

DISABILITIES AND JOB CARVING: A Thematic Analysis of Facilitators and Hindrances

Jennifer Ho, Silvia Bonaccio, Ian R. Gellatly & Catherine E. Connelly

ABSTRACT

People with disabilities experience barriers to employment. Job carving is one approach used by employment specialists to create work opportunities. Although job carving is often used in practice, it has garnered little research attention. This qualitative study reports on facilitators and hindrances of job carving from the perspective of employment specialists and employer representatives.

INTRODUCTION

- People with disabilities (PwD) encounter more obstacles to employment compared to those without disabilities (Kulkarni, & Lengnick-Hall, 2014).
- Job carving, a form of supported employment, develops meaningful employment for PwD (Wehman, Brooke, Lau, & Targett, 2013). It modifies or creates jobs to align with the interests, strengths and skills of a PwD but it also meets the employers needs (Graff, 2013).
- We aim to understand what makes for successful job carving experiences for PwD from two perspectives:
 - Employment specialists who offer PwD support in finding employment
 - Employer representatives (i.e., owners, Human Resources personnel) who hire PwD through job carving

METHODS

- We employed a qualitative approach. The first (N = 5) and second (N = 4) focus groups were conducted with employment specialists. The third (N = 5) focus group was conducted with employer representatives. We used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through NVivo to systematically identify, organize, and report themes.

RESULTS

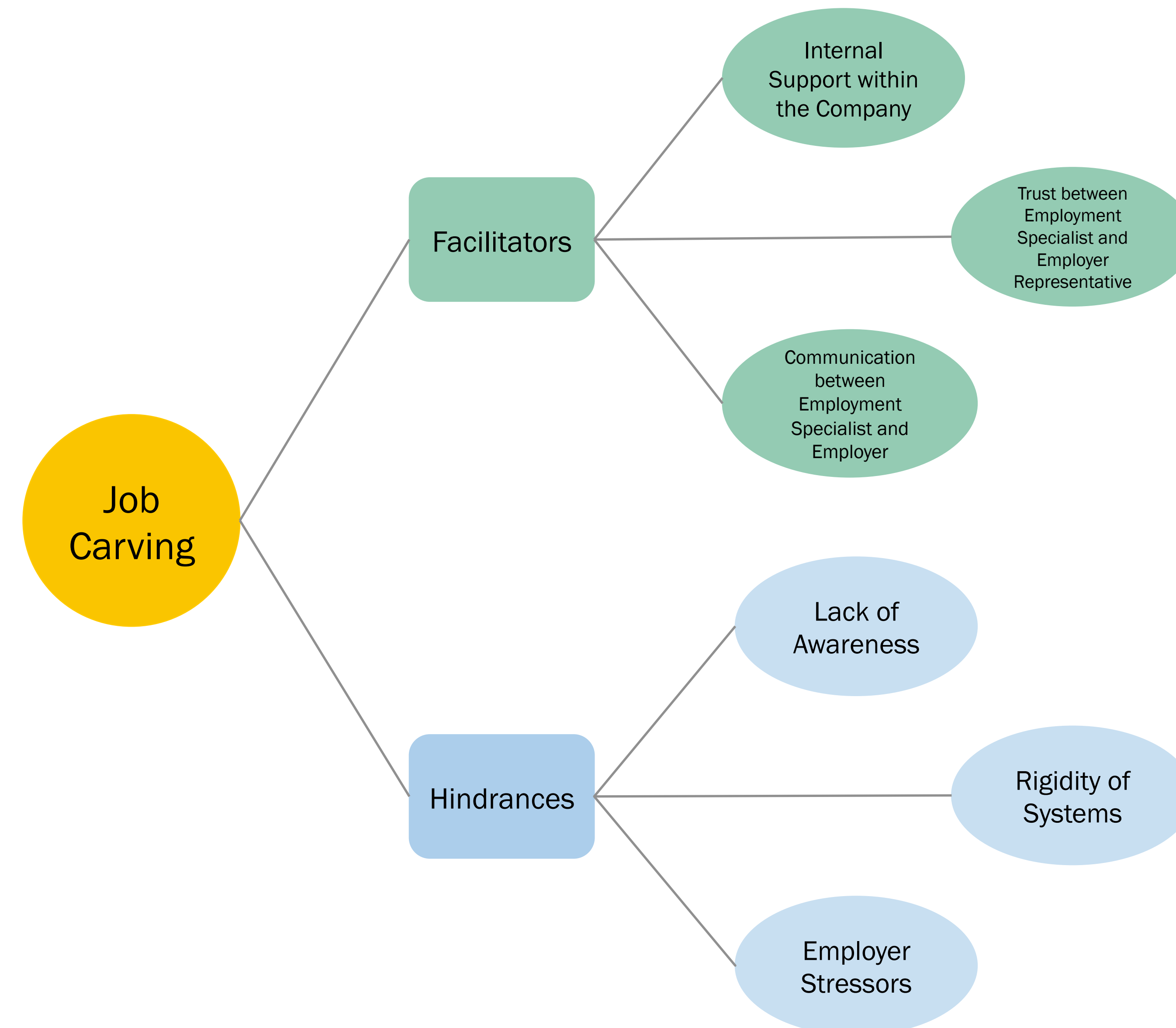
FACILITATORS

Internal support within the company.

- An internal champion supports company buy-in, moves job carving forward, and prevents employees who are hesitant towards job carving from impeding the process.

“I think [top leadership being supportive of diversity initiatives is] important, but it isn’t the be all end all that people say it is. If we can have like management or just even like lower... like a director level be supportive, that’s good enough” (Colleen, employer representative)

ORGANIZING MODEL OF FACILITATORS AND HINDRANCES OF JOB CARVING



Trust between the employment specialist and the employer representative.

- Employer representatives need to trust that employment specialists will provide the necessary assistance if issues arise as well as possess the knowledge and skills in the areas of disability and job carving.

“And [company representatives] really knowing that they can count on us. [...] they get our cell [phone numbers] and they call and we call them back and we’re there for them as they need it” (Lillian, employment specialist)

Communication between the employment specialist and the employer representative.

- Communication is essential at all stages of the job carving process to prevent and resolve issues. Continued communication is also required once the PwD is employed. When one party fails to communicate problems, it can affect the job carving outcome.

“There have been times when we just learned that, you know, [the situation is] not good at all and it should have been nipped in the bud. The conversation should have taken place months before this issue” (Ruth, employment specialist)

HINDRANCES

Rigidity of Systems.

- Job carving may be limited by companies’ rigid procedures during the application and selection process, as well as by fixed job descriptions. These challenges are often experienced more in unionized (vs. non-unionized) environments.

“We have pretty set rules for creating new positions. And if we tried to do something that went against collective agreements, yeah. [...] If we’ve got someone who feels they were qualified for a role and someone else got it, if it’s unionized then you’ll get grievances on that. And because of that we have to always have essentially proof and evidence of why someone was selected” (Timothy, employer representative)

Lack of Awareness.

- Employers may harbor preconceptions about PwD. There is also a lack of awareness around job carving. Employers may be hesitant to employ PwD as they may believe it will be too difficult.

“So sometimes if you say, well [the PwD] may not be able to do this one part of the job, but maybe we can work it to be other parts. They might think automatically, okay, well, if they can’t do that, how are they going to do all these other things?” (Samantha, employment specialist)

Employer Stressors.

- When employers are experiencing stressors (e.g., financial stressors; changes in management), they are less likely to engage in job carving.

“The job carving piece was a really difficult thing to work at because, quite frankly, most companies were just trying to survive. And so that opportunity to have that conversation about customizing a job or creating a job when the employer has just laid off hundreds and hundreds of employees didn’t really sit well” (John, employment specialist)

DISCUSSION

- PwD often face barriers to employment. Job carving can lead to successful employment outcomes. Future work should explore whether the different approaches to negotiating a carved position are related to long term success. From a practice perspective, we assist employment specialists and employers in reducing the hindrances and supporting the facilitators to job carving.

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