
Contextual Barriers and Supports to Employment as Perceived by Counselors: Instrument Revisions

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Abstract: As work is important to everyone and affects both satisfaction and well-being, it is important that counseling professionals are able to understand clients in terms of their diverse career needs. A vital portion of career counseling self-efficacy is the ability to first identify barriers and supports to employment. Career counseling can help influence work obtainment and sustainment. Therefore, it is important that counselors are properly trained to fully identify and understand their client's diverse career needs to achieve the best outcomes. As such, the Contextual Barriers and Supports to Employment as Perceived by Counselors (CBSE-PC) was created. This instrument measures barriers and supports to employment among clients, as perceived by counselors. As with any instrument, validation is important and can be completed through a series of different procedures. Instrument validation procedures ensure that the instrument has good psychometric properties, so that it can be used by counselors in their work with clients. For this instrument, revisions occurred through utilization of exploratory factor analysis principle components analysis. It was hypothesized that a two-factor structure would account for the covariance of the 40 items. The results showed a two-factor solution, resulting in eight factors being eliminated in the revised instrument.

Keywords: Employment, Barriers, Supports, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Instrument Revisions

1. Contextual Barriers and Supports to Employment as Perceived by Counselors: Instrument Validation

Work is a central part of all life [43] and affects both the satisfaction and well-being of everyone [2]. Career counseling can help individuals with this work task, influencing work obtainment and sustainment [1, 13]. Therefore, it is important that counselors are properly trained to fully identify and understand their client's diverse career needs to achieve the best outcomes.

To date, there are limited measures that exist that measure influencing variables of employment among clients, with none measuring such from the perspective of counselors. My Vocational Situation was created by [21] in an effort to identify difficulties related to vocational goals. The Barriers to Employment Success (BESI) was created by John Liptak in 2002 to identify major barriers in obtaining a job or succeeding in employment; the fourth edition of BESI

became available in 2011 [22]. Although instruments such as these that have been created in the past to measure certain barriers to employment, no instruments exist measuring supports to employment. Even more specifically, no instruments exist describing barriers and supports to employment as perceived by counselors. Thus, the *Contextual Barriers and Supports to Employment as Perceived by Counselors* was developed, by the author, and validated, as documented by the following.

Development of Contextual Barriers and Supports to Employment Scale (CBSE-PC)

After researching many articles related to barriers and supports to employment, in both urban and rural areas (as these differ substantially), certain common themes were identified. Some common themes surrounding barriers to employment included demographic and contextual factors such as lack of transportation and limited childcare [3], personal health and physical ability [4], lengthy time of unemployment discrimination such as racism, ageism, and sexism in the workplace [5, 6, 30, 34, 35] and economic uncertainties [46]. Other barriers mentioned in the literature

were related to physical and psychological factors such as having a disability or mental impairment [17, 27, 39] and disability compensation as a barrier to employment [12, 15, 25, 28, 29, 31, 36, 37, 42, 45]. Instrument items were then developed to account for these identified themes.

Some common themes of supports to employment found in the literature included social systems as supports to employment [19, 26, 33, 39] with social supports deemed as particularly important in rural areas [7, 41]. Individual supports such as high self-efficacy [48] and higher education and job training [23] were also common. Additionally, community and contextual supports such as community resources [11, 14], reasonable number of hours, and accommodations provided for those with disabilities [18] were mentioned.

The CBSE-PC was created to describe these barriers and supports to employment. Twenty-four items were created in an effort to measure barriers. Sixteen items were created in an effort to measure supports.

2. Method

This research utilized purposive sampling; participants were chosen or selected based on certain criteria [10], which included being a professional counselor. Due to a variety of counseling listservs being accessed, randomization was strengthened. Two hundred participants were sought to keep the participant-variable ratio at five to one [20]. Invitations to participate were either emailed or posted to the respective page, three different times. The survey was available for seven days, which research indicates is adequate time for responses to be collected; with numbers trickling down and reaching a plateau generally after seven days (24, Survey Monkey, 2009).

2.1. Participants

Participants were recruited via professional counseling listservs. This research project has been supported with data

from the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) [8]. This research project has also been supported with data from the National Council on Rehabilitation Education (NCRE). Other listservs that this research project utilized include COUNSGRADS, DIVERSE GRAD, ASCA Scene, and CESNet-L. Online survey response rates are typically at about 30 percent [24]. To ensure that an adequate sample was obtained, at least 670 participants needed to be contacted to meet the minimum participant rate needed for factor analysis. There were 310 responses total; fifty-one responses were not used due to not being completed through the demographics section. Of the 310, there were 241 completed instruments, therefore these were the ones used.

2.2. Procedure

Preliminary tests were conducted prior to the factor analysis (correlation matrix, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, and Kaiser-Meyer Olking Measure of Sampling Adequacy) to measure the proportion of variance among the variables as well as how suited the data was for factor analysis. Following preliminary analyses, it was decided that exploratory factor analysis was suitable for this data set. Principle axis factoring with iterated communalities was used due to the ability to recover weak factors more so than other extraction methods and due to the relatively simple factor pattern [47]. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was instructed to use principle axis factoring, analyze a correlation matrix, display a scree plot, and to extract eigenvalues greater than one. Only those principal components whose eigenvalues were greater than one were kept [44].

3. Results

The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was $p= 0.00$ and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (*KMO*) was 0.867 (Table 1).

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for CBSE-PC.

Item	Barriers	Supports	Communality
Limited supportive relationships (including that of family and friends)		0.672	.08
Past and/or current use of illegal drugs or alcohol		0.738	.23
Criminal record		0.763	.32
Sick child and/or family member who requires the care of your client		0.570	.31
Lack of motivation and/or determination		0.651	.23
Lack of belief in ability to succeed/ Low opinion and value placed on self		0.605	.23
Presence of mental illness (wide range of mental health conditions-disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior) that debilitates ability to work effectively		0.419	.26
Presence of a learning disability/ies (a condition giving rise to difficulties in acquiring knowledge and skills to the level expected of those of the same age)		0.669	.31
Chronic health problems and/or disability/ies that limit a person's ability to obtain/maintain employment		0.663	.22
Lack of job modifications		0.768	.31
No access to transportation		0.669	.39
Employer misconception of disability and/or workplace discrimination		0.747	.39
Discrimination against race and/or ethnic background (racism)		0.807	.31
Gender discrimination (sexism)		0.764	.37
Heterosexism (the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation)		0.693	.28
Age discrimination (ageism)		0.701	.22
Recipient of welfare and/or public assistance	0.267		.31
Lack of affordable childcare	0.471		.37
Receipt of disability compensation	0.543		.26

Item	Barriers	Supports	Communality
No resume and/or lack of knowledge on how to make a resume	0.533		.25
Undesirable employment options	0.457		.20
Limited work history	0.478		.19
Low basic skills (e.g., lack of computer/technical literacy)	0.493		.39
Limited education	0.552		.32
Many supportive relationships (including that of family and friends)	0.450		.46
Presence of motivation and/or determination for employment	0.547		.55
High self-efficacy and/or self-determination	0.626		.58
Physically healthy with no chronic health problems and/or disabilities that limit ability to maintain/obtain employment	0.615		.33
Availability of job modifications and/or assistive technologies	0.516		.47
Supported employment opportunities are available to accommodate and encourage those with disabilities in their employment endeavors	0.561		.41
Use of transition services to make the transition from high school to work (i.e., IEP or 504 plan)	0.520		.23
There is adequate transportation in the area to support employment for those without personal vehicles	0.413		.45
Employers in the area work cooperatively with rehabilitation counselors to employ persons with disabilities	0.555		.43
Client shows self-sufficiency with finances	0.611		.59
My clients have access to affordable childcare	0.510		.46
Current, up-to-date resume/knowledge of how to make a resume	0.480		.56
Many desirable employment options available	0.448		.65
Self-insight of personal work style (working alone, collaboratively, etc.)	0.433		.58
Participates in continuing education/ skills training	0.620		.49
	0.552		
Post-high school education % of Total Variance	23.72%	15.51%	.49
Total Variance	39.23%		

Note. Utilized principle components analysis with varimax (orthogonal) rotation. *KMO*= 0.867 and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was *p*=0.00.

In examining the scree plot, two factors emerged as accounting for most of the variance among the variables in the sample. A two-factor solution was forced in SPSS (through extraction), to account for the correlation among the variables.

Next, rotation was used for this exploratory factor analysis. After first using oblique (Promax) rotation, the factor correlation matrix was examined for correlations at .32 and above. The factor correlation matrix showed a correlation of .203 between the two factors, therefore orthogonal rotation (particularly varimax rotation) was used instead.

The factor loadings were sufficient, at least 0.3 or above. The loadings were also clean, with difference in cross loadings being at least 0.2 or above [44]. It was hypothesized a priori and also confirmed through factor analysis that two factors might best explain the correlation of variables in the principle axis factor analysis. Together, these two factors accounted for approximately 39 percent of the variance (Table 1). Overall, factor one accounted for 23.72 percent of the variance. Factor two accounted for 15.51 percent of the variance. See Table 1 to see the percent of variance and

cumulative percent of variance for each item in the scale.

Items that loaded onto factor one were named barriers and included items one through 24 on the CBSE-PC (e.g., limited supportive relationships, past and/or current use of illegal drugs or alcohol, criminal record). Items that loaded onto factor two were named supports and included items 25 through 40 on the CBSE-PC (e.g., many supportive relationships presence of motivation and/or determination for employment, high self-efficacy and/or self-determination). The factor loading matrix for this final solution is presented in Table 1. After the exploratory factor analysis was completed and the “factors” were discovered, principle component analysis was used to identify subsets of these factors.

3.1. Principle Components Analysis with Barriers Factor

As for the barriers scale (identified as factor one during the exploratory factor analysis), the *KMO* value was 0.856 and the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity value was *p*=0.000 (Table 2).

Table 2. Principle Components Analysis for Barriers (factor one of the EFA).

Item	Barriers	Supports	Communality
Limited supportive relationships (including that of family and friends)	0.309		0.109
Past and/or current use of illegal drugs or alcohol	0.659		0.435
Criminal record	0.658		0.439
Sick child and/or family member who requires the care of your client	0.525	0.309	0.371
Lack of motivation and/or determination	0.612		0.377
Lack of belief in ability to succeed/ Low opinion and value placed on self	0.500		0.303
Presence of mental illness (wide range of mental health conditions-disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior) that debilitates ability to work effectively	0.703		0.496
Presence of a learning disability/ies (a condition giving rise to difficulties in acquiring knowledge and skills to the level expected of those of the same age)	0.633		0.418
Chronic health problems and/or disability/ies that limit a person’s ability to obtain/maintain employment	0.588		0.353
Lack of job modifications	0.385	0.488	0.387

Item	Barriers	Supports	Community
No access to transportation	0.538	0.357	0.417
Employer misconception of disability and/or workplace discrimination	0.384	0.583	0.488
Discrimination against race and/or ethnic background (racism)		0.856	0.735
Gender discrimination (sexism)		0.892	0.800
Heterosexism (the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation)		0.825	0.681
Age discrimination (ageism)		0.675	0.461
Recipient of welfare and/or public assistance	0.582	0.382	0.323
Lack of affordable childcare	0.418	0.477	0.402
Receipt of disability compensation	0.527		0.319
No resume and/or lack of knowledge on how to make a resume	0.376	0.333	0.252
Undesirable employment options	0.337	0.358	0.242
Limited work history	0.423		0.235
Low basic skills (e.g., lack of computer/technical literacy)	0.638		0.464
Limited education % of Total Variance	0.538	10.45%	0.347
Total Variance	36.60%	41.05%	

Note. Extraction method utilized principle component analysis. $n=241$. $KMO=0.856$ and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was $p=0.00$.

For factor one (barriers), there were 24 components (variables) that emerged as explaining the overall variation in the instrument items for this scale. The eigenvalue cut off rule (Kaiser criteria) was used; components that explained less than the variance of a single variable were not utilized.

The scree plot and a parallel analysis were also used to judge how many components to retain. Two components accounted for 41.05 percent of the variance, with component one accounting for 30.60 percent and component two accounting for 10.45 percent of the variance (Table 2). SPSS was forced to extract a two-component solution.

Varimax rotation was used to assist with better interpreting the loading. The rotated component matrix helped reveal how each variable loaded onto each component (Table 2).

All factor loadings were sufficient, at 0.3 and above. However, four items were eliminated due to insufficient differences in cross loadings. Item 10, 18, 20, and 21 (Lack of job modifications, Lack of affordable childcare, No resume and/or lack of knowledge on how to make a resume, and Undesirable employment options) were eliminated due to the difference in cross loadings between the two component not being 0.2 or above (Table 2).

Communalities were used, which reflected the proportion of variation in the measured variables that was accounted for by the components (Table 2). Two items stood out as having significantly low communality (Limited supported relationships, and Limited work history). These items were eliminated.

Thus, for the two components that emerged, names were given to these sub scales. For component one, the following items emerged: past and/or current use of illegal alcohol or drugs,

criminal record, sick child and/or family member who requires the care of your client, lack of motivation and/or determination, lack of belief in ability to succeed/low opinion and value placed on self, presence of mental illness, presence of learning disability, chronic health problems and/or disability/ies that limit a person's ability to obtain/maintain employment, no access to transportation, recipient of welfare and/or public assistance, receipt of disability compensation, low basic skills, and limited Education. This component (i.e., subscale) was named *Personal and Environment Barriers*. For component two, the following items emerged: employer misconception of disability and/or workplace discrimination, discrimination against race and/or ethnic background (racism), gender discrimination (sexism), heterosexism, and age discrimination (ageism). This component (i.e., subscale) was named *Discriminatory Barriers*.

3.2. Principle Components Analysis with Supports Factor

As for second factor that emerged from the exploratory factor analysis (supports, the KMO value was 0.932 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value was $p=0.000$. For factor two, there were 16 components (variables) that emerged as explaining the overall variation in the instrument items.

To find a parsimonious solution, the eigenvalue cut off rule (Kaiser Criteria) was used. The scree plot and a parallel analysis were also used to judge how many components to retain. Two components (a two-factor solution) emerged. Two components accounted for 59.15 percent of the variance; component one accounted for 51.57 percent and component two accounted for 7.57 percent of the variance (Table 3).

Table 3. Principle Components Analysis Results for Support (factor two of the EFA).

Item	Barriers	Supports	Community
Many supportive relationships (including that of family and friends)	0.724		0.573
Presence of motivation and/or determination for employment	0.753		0.639
High self-efficacy and/or self-determination	0.798		0.698
Physically healthy with no chronic health problems and/or disabilities that limit ability to maintain/obtain employment	0.654		0.457
Availability of job modifications and/or assistive technologies	0.497	0.515	0.512
Supported employment opportunities are available to accommodate and encourage those with disabilities in their employment endeavors		0.798	0.685
Use of transition services to make the transition from high school to work (i.e., IEP or 504 plan)		0.719	0.525

Item	Barriers	Supports	Communality
There is adequate transportation in the area to support employment for those without personal vehicles	0.410	0.625	0.559
Employers in the area work cooperatively with rehabilitation counselors to employ persons with disabilities	0.349	0.686	0.592
Client shows self-sufficiency with finances	0.613	0.462	0.588
My clients have access to affordable childcare	0.375	0.654	0.567
Current, up-to-date resume/knowledge of how to make a resume	0.631	0.423	0.577
Many desirable employment options available	0.648	0.499	0.669
Self-insight of personal work style (working alone, collaboratively, etc.)	0.730	0.325	0.638
Participates in continuing education/ skills training	0.671	0.336	0.563
Post-high school education % of Total Variance	7.59%	7.57%	0.620
Total Variance	51.57%	59.14	

Note. Extraction method utilized principle component analysis. $n=241$. $KMO=0.932$ and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was $p=0.00$.

Varimax rotation was used to assist with better interpreting the loading. SPSS was forced to extract a two-component solution. The rotated component matrix helped reveal how each variable loaded onto each component (Table 3). All factor loadings were sufficient, at 0.3 and above. However, two items were eliminated due to insufficient differences in cross loadings. Item 29 and item 37 were eliminated (Availability of job modification and/or assistive technologies, many desirable employment option) due to the difference in cross loadings between the two components not being 0.2 or above. Communalities were also used. As can be seen from Table 3, all communalities were above .30, thus, this criterion did not result in the elimination of any items.

Thus, for the two components that emerged, names were given to these sub scales to match the items. For component one, the following items emerged: many supportive relationships (including that of family and friends), presence of motivation and/or determination for employment, high self-efficacy and/or self-determination, physically healthy with no chronic health problems and/or disability/ies that limit ability to obtain/maintain employment, client shows self-sufficiency with finances, current and up-to-date resume/ knowledge of how to make a resume, self-insight of personal work style, participates in continuing education/skills training, and post-high school education. This component (i.e., subscale) was named *Personal Supports*. For component two, the following items emerged: supported employment opportunities are available to accommodate and encourage those with disabilities in their employment endeavors, use of transition services to make the transition from high school to work (i.e., IEP or 504 plan), there is adequate transportation in the area to support employment for those without personal vehicles, employers in the area work cooperatively with rehabilitation counselors to employ persons with disability/ies, and my clients have access to affordable childcare. This component (i.e., subscale) was named *Environmental Support*.

4. Discussion

The primary purpose of the present study was validation and item reduction for the CBSE-PC instrument through utilization of exploratory factor analysis and principle components analysis. Through utilization of the exploratory factor analysis with principle axes factoring, two factors

emerged. These were named *Barriers* and *Supports* to employment. Next, through principle components analysis of the two scales, various sub scales emerged and a few items were eliminated. In the *Barriers* scale, two sub scales emerged and were named *Personal and Environmental Barriers* and *Discriminatory Barriers*. In the *Supports* scale, two sub scales emerged and were named *Personal Supports* and *Environmental Supports*. A total of eight items were eliminated from the original *Contextual Barriers and Supports to Employment as Perceived by Counselors Scale* to have a new total of 32 items. Eighteen of the items in the newly revised instrument make up the *Barriers* scale, while 14 of the remaining items formulate the *Supports* scale.

Through utilization of the exploratory factor analysis with principle axis factoring, two factors emerged and explained the variance in the observed variable of the CBSE-PC. These two factors were named *Barriers* and *Supports* to employment. Next, through principle components analyses of the two scales, various sub scales emerged of each (i.e., *Barriers* and *Supports* scales). In the *Barriers* scale, two sub scales emerged and were named 1) *Personal and Environmental Barriers* and 2) *Discriminatory Barriers*. In the *Supports* scale, two sub scales emerged and were named 1) *Personal Supports* and 2) *Environmental Supports*.

This statistical analysis helped to revise the original form of the CBSE-PC. A total of eight items were eliminated from the original CBSE-PC to have a new total of 32 items. Eighteen of the items in the newly revised instrument make up the *Barriers* scale, while 14 of the remaining items formulate the *Supports* scale.

5. Limitations and Future Research

The research sought to account for sample bias [32] by sampling professional counselors through the use of professional counselor listservs.

Also, a variety professional counselor listservs were used, to try and obtain a variety of counselors. Future research should focus on further validation of the CBSE-PC. This may be helpful in that, due to time restraints, the exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the instrument from the same sample addressing alternate research questions. It is common practice to conduct factor analysis on an instrument prior to utilizing the instrument for later research [9, 38, 40]. Therefore,

additional testing of the instrument may be beneficial.

6. Conclusion

The CBSE-PC has been validated to adequately measure barriers and supports to employment among clients as perceived by counselors. It is important for counselors to be able to understand these specific barriers and supports to work efficaciously with their clients in their career development. The revised version of the CBSE-PC has two scales (Barriers and Supports) with various subscales, consisting of a total of 32 items. Overall, the results of the present study suggest that the CBSE-PC has much potential, though further psychometric investigations are warranted.

7. Implications for Counselors

Implications from this research include understanding how counselors recognize and understand barriers and supports to employment among clients. This individualized approach may facilitate more efficacious interventions. The research

also implies the vast importance of career counseling self-efficacy. Overall, if counselors are more aware of client influential variables to work, it may promote clients' increased employment, thus, increased well-being.

Public Interest Statement

Work is a central part of all life [43] and affects both the satisfaction and well-being of everyone [2]. Career counseling can help individuals with this work task, influencing work obtainment and sustainment [1, 13, 16]. Therefore, it is important that counselors are properly trained to fully identify and understand their client's diverse career needs to achieve the best outcomes. The Contextual Barriers and Supports to Employment as Perceived by Counselors (CBSE-PC) helps understand not how clients perceive barriers, but rather, how counselors perceive the employment barriers their clients face; this is important initial step when working on career goals. Instrument validation procedures ensure that the instrument has good psychometric properties, so that it can be used by counselors in their work with clients.

Appendix

Table A1. Contextual Barriers and Supports to Employment as Perceived by Counselors.

		Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All of the time
Barriers						
Personal and Environmental Barriers						
1	Past and/or current use of illegal drugs or alcohol	1	2	3	4	5
2	Criminal record	1	2	3	4	5
3	Sick child and/or family member who requires the care of your client	1	2	3	4	5
4	Lack of motivation and/or determination	1	2	3	4	5
5	Lack of belief in ability to succeed/ Low opinion and value placed on self	1	2	3	4	5
6	Presence of mental illness (wide range of mental health conditions — disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior) that debilitates ability to work effectively	1	2	3	4	5
7	Presence of a learning disability/ies (a condition giving rise to difficulties in acquiring knowledge and skills to the level expected of those of the same age)	1	2	3	4	5
8	Chronic health problems and/or disability/ies that limit a person's ability to obtain/maintain employment	1	2	3	4	5
9	No access to transportation	1	2	3	4	5
10	Recipient of welfare and/or public assistance	1	2	3	4	5
11	Receipt of disability compensation	1	2	3	4	5
12	Low basic skills (e.g., lack of computer/technical literacy)	1	2	3	4	5
13	Limited education	1	2	3	4	5
Discriminatory Barriers						
14	Employer misconception of disability and/or workplace discrimination	1	2	3	4	5
15	Discrimination against race and/or ethnic background (racism)	1	2	3	4	5
16	Gender discrimination (sexism)	1	2	3	4	5
17	Heterosexism (the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation)	1	2	3	4	5
18	Age discrimination (ageism)	1	2	3	4	5
Supports						
Personal Supports						
19	Many supportive relationships (including that of family and friends)	1	2	3	4	5
20	Presence of motivation and/or determination for employment	1	2	3	4	5
21	High self-efficacy and/or self-determination	1	2	3	4	5

		Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All of the time
Barriers						
Personal and Environmental Barriers						
22	Physically healthy with no chronic health problems and/or disabilities that limit ability to maintain/obtain employment	1	2	3	4	5
23	Client shows self-sufficiency with finances	1	2	3	4	5
24	Current, up-to-date resume/knowledge of how to make a resume	1	2	3	4	5
25	Self-insight of personal work style (working alone, collaboratively, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
26	Participates in continuing education/ skills training	1	2	3	4	5
27	Post-high school education	1	2	3	4	5
Environmental Supports						
28	Supported employment opportunities are available to accommodate and encourage those with disabilities in their employment endeavors	1	2	3	4	5
29	Use of transition services to make the transition from high school to work (i.e., IEP or 504 plan)	1	2	3	4	5
30	There is adequate transportation in the area to support employment for those without personal vehicles	1	2	3	4	5
31	Employers in the area work cooperatively with rehabilitation counselors to employ persons with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5
32	My clients have access to affordable childcare	1	2	3	4	5

This instrument seeks to address barriers and supports to employment among rural residents from the view-point of professional counselors. If you are not a counselor, please do not continue by taking this instrument. If you are a counselor, please proceed by answering the basic demographic questions and continue by indicating supports and barriers that you see as evident in your clients lives that may affect their ability to obtain or maintain employment.

Please indicate if the following are supports and barriers to your clients' employment endeavors.

*The following items are supports and barriers to my clients' ability to gain or maintain employment: (1-not at all, 2-rarely, 3-sometimes, 4-most of the time, and 5-all of the time)

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