"What's in it for me?" – uncovering the individual benefits of inclusive behavior in the Norwegian workplace

Ola Martin Jensen Larsen

Department of Leadership and Organization, Kristiania University College, Oslo, Norway and
NORD University Business School, Bodø, Norway, and

Laura E.M. Traavik and Mari Svendsen

Department of Leadership and Organization, Kristiania University College, Oslo, Norway

Abstract

Purpose – This article examines how the practice of work inclusion towards vulnerable groups can positively affect individual leaders and co-workers. We specifically examine intrapersonal factors like motivation and commitment.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a multiple case design, data is gathered through semi-structured interviews in three private Norwegian organizations. Fifteen interviews were conducted and included leaders and co-workers from each organization. Secondary data, such as internal documents regarding the work inclusion policies, sustainability reports and news articles, were also used to describe different organizational approaches toward work inclusion.

Findings – Work inclusion activities can positively affect leaders' and co-workers' commitment and intrinsic motivation.

Originality/value – This article focuses on the individuals who conduct inclusive behavior and how they benefit from practicing inclusion. Exploring the three companies' different inclusion policies provides insights into how these are associated with different outcomes. The findings indicate that the policy structure and the practice of inclusion can have positive motivational and commitment effects.

Keywords Work inclusion, Diversity, Disabilities, Commitment, Motivation, Benefits, Leadership

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Research on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in organizations has grown rapidly since the early 2000s (Holmes *et al.*, 2021; Özbilgin and Erbil, 2023), with increased attention towards inclusion, multiple socio-demographic groups, intersectionality and specific cultural and institutional contexts (Klarsfeld *et al.*, 2022). EDI generally involves how societies and workplaces address equality and inequality for different socio-demographic groups. However, countries vary substantially regarding how EDI is understood and practiced Özbilgin and Erbil (2023).

In Norway – the context of this study – inclusion is often linked with systematic state policies that aim to increase the participation of people in the workforce who have stopped or

reduced the amount they work due to illness or disabilities (Strand *et al.*, 2015). These policies have encouraged organizations to participate voluntarily by using arguments based on principles of social welfare and corporate social responsibility (CSR) rather than on the business case approach to diversity. Inclusion initiatives in Norway can be incentivized and facilitated through state-sponsored programs that target groups most *vulnerable to exclusion* from the Norwegian labor market and include people with non-Western cultural backgrounds, physical disabilities, sensory impairments or a history of mental illness (Frøyland, 2015).

This paper seeks to understand how the current approaches to inclusion of vulnerable groups in Norwegian organizations affect the individuals implementing and supporting these policies. Using the individual perspective, we focus on how the intrapersonal dimensions are affected by individuals practicing work inclusion. We use the *Diamond of Inclusion Model* (DIM) framework, as shown in Figure 1 (Svendsen and Larsen, 2020). The DIM framework has been developed within a Norwegian context, combining literature from diversity, CSR and vocational rehabilitation research, while applying a positive psychological approach.
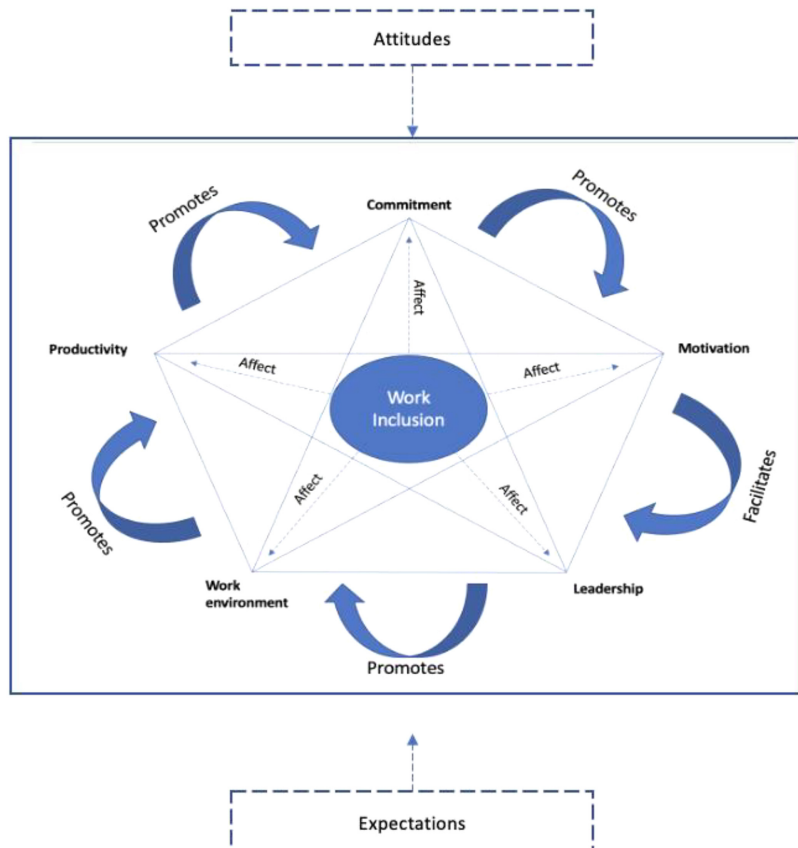

Figure 1.
The diamond of
inclusion model (DIM)

Source(s): Courtesy of Svendsen and Larsen (2020)

A positive psychological approach focuses on strengths and emphasizes the positive features and qualities of individuals, organizations, practices and outcomes (Burke, 2019; Spreitzer and Cameron, 2012). On the individual level, the DIM model proposes that inclusive behaviors may positively affect individual leaders' and co-workers' motivation and commitment (Svendsen and Larsen, 2020). We define leaders as individuals with direct leadership responsibilities toward colleagues categorized as vulnerable and co-workers working at the same hierarchical level within the same team or group as vulnerable colleagues, as described by Frøyland (2015).

Work inclusion can be defined as "providing real opportunities for equal access, possibilities for belonging and contributing, and career prospects through organizational and managerial practices" (Roberson, 2006). The experience of inclusion "is facilitated and made possible by the behavior of those in contact with the individuals" (Ferdman, 2013:4). Inclusive behavior can take many forms and can involve behavior such as communication, listening, acknowledging, information-sharing and fostering interdependence (Ferdman, 2013). In the DIM model, inclusive behaviors are rooted in the exploration of prosocial behavior, characterized as voluntary actions aimed at benefitting individuals other than oneself (Klein, 2017) and are comprised of actions that contribute to people with disabilities being afforded equal status by their co-workers, and accepted and supported by their leaders and co-workers (Colella and Bruyère, 2011). The scope of disabilities within a Norwegian context extends to those individuals deemed potentially susceptible to exclusion from employment. Norwegian government inclusion policies define these individuals as those with non-Western cultural backgrounds, and/or physical disabilities, and/or sensory impairments, and/or a history of mental illness (Frøyland, 2015). We refer to these groups when we use the term vulnerable to exclusion. Following Ferdman (2013), Roberson (2006), and Svendsen and Larsen (2020), it is critical to understand that inclusion as a practice is complex, multi-level, and dynamic, and at the same time acknowledge the integral role of individuals, especially leaders and co-workers in implementing inclusion.

Inclusive policies and structures have inclusive behaviors as a goal. However, there is a paucity of studies focusing on the positive outcomes of these inclusive behaviors which target marginalized groups with reduced abilities or opportunities (Frøyland, 2015). Few studies have addressed the indirect effects of how work inclusion behaviors affect individual processes and outcomes (Gewurtz *et al.*, 2021; Tompa *et al.*, 2021). One recent study found negative effects for individuals working with diversity and inclusion, such as cynicism and exhaustion, and one positive effect, level of performance efficacy (Pemberton and Kisamore, 2022). These authors encourage more research on how practicing inclusive behaviors affects the individuals performing these behaviors. Additionally, Veli Korkmaz *et al.* (2022) call for more research on how being an inclusive leadership impacts leaders themselves. In this study, we respond to these calls for research by investigating the positive individual benefits for leaders and co-workers that emerge when they practice inclusion. Against this backdrop, the research questions are:

RQ1. How does the practice of inclusive behaviors toward employees vulnerable to exclusion from the labor market affect co-workers?

RQ2. How does the practice of inclusive behaviors toward organizational members vulnerable to exclusion from the labor market affect leaders?

By responding to these questions, this article contributes to the research on inclusion by investigating the individual benefits of practicing work inclusion of marginalized groups with reduced abilities from the perspective of the individuals applying the inclusion practices. By highlighting how individuals could benefit from practicing inclusive behavior, this article contributes to a better understanding of the benefits connected to being inclusive and,

therefore, also helps motivate both individuals and organizations to embrace inclusive practices.

Theoretical framework

Ferdman and colleagues have written extensively on the value of inclusion and the importance of inclusionary practices (Ferdman, 2013; Ferdman *et al.*, 2010). In addition, others have built on the concept of inclusion by developing scales to measure inclusion in groups and inclusive leadership (Chung *et al.*, 2020; Randel *et al.*, 2018; Shore and Chung, 2022). Shore *et al.* (2018) noted many suggestions regarding the specific practices and behaviors that could contribute to inclusion at work. However, studies on how inclusive behavior can affect the individuals performing these acts are scarce (Pemberton and Kisamore, 2022).

The current study uses the *Diamond of Inclusion Model* (DIM) (Svendsen and Larsen, 2020), which is based on a review of the literature on diversity, CSR and vocational rehabilitation research, seen through a lens of positive psychology (Meyers *et al.*, 2013). DIM focuses on the positive effects of inclusion for the individual, workgroup and organization. Positive psychology offers a framework to examine the benefits of being inclusive (Luthans and Youssef, 2007). Recent research within positive psychology demonstrates how performing acts of kindness, helping behaviors and organizational citizen behaviors can positively affect the person performing the act (Curry *et al.*, 2018). Although there are many criticisms of positive psychology, such as methodology, insufficient historical references and lack of joint attention to both positive and negative emotions (Ryff, 2022; Van Ngo *et al.*, 2021), looking for prosocial and positive dimensions of inclusion in the Norwegian context helps to balance the previous emphasis on the challenges and barriers of inclusion (Svendsen and Larsen, 2020).

The DIM model proposes a set of potential positive effects at the individual, group and organizational level. The present study focuses on the individual effects represented by two effects of inclusion proposed by the DIM model's top and upper right corners (see Figure 1). First, we explore how individuals in organizations, through inclusive behavior, may increase commitment toward their organization. An individual's organizational commitment is defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday *et al.*, 1979, p. 226). Thus, we understand commitment as a global construct, in line with the literature that regards social identity theory as a relevant point of departure for understanding organizational commitment (Al-Jabari and Ghazzawi, 2019). Second, the model identifies how inclusion is related to motivation. Specifically, intrinsic motivation, which refers to "doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable" (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 55). According to Deci and Ryan (1985), Ryan and Deci (2000), motivation can be understood as varying in terms of internalization; the amount of motivational internalization is based on the degree to which the action performed by an individual is in accordance with their own goals and values. Inclusion may stimulate commitment and intrinsic motivation in different ways. For example, inclusion may stimulate an employee's perception of CSR by showing that their organization helps solve a significant societal challenge. The perception of CSR leads to more substantial commitment and intrinsic motivation (Martínez-Ferrero *et al.*, 2021) by stimulating cognitive, emotional and attitudinal behavior, such as pride and loyalty (Van Ngo *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, inclusion may make the individual more likely to consider the organization an important part of their self-concept (Haslam and Ellemers, 2005), which is an important part of their organizational commitment.

Furthermore, inclusive practices may stimulate a sense of meaningfulness for the employees. The experience of helping vulnerable individuals and contributing to something

bigger than themselves is a fundamental part of the concept of meaningfulness (Martela, 2023; Rosso *et al.*, 2010). An employee's experience of meaningfulness is an essential antecedent to intrinsic motivation (Kim *et al.*, 2018). In line with this, the research on prosocial behavior demonstrates how performing acts of kindness, helping behaviors and organizational citizen behavior affect the actors performing the act positively, such as increasing well-being, contributing to meaning, lowering stress and lowering turnover (Klein, 2017; Curry *et al.*, 2018; Xiao *et al.*, 2022). Using the DIM model, we explore the positive association between the practice of inclusive behavior and individual motivation and commitment.

Methods
To better understand the dynamics of inclusive practices within the Norwegian private sector context, we used a multiple case study design combining inductive and deductive approaches. A selection of three companies within this national context that met our sample criteria of having a formalized strategy for implementing inclusive practices within their own organization were chosen. Case studies explore a real-life, contemporary bounded system (single case) or multiple bounded systems (multiple cases) through detailed, in-depth data collection (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 97). Multiple case studies offer the potential for in-depth understanding in context-sensitive settings such as specific organizations (Yin, 2012) and provide ground for comparisons and for discovering similarities and differences (Eisenhardt *et al.*, 2016), which could help to better understand the individual benefits of inclusiveness.

The data consists of primary data used to uncover the relationships between inclusion and the individual outcomes of motivation and commitment, combined with secondary data used to describe the cases. The primary data is collected using interviews with two groups: (a) employees with direct leadership responsibilities towards co-workers who are vulnerable to work exclusion, and (b) employees who work with co-workers who are vulnerable to work exclusion on the same hierarchical level within the organization.

When referring to vulnerable groups, our definition comes from Frøyland's (2015) findings, pointing to four groups as those most vulnerable to exclusion within the Norwegian labor market, being people with non-Western cultural backgrounds, physical disabilities, sensory impairments or a history of mental illness. These groups are not mutually exclusive, making it possible for an individual to belong to several of these groups simultaneously.

The interview guide is structured into two parts. The first part used an open and inductive approach, involving open-ended questions about how inclusive behavior affects the individual in general. The second part takes a more deductive approach, more directly derived from the specific terms from the DIM model regarding intrapersonal elements. The questions in this section specifically ask about the potential beneficiary factors of inclusion as they relate to commitment and motivation. The purpose of this interview structure is to gain a deeper understanding of the already conceptualized themes commitment and motivation from DIM while staying open to uncover other themes that emerge when individuals perform inclusive behavior in the workplace. The interviews lasted between 45 min and three hours and were conducted either face-to-face or via video calls. The secondary data consists of strategic documents collected from the organizations in question.

Analysis
The primary data were analyzed by utilizing the Framework Method of analysis (Gale *et al.*, 2013), which is suited for both inductive and deductive thematic analysis. We used predefined themes, such as motivation and commitment, and grouped all quotes associated with these themes in separate groups. We also looked for other substantial themes within the data

related to intrapersonal benefits due to practicing inclusive behavior, such as the influence of individual proximity. This procedure was adapted to our study and consisted of three stages. In stage one, the first author transcribed the interviews, and all authors then familiarized themselves with the data. In stage two, the application of a thematic framework was done by Author 1 and discussed and revised with all authors. In this stage, we categorized contextual quotes into the themes of commitment, motivation or other emerging themes. The third stage is interpretation and formulation. Throughout this process, we acknowledged that making sense of qualitative data is not merely about aggregating patterns, "but of weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues and searching for a structure rather than a multiplicity of evidence" (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002, p. 186). Therefore, findings are presented to the reader in a way that exposes their analytical value to the research questions.

Sample

Our sample consists of three private-sector organizations that have formalized strategies for internal work inclusion policies. The companies differ in their practice of work inclusion and how long they have been involved in their respective inclusion programs to capture the multiple ways of practicing inclusive behavior (see Table 1).

The respondent has different levels of proximity towards vulnerable colleagues in their own work environments, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 quantifies the varying level of proximity respondents have to vulnerable co-workers within their respective organizations. The table categorizes respondents based on their level of engagement with these co-workers and the extent of responsibilities they have towards them. The category with the least proximity is marked with * and represents respondents who hold no formal responsibility and only occasionally collaborate with their vulnerable co-workers. The next category, denoted by **, incorporates respondents who have responsibilities towards implementing inclusive processes. However, they do not work directly with their vulnerable counterparts on a daily basis. The category characterized by the highest level of proximity, marked with ***, includes respondents who work closely with their vulnerable colleagues daily. The table collectively illustrates the range of respondents' interactions and responsibilities, depending on their day-to-day involvement with vulnerable co-workers.

Empirical findings

Norwegian context

The Norwegian context is characterized by close cooperation among the government, the employers and the labor unions and has a strong focus on workplace democracy. This three-

	Case A	Case B	Case C
Company	Banking	Telecommunication	Retail
Inclusion Policy	Novel	Hybrid	Organic
Informants	4	6	5
Position	2 leaders/managers	3 leaders/managers	3 leaders/managers
	• A2, A4	• B3, B4, B5	• C1, C2, C3
	2 co-workers	3 co-workers	2 co-workers
	• A1, A3	• B1, B2, B6	• C4, C5
Gender	3 women	4 women	2 women
	1 man	2 men	3 men

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 1.
Sample overview

List of respondents	Role	Proximity
Case A		
A1	Co-worker	*
A2	Leader	**
A3	Co-worker	*
A4	Leader	***
Case B		
B1	Co-worker	***
B2	Co-worker	**
B3	Leader	**
B4	Leader	***
B5	Leader	***
B6	Co-worker	**
Case C		
C1	Leader	***
C2	Leader	***
C3	Leader	**
C4	Co-worker	***
C5	Co-worker	***

Table 2.
Respondent's proximity towards vulnerable colleagues

way collaboration is often referred to as the Norwegian or Nordic model. All private sector companies operate within the system, and larger companies often work closely with government agencies on policies and practices.

The case organizations in our study all participate in the Work Inclusion Agreement. The agreement is meant to support the work of managers, unions, safety representatives and employees to prevent sick leave and help people remain employed. The three-way collaboration is meant to support and enable follow-up, evaluation and competence development and to increase inclusion in the organization (NOU p. 43–44, 2021). Below, we present how the three organizations in this study approach their inclusion work.

Case descriptions
Case A, a large banking firm, has approximately 10 million customers and over 29,000 employees. The firm defines itself as a socially responsible actor and aims to accommodate its employees (or potential employees) who have reduced working capacity due to disabilities or other health-related issues. Case A has no clear strategy to broaden its diversity by actively including people from different groups in its organizations. However, it acknowledges its responsibility to take care of its employees should they experience changes in their health situations, such as disabling injuries or loss of hearing or eyesight. They pursue inclusive policies in line with the laws, specifically in accordance with the Norwegian Working Environment Act (2005). As a major employer and financial company, the company sees itself as an important social actor with social responsibility. The company's internal documents state that participating in the inclusion agreement can provide people with the opportunity to work and add value instead of being welfare recipients. Case A links its work to sustainability and peripherally with diversity in general.

Case B is a global company that is partially owned by the Norwegian government and has over 16,000 employees in Norway and over 100 million customers worldwide. Case B has a unique inclusion program that directly promotes inclusion in the Norwegian labor market, not just within the company. The participants in this program are eligible to apply for, but not guaranteed, a job in the *Case B* organization. Together with the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), the company has set up an on-site course and work training

program that provides relevant training and work experience to people with non-Western cultural backgrounds, physical disabilities, sensory impairments or history of mental health issues (Frøyland, 2015). The goal is to build competencies based on the participants' preferences and skills, which enable them to enter the Norwegian labor market. The participants receive technical skills and language training (if required) and are given practical work experience within the organization. Participants also receive coaching regarding how the Norwegian labor system and support for writing job applications.

Case C has around 5.000 employees and over 90 retail stores in Norway. This company provides opportunities for people in vulnerable groups (Frøyland, 2015) to work in their stores and demonstrate their skills and abilities. This company's approach emphasizes the importance of tailoring the work tasks toward the individuals, making positions more fluid and manageable and providing leaders with the flexibility to create an inclusive work environment. The approach to work inclusion in Case C is similar to the *Supported Employment* (SE) approach described by Spjelkavik (2012), where the importance of preliminary training is downplayed, and rather focusing on learning and development through real work settings combined with support from their co-workers (and leaders).

Table 3 summarizes how these three companies view their own approach to work inclusion in their own organization. These are aligned along four different parameters: rationale, emphasis, focus, and level. We categorized the approaches as follows: novel (Case A), hybrid (Case B) and organic (Case C). These categories are primarily meant as a tool to divide these approaches within this specific context, but they also say something about the percentage of vulnerable individuals who are situated within each organization (least in Case A, most in Case C). However, due to both privacy concerns and the fact that this group is difficult to quantify exactly, we only view them in relation to each other in terms of vulnerable individuals employed.

	Case A Banking	Case B Telecommunications	Case C Retail
Rationale	• Corporate social responsibility • Law following • Sustainability	• Emphasis on social responsibility – • Sustainability	• Social responsibility and goal to help people become included in work life
Emphasis	• Reactive- Assistance and prevention	• Proactive in making a difference for people and society	• Training and opportunity to organically develop together at work
Focus	• Helping the target stay off welfare	• Getting people into the Norwegian labor market	• Inclusion
Level	• Helping individuals with disabilities and challenges stay in work	• Society helping groups get work experience and competencies	• Helping individuals discover and develop their competencies
Inclusion Policy	• Novel	• Hybrid	• Organic

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 3.
Work Inclusion approaches

Practicing inclusion: commitment
Case A: banking. The respondents (both leaders and co-workers) spoke about having a high degree of commitment towards their jobs and organizations. However, only one of the respondents (leader A4) pointed to the practice of inclusion as a factor in obtaining this high degree of commitment. This respondent is one of the leaders and has the main responsibility for the organization's work inclusion initiatives. Leader A4 said:

There are heavy stories from our co-workers that tie me closer to the organization, making those ties strong. I have been the one who has spoken to those co-workers that are experiencing the biggest difficulties, and that ties me much closer to the organization itself because of the trust put in me and the trust that is being shown towards me. (A4)

The other respondents stated that the positive factors associated with their levels of commitment were good communication with their leaders, nice colleagues and a sense of ownership toward their work tasks, exemplified by this statement from co-worker A3:

I'm not sure if it [*inclusive practices*] has influenced me. But, well, it's not weakened or worse, because I have encountered some, what should I call them, challenges along the way. However, since I have the role I have, I have been able to instruct and communicate with the leader in a different way than I think other employees can. (A3)

Co-worker A1 pointed to the significance of success in inclusion behaviors, which work as a driver for enhancing the degree of commitment, although co-worker A1 used the term *pride*. Co-worker A1 offered two examples to highlight this point:

Well, I mean, I feel that in a way, the person I was talking about last time needs to come forward more. If *** can shine more and emerge more, and if I can contribute to that, I would be very happy and that's what I want to happen. (A1)

Case B: telecommunication. Case B appears to have a greater positive impact on the commitment due to the practice of inclusion activities than what we observed in Case A. All six respondents pointed to a heightened degree of commitment, although in slightly different ways. For example, co-worker B1 was clear about the importance of the increased sense of pride due to the organization providing opportunities to others: "I think it's really important; I feel proud every time someone gets a job, you know. And now it has completely taken off, I feel like people are getting jobs before they even come here. And when it's like that, it's really fun." (B1).

Co-worker B2 was more reserved, differing between valuing their sense of pride in contributing towards inclusion but without the notion of an increased commitment towards the organization. "I don't really feel a direct sense of, like, a stronger connection to the company. I actually feel like I take some responsibility myself, and it's actually . . . Less. I feel like it's mine, it's actually more personal, so to speak" (B2). Regarding their perceived effect on commitment levels in his colleagues, co-worker B2 described their general perception of the beneficial effect of the practice of inclusive behaviors on his colleagues as follows:

I believe that many people feel proud when they see what [*inclusion program*] candidates achieve through that program and where they end up afterwards. In those situations, people probably experience a certain sense of pride in having been a part of it" (B2).

Co-worker B6 also used the word pride to describe how the organization's inclusion practices affect their commitment:

You become even more of an ambassador for the company when you onboard and support such a person in the company. It probably means that if you feel more pride in your job, and that does have an impact . . . not necessarily emotions, but it increases the chances that I want to stay here. (B6)

The leaders in Case B (B3, B4 and B5) all mentioned an increased sense of pride for themselves from the organization's inclusion practices, mainly due to the notion of making a difference, both for the included individuals and society alike. Leader B3 said: "I think it's incredibly great, it has been there for so many years, and it's doing something good for society. So, I feel proud of working at [this organization] because of that. Making a difference" (B3). Leader B5 also said that there is a noticeable sense of pride in the organization due to the work inclusion program, especially among those who work closely with the program:

We often talk to managers and colleagues who are involved in the interviews. They mention that it is one of the things that makes them proud to work at [*the organization*], something that will make them stay. Because it's not just about money; it's the whole package, the environment, and the culture that matter a lot. (B5)

Case C retail. In *Case C*, the respondents largely agreed that their commitment has been affected positively by work inclusion practices, leaders and co-workers alike. Leader C2 described it as follows:

I remember that a long time ago, there were no common rules for it. Now it's like, when I tell my manager that we've had some trainees, I receive praise for it. And that tells me that I'm in the right place, it has undoubtedly strengthened the attachment. (C2)

Leader C3 experienced increased commitment but specified that it was being directed more toward the department, team and colleagues than the organization. When asked about the effects of the practice of inclusion on commitment, leader C3 said, "It's mostly about helping the people it concerns. It's not the company name that occupies my mind, or the corporation. That's just in the back of my mind. It's my store, how this benefits us locally, that's what I think about" (C3). Co-workers C4 and C5 both expressed that they feel inclusion activities have had a positive effect on both their degree of commitment, but also for their colleagues. Co-worker C4 pointed to the increased room of acceptance for different individuals and their uniqueness, and how this created a sense of security and elevated levels of commitment:

I did think "I hope I'm not too quiet or outgoing", but it's not a problem. As long as you are yourself, it's all good. There was a guy, in this case, it was about being bisexual. They don't work here anymore, but they talked about how nice it was not to be judged and that colleagues were generally understanding. I hope that most people feel that degree of commitment (C4).

These cases reveal a common pattern of how the practice of work inclusion positively affects commitment levels, albeit to a lesser extent in Case A. This impact is often expressed as heightened sense of pride. However, the terminology used and the focus on the local context differ, highlighting the nuanced nature of how the practice of inclusion influences the degree of commitment in different organizational settings.

Practicing inclusion: motivation
Case A: banking. The Case A respondents had similar responses regarding how the practice of inclusion affects their general motivation in the workplace. They pointed to a boost in energy and motivation when inclusive behaviors are perceived as successful but also pointed to the experience of energy drain when the practice of inclusion feels unsuccessful. This applied to both leaders and co-workers. When asked about how work inclusion practices affect motivation, Leader A2 said: "It's difficult to say that it is energizing when you're in the midst of it. But then, there is a reward in the form of a lot of energy when the solution is secured, and what you have achieved together with the employee turn out to work well" (A2).

Case B: telecommunication. Case B respondents were largely positive when asked about how their motivation is affected by inclusive practices. The leaders spoke of higher motivation, especially when it is related to a sense of success in their inclusion practices: "They come in with a clean slate, assisting them, helping them develop, it's an incredibly exciting journey" (B3). Similarly, Leader B5 said: "Not only aiming for the best results individually, but also striving for the best results as a group by collaborating and ensuring that everyone is thriving, because it boosts motivation" (B5). All leaders in Case B pointed to the importance of success in their inclusion practices. They mentioned that their motivational sense of success comes from good results, successfully implementing the work inclusion candidates into their teams.

Leader B5 had an additional perspective on motivation, which is interesting since it did not concern the high end of the motivation scale, but rather the effect on preventing temporarily low motivation:

> You do have a higher threshold for being sick; for example, when you have colleagues and leaders with severe disabilities who go to work every day and give 100 percent. I think that if they can perform with their challenges, then I need to pull myself together. It gives you some perspective (B5).

While this perspective adds to the consensus among the leaders in Case B, it is also dependent on successful inclusion practices, in terms of having inclusion candidates who come to work despite their difficulties and have a positive attitude towards their colleagues. The co-workers were not as unanimous as the leaders in Case B. Co-worker B1 underlined the comments from leader B5 about providing employees with motivation from perspective about employees' own situation when feeling unmotivated:

> Of course, it's much more positive to meet people who are like, "Yes, I'm moving forward" than "Now everything is going wrong, the cat has got stomach flu again," and it's not just those conversations. Then, you become a bit more positive yourself" (B1).

However, B2 provided a somewhat nuanced version of this point, presenting their attitudes towards personal desire for growth through involvement in the work inclusion:

> I can see that many people may not have the time or desire to take on such a mentoring responsibility precisely because it involves a lot. But I think it's kind of cool to be able to do it anyway because it also shows that you have capacity beyond the initial task at hand (B2).

In contrast, co-worker B6 offered a different take on motivation: "To be brutally honest, I do not think it [*inclusive practices*] affects my general motivation on a daily basis" (B6). Although this perception opposes the general experience in Case B, this shows that perceived individual benefits will vary.

Case C: retail. When asked about how inclusive practices affect their motivation, leaders C1, C2 and C3 differed in their answers. Leader C1 again talked about a heightened sense of pride when asked about how motivation is affected, although it is difficult to conclude that this also means higher levels of general motivation due to inclusive activities. Leader C3, by comparison, provided the following answer:

> There's joy in seeing gratitude in the eyes of those who are given the opportunity and that someone believes in them. Then there are those success stories, right? Those who are at work, working, and have obtained permanent employment with us. When a new person joins, it becomes a positive cycle that just keeps rolling (C3).

Leader C2 was less positive:

> Sometimes things are boring, and we just have to do them. That's how it is. Not everything provides inner motivation, you know. But I don't think it's related to how we work with candidates, and it certainly doesn't have any connection with the tasks I perform, at least I do not think so. (C2)

The co-workers in *Case C* were more unanimous regarding the positive way inclusive practices have affected their general motivation. Co-worker C4 said: "The fact that there are different people with diverse backgrounds and needs makes it safer to just be yourself" (C4). Co-worker C5 added to C4's comments, emphasizing the importance of inclusive leadership as a key motivation feature. C5 said: "Coming here, getting the opportunity, and kind of like, "Yeah, I think we should do this!" It can be recommended [laughs]. I am very grateful for that opportunity" (C5).

Across all cases, the respondents generally expressed increased motivation due to inclusive practices, although they vary both within and across cases. The notion of success in

their inclusive practices is something that positively enhances their motivation. It also seems that the individual's proximity, as highlighted in Table 2, towards those being included is an important factor in whether the individual is experiencing a heightened sense of motivation from inclusive practices.

Discussion

Overall, our findings help us understand how the practice of inclusive behavior can benefit the individuals performing these behaviors, but also why some seemingly benefit more than others. While our data indicate that the practice of inclusive behavior is associated to commitment and motivation, as specified in the DIM framework, several nuances need to be discussed to better explore why this is happening. Three key elements related to our findings are discussed here.

Firstly, the experienced benefits seem to be related to a combination of proximity towards the included and how invested the includers are in the inclusive practices. This appears across all three cases, being important for both degree of commitment and intrinsic motivation. These findings are in line with previous empirical findings of a positive relation between proximity and commitment (Bentein et al., 2002). A possible explanation of the positive association between proximity and commitment is that proximity and daily interaction with organizational members provides ample opportunities for feedback and control (Klein et al., 2012). Regarding motivation, the proximity seems to have differing effects. In all cases, the meaningfulness aspect plays a role for both those who work closer to and further from the organization's inclusive practices. However, when an individual is closer to those practices, the perceived meaningfulness changes from being dominated by the broader picture that dominates in CSR literature to being more about genuine care for their colleagues. In this process, the nature of the motivation connected to inclusion becomes more intrinsic. This is especially evident in Case B, where most inclusive practices occur in a separate department in the organization. Even though the company members show commitment and pride towards their inclusion practices, this seems to be driven by external validation, such as positive media coverage, when the individual's proximity towards these practices decrease. By contrast, higher proximity tends to result in intrinsic motivation, and not being dependent on such external validations, even though they are appreciated. These findings add to Martínez-Ferrero et al. (2021) claims regarding how social bonds and genuine care for co-workers tend to overshadow the more abstract sense of social responsibility on a societal level. Closer proximity therefore seems to generate intrinsic motivation, which is less dependent on external validation. In other words, it seems that practicing inclusive behaviors has a stronger effect on the individuals experience of social identity of the work group, than the organizational commitment, fostered by the CSR perception of the whole organization (Haslam and Ellemers, 2005; Martínez-Ferrero et al., 2021).

Secondly, success when practicing inclusive behavior was key, if doing so led to commitment among other organizational members. This finding is in line with Dirks and Ferrin (2002), who argue that when employees put their efforts into the organization, they may feel more assured that their actions are making a positive impact and further experience a deeper sense of commitment. Thus, practicing inclusive behaviors, and having success with them, is an important arena for developing task mastery and experience personal growth, which leads to increased affective commitment (Grant and Parker, 2009). However, successful inclusive practices are defined differently across the three cases. The most evident difference is that between a linear view and a continuous view on inclusion. The novel approach in Case A largely sees inclusion as a string of issues that needs solving, thus representing a linear view to inclusion practices. If these needs are not met or resolved, it is perceived as a failure and a burden. Case B looks at this hybrid approach as something

in between, teaching and developing both technical and organizational skills with a focus on growth as a part of their definition of success. However, the Case B organization have a clear goal of providing participants with further employment, usually in another organization. Case C deploys a more continuous path, where the end goal is more about continuous learning and growth, while harvesting small successes along the way. Ferdman (2013, p. 15) described the inclusion process as something that is created for each particular situation and is therefore not static or a one-time achievement. Risberg and Corvellec (2022) were even clearer in their claim that diversity management does not allow itself to be reduced to a matter of success and failure, always revolving around *trying* to find satisfactory solutions. While our findings support this claim, in terms of looking at inclusion as a process without a definite end, we also note the importance of acknowledging the small wins along the way to avoid losing the sense of accomplishment among organizational members.

Thirdly, practicing inclusive behavior was also associated with a sense of pride, which is previously linked with heightened levels of commitment (Van Ngo *et al.*, 2021). However, our respondents highlighted how practicing inclusive behaviors was only indirectly associated with a higher pride in the organization itself, but rather pride in the local work group that has operational responsibility for the individual vulnerable to exclusion. This seems to be the case across all three cases. Moreover, some organizational members also explained that practicing inclusive behaviors was an individual endeavor, so the pride they experienced was associated with themselves. Accordingly, the pride they experienced was associated more with something they enjoyed doing, and thus had a stronger effect on intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Limitations and future research
Considering our overall DIM framework, the current study has limited itself to only looking at the individual, intrapersonal level of the framework. Accordingly, this is only the first step towards revising the overall framework and its inherent multi-level characteristics. Therefore, we encourage future research to empirically test and challenge the DIM framework from a multi-level point of view. The framework needs more empirical data to evolve, especially within the areas that we have not yet touched upon, namely group level (effects on work environment, and leadership) and the organizational level (effects on organizational performances), and the interrelations between these levels. As illustrated in our case description, the cases in this study differ from each other in many areas. This limits our abilities to compare them further in our study. Also, the sample of three organizations is too small to make assumptions on how inclusive practices is affected by organizational traits such as market segment, size or function. Therefore, we encourage future research to look further into such organizational traits and their relation to inclusive practices ability to affect the organization.

Conclusion
By actively investigating the indirect individual benefits of practicing inclusive behaviors, this article brings a different perspective to the field, emphasizing areas that could help organizations invest in developing their inclusive behaviors. Using two dimensions from the DIM Model – commitment and motivation – to explore how leaders and co-workers in three Norwegian firms relate to inclusive practices, we found that the importance of meeting others with an open, constructive and positive attitude is important for successful inclusion practices. In terms of practical and scientific implications, which interweave in this study, reflexivity about three conditions is required.

First, inclusion is a process, not an end. When it comes to benefits affecting motivation, the leaders and co-workers in Case A both talked about positive feelings when things are "resolved", and a drain in energy and decrease in general motivation when things are at a standstill or seem unsolvable. Consequently, in this case inclusion is believed to have a clear starting point and a definite end, where there is a specific solution to a specific challenge. In contrast to Cases B and C, this almost mechanical way of seeing inclusion activities provides little room for indirect benefits, as it is seen to seek a form of status quo. The realization that inclusion is an ongoing process helps organizations obtain benefits for those practicing inclusive behavior.

Second, structure matters. By having the structure for work inclusion, as in Case B, with a somewhat separate department in charge of the inclusion activities, the people closest to this department appear to feel that this activity affects them more strongly and positively in terms of their degree of commitment and motivation. This could explain why leaders seem more positive due to their heightened responsibilities and therefore also have a higher sense of ownership towards the practice of inclusive behaviors. Another possible explanation lies in the length of their engagement in the company, which seems to correlate with the positive benefits experienced from work inclusion initiatives. Judging by the qualitative evidence in this article, these explanations are not mutually exclusive, but not necessarily correlated either. Future studies could look for causalities in this regard.

Third, it is vital to acknowledge that commitment and motivation appear to influence each other, at least in the context of practicing inclusive behavior. As pointed out in the DIM framework, the level of commitment can promote the levels of motivation. However, different foci of commitment, such as to what or whom the individual targets when it comes to their commitment, affect the characteristics of the motivation being generated. While also providing better understanding and depth to the DIM Framework, this insight highlights the relevance of exploring the remaining dimensions from the DIM Model for further empirical studies, especially the relationships between the categories of beneficial components for practicing inclusive behavior. These insights are beneficial regarding both the understanding of what positives individuals can obtain and how they best can obtain them. It also has the potential to motivate individuals and organizations alike to become more inclusive in their respective work settings.

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Appendix
Questionnaire, semi-structured interviews

1. General considerations, (Open perspective)

2.1 Do you have experience working with people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, non-Western cultural backgrounds or a history of mental illness?

2.2 How long have you worked with people with reduced work capacity or additional accommodation needs?

2.2.1 How many people have you worked with who have reduced work capacity or additional accommodation needs (that you know of)?

2.2.2 What was your job relationship with them?

2.3 What is it like to work with someone with reduced work capacity or extra accommodation needs?

2.3.1 What is different compared to other employees?

2.3.2 Can you share any positive experiences in your working relationships with people who have reduced work capacity or extra accommodation needs? (Not an overall impression of people). Please use concrete examples.

2.3.3 Can you share any challenging experiences in your working relationships with people who have reduced work capacity or extra accommodation needs? Not an overall impression of people. Please use concrete examples.

2. Individual perspective

3.1 How has working with someone with reduced work capacity or additional accommodation needs affected you?

3.1.1 Has it affected how you perform your job? If yes, how?

3.1.2 Has it affected how you behave towards coworkers who apparently do not have reduced work capacity or increased accommodation needs? If yes, how?

3.1.3 Has it affected how you want to be perceived by your colleagues? If yes, how?

3.2 What have you learned from working with colleagues who have reduced work capacity and/or additional accommodation needs?

3. The feeling of commitment (individual level)

3.1 What does the term "my workplace" mean to you?

3.1.1 Have you experienced that working with colleagues with reduced work capacity or increased accommodation needs has affected the feeling of commitment to your own workplace

3.1.1.1 For yourself?

3.1.1.2 For your colleagues?

3.1.1.2.1 Please describe specifically what has been affected, and what you feel is the cause of this.

3.1.1.2.2 What does the changed sense of commitment mean for you, your department and the entire company?

4. Motivation (both individual, group and organizational focus, but mostly individual)

4.1 What do you think is the reason that your organization engages in work inclusion?

4.2 Can you elaborate on what drives you in terms of inclusion work? Keywords: is this something you do because you 1) must; 2) expect rewards, for example, for others to think you are good; 3) think you should; 4) enjoy and find it valuable

4.3 How has this affected the way you view other (more ordinary) work tasks?

5. Attitudes and expectations

5.1 Have you experienced that your attitudes towards people with reduced work capacity or increased accommodation needs have changed as a result of your experiences related to work inclusion on the job?

5.1.1.1 Do you have any specific examples?

5.2 Have you experienced changed attitudes among others: among leaders, in the department and generally in the organization?

5.2.1.1 Do you have any specific examples?

6. Other experiences

6.1 Are there any other experiences or reflections you have about work inclusion that you can share with me?

Corresponding author
Ola Martin Jensen Larsen can be contacted at: ola.mj.larsen@gmail.com