctuality	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
66	Trustworthiness	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
67	Respect for rules in the workplace	Understanding soft and hard skills	Specialized Skills
68	Understanding available jobs in the local community	Understanding job context	Cultural and Societal Awareness
69	Natural supports in the workplace	Understanding job context	Cultural and Societal Awareness
70	Understanding appropriate adaptations in the workplace	Understanding job context	Cultural and Societal Awareness
71	Understanding health and safety principles in work environments	Understanding job context	Cultural and Societal Awareness
72	Familiarity with labor laws in Iran	Understanding laws and regulations	Cultural and Societal Awareness
73	Familiarity with insurance laws	Understanding laws and regulations	Cultural and Societal Awareness
74	Familiarity with organizations supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities in Iran	Understanding laws and regulations	Cultural and Societal Awareness
75	Familiarity with the Comprehensive Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Disabled (Employment Section)	Understanding laws and regulations	Cultural and Societal Awareness
76	Types of facilities for the employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities in Iran	Understanding laws and regulations	Cultural and Societal Awareness
77	Familiarity with the referral system in Iran	Understanding laws and regulations	Cultural and Societal Awareness
78	Number of sessions required for data collection and interviews	Length of the coaching period	Earning Skills
79	Type of workplace visits (in-person or virtual)	Length of the coaching period	Earning Skills
80	Number of visits per week	Length of the coaching period	Earning Skills
81	Duration of visits and training in each session	Length of the coaching period	Earning Skills
82	Job coaching income	Coaching Costs	Earning Skills
83	Methods of funding	Coaching Costs	Earning Skills
84	Familiarity with marketing and client acquisition methods	Coaching Costs	Earning Skills
85	Principles of contract design and drafting	Coaching Costs	Earning Skills

The findings presented in Table 4 indicate that the factors influencing job coaching skills for supported employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities can be grouped into five categories: 1) Emotional-Affective Skills, 2) General Skills, 3) Specialized Skills, 4) Cultural and Societal Awareness, and 5) Earning Skills. These categories can form a five-faceted model of job coaching skills for supported employment. To assess the content validity of the developed model, experts evaluated the "relevance" of each content, and the results are detailed in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The Degree of Experts' Agreement with the Results of the Theme Analysis

Global Themes	Organizing Themes	Not Relevant	Relatively Relevant	Relevant	Highly Relevant	C VI
Emotional and Affective Skills	Positive attitude	0	0	0	10	1
	Social skills	1	1	5	3	.80
	Ethical principles	2	0	4	4	.80
General Skills	Understanding job coaching	1	1	5	3	.80
	Familiarity with guidance and counseling principles	0	0	1	9	1
	Use of technology	0	0	2	8	1
Specialized Skills	Knowledge of intellectual disabilities	0	0	2	8	1
	Understanding supported employment	1	1	4	4	.80
	Understanding soft and hard skills	0	2	6	2	.80
Cultural and Societal Awareness	Understanding job context	1	1	6	2	.80
	Understanding laws and regulations	0	0	5	5	1
Earning Skills	Length of the coaching period	1	0	5	4	.90
	Coaching costs	0	0	0	10	1

The data illustrated in Table 5 reveals that all themes have a content validity index (CVI) surpassing 0.80, with an average CVI of 0.9 for the identified themes, signifying excellent content validity. Consequently, none of the components from the initial model were excluded. As a result, a final model outlining five facets of job coaching skills for supporting the employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities was developed, as depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The Five-Faceted Model of Job Coaching Skills for Supported Employment in Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

**Discussion**

Employment of individuals with mild intellectual disabilities in the workforce is crucial for society. It brings many benefits to individuals, their families, and the community. Supported employment has proven to be a successful approach for integrating this group into the workforce. The main objective of supported employment is to offer individuals with disabilities real job opportunities with real benefits. In Iran, the implementation of supported employment by the Welfare Organization is relatively recent, and only a few job support centers have been established in the country (Karbalai et al., 2020). Based on the reviews conducted, there is a scarcity of information on this subject within the country. The central element of supported employment is the job coach, and the success of this approach is heavily dependent on effective job

coaching. Given the research gap, identifying the necessary skills for job coaching individuals with intellectual disabilities was the primary objective of this study. The findings revealed that job coaching for individuals with intellectual disabilities is a kind of multidimensional issue, and the coach needs different skills to be successful. The study identified five skills and abilities required for effective career coaching: emotional-affective skills, general skills, specialized skills, cultural and societal awareness, and earning skills.

## **Global Theme**

### ***Emotional and Affective Skills***

A review of literature and scientific sources indicates that job coaches possess distinct and unique characteristics in social and ethical skills. Coaching fosters a blame-free culture. A good coach provides support, listens attentively, and focuses the trainee's attention on the future.

### ***Positive Attitude***

A job coach is a benevolent individual motivated to solve societal problems. They must believe that individuals with intellectual disabilities have the necessary abilities for employment and can contribute positively to society. The coach understands that the criterion for judging people is their abilities. They should help the individual achieve self-awareness. The role of a coach is not to force or direct individuals but to allow them to identify and implement changes. The coach must support and encourage (Carlson & Munandar, 2020). The goal of a job coach is to protect individuals with intellectual disabilities to be effective and independent in their role. Typically, as the individual learns the job, the coach's support diminishes over time. A successful coach is confident, has personal integrity, and demonstrates a passion for challenging individuals with disabilities, deriving satisfaction from their success (Moradi & Shirazi, 2019; Grover & Furnham, 2016). It appears that the success of a job coach is less related to academic qualifications and more to personal style and philosophy. Positive, energetic, and enthusiastic individuals with a "can-do" attitude tend to perform well (Sigstad & Garrels, 2023).

### ***Social Skills***

Job coaching requires advanced social skills. The ability to empathize and understand others is a characteristic of a successful job coach (Agran et al., 2016). A coach should not fear interacting and communicating with different people and should be able to defend the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Communication with individuals with intellectual disabilities, various specialists, families, employers, and workers is essential for job coaching (Abd Manaf et al., 2018). A job coach is not confined to a sedentary job but frequently visits workshops and factories, persuading employers to hire individuals with intellectual disabilities. Even after employment, the coach makes periodic visits to the workplace to ensure that necessary activities are in place to support the sustained employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities (Domanska & Chmyreva, 2016). A professional and efficient coach knows when to praise genuine effort, advise self-restraint, encourage stepping out of the comfort zone, provide strong support in facing challenges, and urge individuals with intellectual disabilities not to give up despite adverse outcomes.

### ***Ethical Principles***

Due to the nature of job coaching and the need for human interactions, a coach must adhere to ethical principles. They must be committed to maintaining confidentiality and respecting the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Avoiding labeling, mockery, humility, and showing respect for individuals with intellectual disabilities are essential traits of a job coach (Slabbert & Hoole, 2021). The coach must always strive to protect the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities in the workplace. To gather information and gain a correct understanding of individuals with intellectual disabilities, a job coach may use various methods, such as spending leisure time together or sharing meals. However, throughout these activities, the coach must respect the individual's personal and family privacy (Woo, 2015).

### ***General Skills***

Based on the research findings, general skills for job coaching include a thorough understanding of job coaching itself, familiarity with guidance and counseling principles, and proficiency in the use of technology.

### ***Understanding Job Coaching***

An individual stepping into the role of a job coach for people with intellectual disabilities must possess comprehensive knowledge about the definition, principles, goals, approaches, and processes involved in job coaching. A coach enables the individual to personally identify and implement solutions suitable to their circumstances (Brown & Kessler, 2014). The coach's responsibility is to clarify the path and environment for the individual. The methods used in job coaching are crucial for the successful transition of supported employees. Coaches play a pivotal role in helping employees learn how to perform their tasks according to the expectations of their supervisors (Bennett et al., 2010). A job coach supports an individual with a disability in their career, offering customized and flexible assistance in learning job tasks and responsibilities and navigating the social, cultural, and behavioral aspects of the workplace (Wehman et al., 2018).

### ***Familiarity with Guidance and Counseling Principles***

Job coaching and career counseling are distinct concepts. Job coaching focuses on the present situation and practical goals to advance disabled individuals, while career counseling may delve into past experiences or barriers that have led to current career challenges (Segers et al., 2011). Effective implementation of supported employment by a job coach requires guidance and counseling techniques and principles. The job coach needs to be an active listener, familiar with interview techniques, and proficient in gathering information through behavioral observation. Subsequently, the job coach should be able to utilize classification and data analysis techniques (Robles, 2012). Decision-making should rely on proper data collection and interpretation rather than assumptions, considering the effectiveness of job support and the progress of individuals with disabilities. Job coaches should be acquainted with various work environments and know how to collect and analyze data properly. After data collection, it is essential to design an individualized training program during the implementation process of supported employment (Ebner, 2021). Job coaching based on supported employment has been tested to assist employees with psychological and intellectual challenges in maintaining employment (Telle et al., 2016). Job coaching must address the individual issues of employees and their specific job positions (Marshal, 2014).

An important skill is using behavior modification techniques to change behaviors in individuals with intellectual disabilities. Behavioral issues such as anger, aggression, self-harm, property destruction, and repetitive behaviors are essential barriers to the employment of individuals with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities (Engelbrecht et al., 2023). Research literature supports the use of behavior

management strategies to reduce inappropriate behaviors such as aggression, self-harm, and property destruction (Ineson, 2015). Therefore, job coaches must have sufficient knowledge in this area.

### ***Proficiency in the Application of Technology***

In job coaching, technology has led to the development of new methods. Technology has brought about new methods in the field, and a proficient job coach should be skilled in using computers, smartphones, virtual interview techniques, video coaching, and covert audio coaching. They should be able to utilize these tools effectively. Job coaches also discuss technology and virtual support with individuals with disabilities. In virtually provided support, there are fewer opportunities for informal discussions between the job coach and the supervisor or manager. Video modeling is an evidence-based method widely applied for individuals with intellectual disabilities (Park, 2020). It involves showing recorded video clips that visually model targeted skills for the individual with a disability. After watching the entire video, the individual is asked to perform the task (Spivey & Mechling, 2016).

### ***Specialized Skills***

In the domain of specialized skills, the research identified three critical areas: understanding individuals with intellectual disabilities, knowledge of supported employment, and proficiency in hard and soft skills. A job coach must be well-versed in these areas to protect individuals with intellectual disabilities effectively.

### ***Knowledge of Intellectual Disabilities***

A job coach must map out the stages of career development, from assessing the strengths and limitations of the individual with a disability to analyzing job-related information. The coach is responsible for helping these individuals recognize their hidden talents and encouraging them to pursue their dream jobs with a solid plan. In doing so, these individuals can achieve their career goals (Scheef et al., 2016). Therefore, a job coach should have comprehensive knowledge of intellectual disabilities, including definitions, classifications, and the specific characteristics of this population. Additionally, the coach should be well-informed about comorbid disorders and behavioral traits within this group. Understanding the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities, their employment and educational status in society, and the barriers to employment is crucial for the job coach to make informed decisions (Osa-Edoh, 2013). Instead of focusing on deficiencies, the coach should highlight positive attributes, emphasizing capacity and capability. Self-determination in job searching should be appreciated, and appropriate compensation should be provided (Wehman, 2018).

### ***Knowledge of Supported Employment***

The research findings emphasize that a job coach should be well-acquainted with the definition, goals, and execution stages of supported employment and comprehend its benefits for society, employers, and individuals with intellectual disabilities. The coach must be capable of teaching the principles and foundations of supported employment and should be skilled at executing all stages effectively. Any misstep at any level could impact both short-term and long-term job stability (Wehman et al., 2018). Supported employment requires the job coach to be highly competent and flexible to assess the employer's needs and match them with the individual's competencies and available resources. Additionally, training and support on the job are crucial aspects of supported employment. In some cases, ongoing support for both the employee and employer may be necessary (Callahan et al., 2011).

### ***Understanding Hard and Soft Skills***

Hard skills, encompassing technical job skills, the ability to use tools, and applied academic skills, are crucial for employing individuals with intellectual disabilities (Smith et al., 2022; Sethi, 2016). On the other hand, soft skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, verbal communication, receptiveness to feedback, planning, respect for others, following instructions, asking for help, flexibility, punctuality, respect for rules, and trustworthiness are also important. When it comes to employing individuals with intellectual disabilities, it is paramount for job coaches to recognize the significance of both hard and soft skills and plan accordingly. While technical skills are important, soft skills and personal attributes are vital for job retention. Individuals with intellectual disabilities often encounter barriers to employment, including a lack of necessary skills and insecurity in social situations (Kocmane et al., 2018). The ability to interact socially in the workplace has been identified as a key factor for employing people with disabilities (Phillips, 2014). Skills such as asking for help, seeking clearer instructions, and responding to critical feedback are crucial for job success. According to Smith et al. (2022), 85% of job success comes from having soft skills, while only 15% is related to technical skills and knowledge. It is noteworthy to mention that while hard and personal skills are commonly taught during education, soft skills relevant to the workplace receive less frequent coverage (Agran et al., 2016).

### ***Cultural & Societal Awareness***

It's important to acknowledge that the job market is constantly evolving, and some jobs may no longer exist. It's crucial to be able to apply skills in various work settings (Sigstad & Garrels, 2023). Furthermore, employment is a culture-dependent issue, and different types of jobs and regulations prevail in diverse societies. Therefore, a job coach needs to have a deep understanding of the local job market, as well as the knowledge of employment laws and regulations, such as working hours, insurance, wages, and benefits. This is essential to effectively advocate for the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities (Wehman et al., 2014).

### ***Understanding the Employment Context***

A career coach should be familiar with the types of careers available in the local community and provide information to individuals with intellectual disabilities. It will help them choose a job that aligns with their interests, talents, and capabilities. Additionally, accommodating individuals with intellectual disabilities in work environments necessitates some environmental adaptations. The coach should have a good understanding of these adaptations and how to implement them. Research indicates that work-related supports have a significant impact on successful employment (Ellenkamp et al., 2016; Brown & Kessler, 2014). Ensuring job suitability is crucial; the job must match the individual's strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Successful employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities depends on coworkers and employers who provide a supportive environment. Flexibility and tolerance of others are essential. Changes in job tasks or the work environment, adjustments in communication exchanges, and assistance in social interactions may be needed. Furthermore, training is more effective when provided in a real environment, increasing the likelihood of success (Kawano et al., 2022). A job coach should be familiar with various types of workplace support and be prepared to facilitate the appropriate type and level of support to help the individual secure employment. The goal is to help workers become independent from the job coach as quickly as possible. Therefore, the job coach needs to learn how to recognize and

facilitate the natural supports available in the workplace. Maintaining the health and safety of individuals in work environments is a top priority, so attention must be paid to health and safety principles.

### **Knowing the Rules and Regulations**

The goal of supported employment is competitive work and equal rights with other members of society (Wehman, 2018). Therefore, familiarity with laws and regulations, insurance, wages, and the comprehensive law supporting the rights of people with disabilities is necessary. A job coach should be aware of the organizations that protect individuals with intellectual disabilities and are able to communicate with them. Being familiar with these rules, the career coach can refer the person with intellectual disability to the relevant organizations to receive facilities or services (Engelbrecht et al., 2023).

### **Earning Skills**

Implementing supported employment and job coaching certainly requires time and financial investment. Without careful planning for expenses and incomes, all activities may lead to failure. Therefore, a job coach must plan the duration and costs to ensure that the process is financially viable.

### **Length of coaching period**

The length of the coaching period is crucial for effective outcomes. The career coach must establish the frequency and duration of appointments to collect data and engage the relevant parties. Holding coaching sessions at short intervals helps sustain the trainee's motivation. These sessions can take different forms, such as role-playing or discussions, and can be conducted at various locations. It is essential to schedule appointments at times convenient for trainees and coaches. Additionally, it is important for the trainer and the trainee to collectively decide on the session duration (Segers et al., 2011).

### **Coaching Costs**

A job coach should be familiar with marketing and audience attraction methods, costs, and ways to cover them, as well as the principles of contract design and the earnings from job coaching. Job coaching is energy-intensive and time-consuming; the cost and time required for coaching individuals with intellectual disabilities are essential factors that should be noticed (Niekerk, 2015).

### **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to everyone who works selflessly for the employment of individuals with special needs, whose concern is reducing the suffering of families and individuals with special needs in adulthood.

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