



## Article

# Organizational Context and Satisfaction of Basic Needs of Workers with Intellectual Disability as Sources of Well-Being

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**Abstract:** The inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities (ID) through integrated employment is essential for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This research study examines how organizational contextual factors facilitate or hinder the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID in their workplaces, as well as organizational practices that satisfy their basic needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), thus promoting their well-being. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts in integrated employment, workers with ID, and supervisors. Content analysis was then performed using the grounded theory methodology. Data analysis revealed three main categories: (1) organizational contextual factors that favor inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID; (2) organizational contextual factors that hinder inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID; and (3) organizational practices that satisfy basic needs of workers with ID. These findings underscore the importance of creating work environments that promote inclusion, positive contributions, and satisfaction of the basic needs of workers with ID, thus fostering their well-being and professional development.

**Keywords:** organizational context; satisfaction of basic needs; intellectual disabilities; integrated employment; well-being; grounded theory methodology



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## 1. Introduction

Worldwide, it has been estimated that 1.3 billion people live with some form of disability, and approximately 200 million people face significant challenges to their functioning (WHO 2023). Furthermore, persons with intellectual disabilities (ID) encounter particularly significant challenges to their inclusion in society as citizens (e.g., Dusseljee et al. 2011). One of the crucial ways to achieve the effective social inclusion of persons with ID is through their integrated employment in organizations, interacting with co-workers without disabilities, and enjoying the same dignified working conditions as other workers without disabilities who hold comparable positions (Smith et al. 2019).

Evidence shows that persons with intellectual disabilities can successfully integrate into integrated employment (Cimera 2011; Conley and Conroy 2009; Jiranek and Kirby 1990). However, working with co-workers without disabilities may negatively impact their experience, increasing, for example, feelings of isolation (Petrovski and Gleeson 1997). Caution is warranted because factors such as the level of functioning may influence these outcomes (Kober and Eggleton 2005). Many persons with disabilities prefer sheltered or segregated spaces and services, possibly due to a lack of confidence in the support they receive in integrated contexts when interacting with persons without disabilities, or because they feel isolated in such contexts (Lockwood and Lockwood 1996). The existence of an adequate support system seems to be a key factor for persons with disabilities and their families when choosing integrated services (Mayer and Anderson 2014).

In any case, participation in integrated contexts offers many benefits, despite obstacles. Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of integrated employment on

persons with ID. Research indicates that the closer the nature of their work aligns with that of their peers without intellectual disabilities, the higher their overall quality of life (Verdugo et al. 2006). Factors such as a sense of belonging, physical and mental well-being, skill enhancement, self-esteem, security, and independence have consistently emerged as noteworthy benefits associated with integrated employment (Carew et al. 2010; Donnelly et al. 2010; Dunn et al. 2008; Jahoda et al. 2009; Robertson et al. 2019; Voermans et al. 2020). Moreover, a comparative study conducted by Jiranek and Kirby (1990) examined job satisfaction and psychological well-being in persons with similar levels of ID across two distinct work environments: sheltered employment and integrated employment. The findings revealed that persons with ID who held integrated employment exhibited significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than their counterparts in sheltered employment settings. This finding highlights the importance of the work environment in the satisfaction and well-being of persons with ID, emphasizing the relevance of integrated employment as a facilitator of a more positive work experience for this group. However, despite these advances, significant challenges persist and make it difficult to achieve the inclusion of persons with ID in integrated employment.

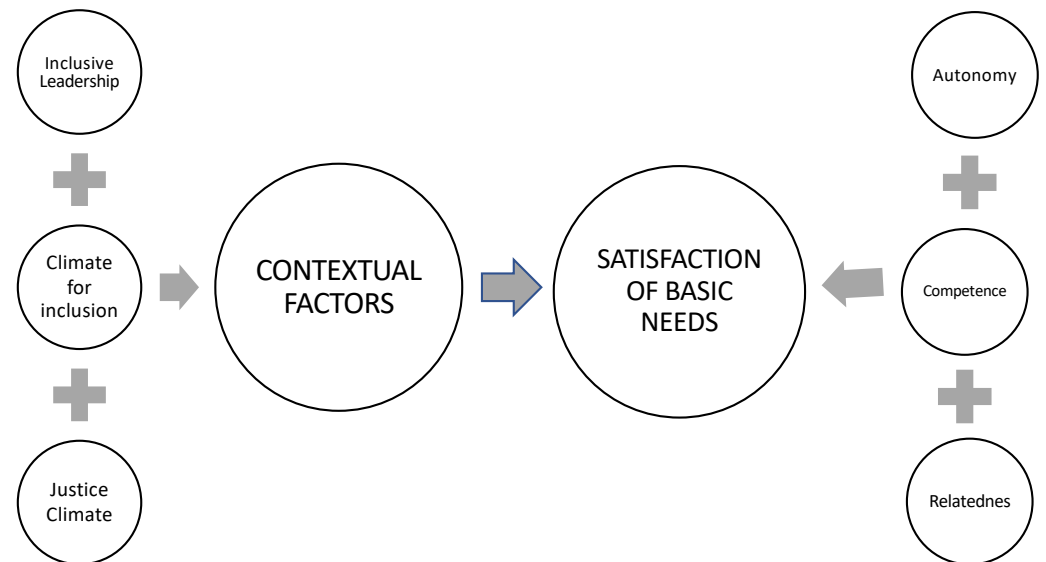
Although employers have positive attitudes about hiring and retaining persons with disabilities, these views do not always translate into concrete hiring and retention actions (Burke et al. 2013; Hernandez et al. 2000; Paez and Arendt 2014). A series of studies have identified misconceptions that often present obstacles to hiring persons with ID, such as the belief that they require additional job adaptations, a perceived lack of necessary skills, or difficulties in completing their work on time (Amir Ziv and Chan 2009; Kocman et al. 2018). These misconceptions, contribute to a lack of employment and labor discrimination towards persons with ID and, along with other factors, act as barriers to the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID.

Beyond acquiring employment, it is important to investigate factors that enable workers with ID to feel good and remain in their workplace, supporting the inclusion and positive contribution of workers with ID. This sense of well-being can contribute to a positive social image that conveys that persons with ID can make significant contributions to society through their work, thus facilitating a more widespread integration into the workforce. Therefore, the role of organizational contextual factors related to the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID in their workplaces and teams is especially relevant. In addition, meeting the basic needs of persons (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), as proposed in the well-founded self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 2000), could play a crucial role in enhancing well-being and achieving long-term employment. Organizational practices, as part of the context, should be implemented within organizations towards satisfying these basic needs. Satisfaction of basic needs in the workplace enables individuals to showcase their true strengths, show competence in their job performance, actively acquire new skills and knowledge, and develop positive interpersonal relationships (Luo et al. 2022).

Despite the importance of organizational contextual factors and satisfaction of basic needs at work as sources of well-being and job continuity, there is a lack of research focused on persons with ID. An exception is the work by Akkerman et al. (2018), who examined the relationship between meeting the basic needs of workers with ID and their job satisfaction. However, there is a need for an in-depth study of organizational contextual factors and the satisfaction of basic needs in workers with ID.

The objective of our study is to address the gap in the literature with regard to the study of organizational contextual factors and the satisfaction of basic needs in workers with ID by performing a content analysis of semi-structured interviews, using the grounded theory methodology developed by Corbin and Strauss (2015). We will examine the factors in the organizational context—specifically inclusive leadership, climate of inclusion, and procedural justice climate—that support (or act as barriers) for the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID and organizational practices implemented towards the satisfaction of basic needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) of workers with ID

(see Figure 1). At a conceptual and theoretical level, the objective of this study is to advance knowledge about the contribution of organizational contextual factors to the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID in their workplaces and teams. This study will also make progress in understanding the organizational practices that promote the satisfaction of the basic needs of workers with ID. On a practical level, it will provide valuable information for designing interventions and policies that promote the inclusion and well-being of workers with ID through integrated employment.



**Figure 1.** Graphical representation of the model.

### 1.1. Relevant Organizational Contextual Factors

Although the factors in the organizational context are numerous, there are some that are particularly relevant because they are directly related to the inclusion of workers with ID and their contributions to workplaces and teams. Based on the specialized literature, we selected three contextual factors: inclusive leadership, climate of inclusion, and procedural justice climate. Despite the limited research, the initial results are promising, suggesting that these organizational factors can play a significant role in processes promoting the inclusion and contributions of persons with ID.

Regarding leadership, [Luu \(2019a, 2019b\)](#) confirmed the positive links from inclusive and benevolent leadership to the well-being of employees with disabilities. Inclusive leadership represents a specific form of relational leadership ([Uhl-Bien 2006](#)). Within this conceptual framework, inclusive leadership focuses on the way the leader's actions foster and value the contributions of diverse individuals within heterogeneous groups, ensuring that they feel genuinely appreciated ([Carmeli et al. 2010](#)). We argue that inclusive leadership, by avoiding discrimination and recognizing the contributions of all the team members, will have a positive impact on the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID in their workplaces and teams.

Another relevant organizational contextual factor in this study is the *climate for inclusion*, defined by [Nishii \(2013\)](#) as the degree to which the organizational context is perceived to integrate all the employees, offer non-discriminatory treatment, and encourage the participation of all the employees in decision making. Previous research confirmed that an inclusive climate favors the inclusion ([Nelissen et al. 2017](#)) and psychological safety ([Gonzalez et al. 2020](#)) of workers with disabilities. We propose that an inclusive climate promotes the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID.

The last organizational contextual factor we analyze is the procedural justice climate, which refers to the perception of fair treatment by the organization in the implementation of procedures ([Thibaut and Walker 1975](#)). Procedural justice climate has been widely

addressed in the research (Martínez-Tur and Moliner 2017; Naumann and Bennett 2000). In the case of workers with disabilities, they are likely to face a higher perception of injustice in procedures due to common biases against this group, as Snyder et al. (2010) pointed out when investigating the treatment of workers with ID. Thus, creating a context characterized by fair procedures for all, including workers with ID, is a condition for achieving inclusion and well-being. We propose that in work environments where a climate of procedural justice prevails, persons with ID are more likely to be able to contribute and feel part of a team and/or organization, thus fostering a sense of belonging.

Although these are the three most relevant contextual factors we considered a priori, other aspects of the context may emerge in the collection and analysis of information in the present study. This is the case of the adaptation of working conditions and ergonomics (de Paula Nunes Sobrinho and de Lucena 2012). Integrating ergonomic principles could ensure that the physical and cognitive aspects of the work environment are designed to accommodate the diverse needs of all employees, including those with ID. Workplace characteristics can impact health outcomes, and an ergonomically based approach to workplace design could help to address barriers to inclusion for persons with ID (Vujica Herzog et al. 2019).

### 1.2. Satisfaction of Basic Needs Based on the Self-Determination Theory

One of the crucial facets of the self-determination theory, proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), is the existence of the three aforementioned basic human needs. *Autonomy* involves having control and volition over decisions, whereas *competence* is based on feeling effective in interacting with the environment. Finally, the need for *relatedness* refers to feeling connected to others. It is assumed that all individuals have these needs, and that contexts, including the work setting (and specifically the organizational practices), can either promote or hinder their satisfaction, with important consequences for individuals. In fact, a primary way to foster work motivation is to ensure that the external situation meets employees' three basic psychological needs (Deci and Ryan 2000; Luo et al. 2022). Research has also demonstrated that satisfaction of these fundamental needs is a direct precursor of well-being and health. Nelson et al. (2015) confirmed this link from satisfaction of basic human needs to well-being in a six-week randomized experimental study in the United States and South Korea. Satisfaction of basic needs also predicted mental health and healthy relationships (Patrick et al. 2007), encouraging individuals to find a greater sense of meaning in life (Eakman 2014). Moreover, those with higher satisfaction of basic needs exhibited fewer symptoms of depression and indifferent behaviors (Ferrand et al. 2015). Additionally, when these basic needs were satisfied, work motivation, growth, and well-being were strengthened, increasing people's belief in the meaningfulness of work and their confidence in professional development (Luo et al. 2022), which, in turn, promoted positive behaviors (Guo and Cheng 2021). By contrast, if these basic needs were not met, the perception of work meaningfulness was reduced, stimulating negative work attitudes and behaviors such as job detachment (Li et al. 2020, cited in Luo et al. 2022).

Although scholars have suggested that persons with disabilities have the same needs and desires as those without disabilities (e.g., Melchiori and Church 1997), research on persons with ID is limited and tends to focus on the need for autonomy. Considerable research efforts have been devoted to investigating and promoting the autonomy of persons with ID in their daily activities as an indicator of their quality of life (e.g., Blížkovská et al. 2022; Martínez-Tur et al. 2018; Wehmeyer and Shogren 2016; Zhang et al. 2005). Furthermore, as mentioned above, Akkerman et al. (2018) employed the Self-Determination Theory to understand job satisfaction in workers with ID. Specifically, they confirmed that satisfying the three basic needs contributes to job satisfaction. However, there is a lack of research on the role of context (organizational practices) in promoting the satisfaction of basic needs in workers with ID. We propose that in work environments with a climate of procedural justice, inclusive leadership, and climate for inclusion, persons with ID are more likely to have a higher level of satisfaction with basic needs (autonomy, competence, and

relatedness). Additionally, other contextual factors may emerge as a result of the content analysis of the interviews.

In sum, the aim of our study is to fill the gap in the literature on organizational contextual factors and basic needs satisfaction for workers with intellectual disabilities (ID). Through a content analysis of semi-structured interviews, using Corbin and Strauss's (2015) grounded theory methodology, we explore organizational contextual factors—inclusive leadership, climate of inclusion, and procedural justice climate—that either support or act as a barrier to the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID. Additionally, we examine how these organizational practices relate to the satisfaction of basic needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness).

In the following sections, we will explain the research we carried out (and the results obtained) on the organizational contextual factors that facilitate inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID, as well as the organizational practices that meet their basic needs in their workplaces. Moreover, we will describe the main implications of our findings.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Design

A qualitative cohort exploratory study (Creswell and Creswell 2017) was carried out by performing a content analysis of semi-structured interviews, utilizing Corbin and Strauss's (2015) grounded theory methodology with the assistance of the NVivo software program (QSR International Pty Ltd. 2023).

The interview protocol used in the study was developed based on the literature review findings. Several expert meetings were held to scrutinize the topics and questions to be incorporated into the interview protocol. A pivotal part of this process was the involvement of a professional job coach for persons with intellectual disability, whose expertise was instrumental in refining the language of the questions to make them more accessible to participants with intellectual disabilities. The content validation test (Escobar-Pérez and Cuervo-Martínez 2008), which encompassed experts in psychology, methodology, and intellectual disability, further ensured the questions' relevance, clarity, and coherence.

The interview guide used a comprehensive approach, incorporating open, closed, and probing questions. The latter was used to delve deeper into the responses provided by the participants to explore a topic further (Patton 2014). This thorough data collection allowed a comprehensive understanding of workers' experiences with ID, supervisors, and experts. The interviews were conducted via video conference using the Microsoft Teams tool, via a link connection. Persons with ID who participated in the interviews were also allowed to have a job coach present if they did not understand some of the interviewer's questions; only one person asked for this help. As for the connection through the Teams tool, the participants connected autonomously or asked their relatives for help.

### 2.2. Ethical Considerations and Consent Declaration

The study received approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of the corresponding author. All appropriate measures were taken to ensure participant consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Additionally, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is essential to highlight that the informed consent document for persons with disabilities was adapted by experts external to the research team to include accessible language.

### 2.3. Participants

To select the participants in the interviews, a call was launched through the organization "Plena inclusión", a non-governmental organization in Spain dedicated to improving the inclusion and quality of life of persons with ID. In all, four experts in integrated employment in the field of ID, four workers with ID, and two team supervisors working with persons with and without ID participated, ensuring that the sample was sufficiently diverse

to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives. Of the 10 participants, seven were women, and three were men. Their ages ranged between 25 and 50 years. The sample size was determined based on the theoretical saturation obtained during the data collection process (Guest et al. 2006).

#### 2.4. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via the Microsoft Teams platform between July 2022 and January 2023. These interviews were recorded with participants' consent for subsequent transcription. The average duration of the interviews was 32 min. The interviews explored the organizational contextual factors in the three aforementioned areas (inclusive leadership, climate for inclusion, and procedural justice), focusing on the inclusion and positive contribution of workers with ID in their workplaces and teams. An example of a question was: How do your colleagues help you at work? What do they do? Could you give me an example? Satisfaction of the basic needs of workers with ID was also explored explicitly, examining organizational practices that promote autonomy, the development of competencies and self-efficacy (competence), and a sense of belonging to the work team (relatedness). An example of a question was: Can you choose how to do your job or which tasks to do first? Finally, questions were asked about the well-being of people with ID and their teams and personal growth. An example question was: How do you feel about working at that company? How do you think your colleagues feel about working with you? Questions were developed in clear and simple language, and visual aids were included when necessary to ensure understanding by all participants. Finally, it is important to mention that before the interview, test sessions were held to make sure that participants knew how to handle the basic functions of the tool, such as turning the microphone or camera on and off, etc.

#### 2.5. Procedure

Interview transcripts were textually transcribed, and a qualitative content analysis of the ten interviews was conducted using NVivo 14 software, employing methods consistent with a grounded theory approach. The interviews were analyzed in four rounds following the guidelines of Corbin and Strauss (2015) and Estrada-Acuña et al. (2021).

In the first round, multiple readings of the transcripts were performed to familiarize researchers with the data, and interviews were classified according to the participants' roles.

In the second round, one of the researchers applied a line-by-line coding process, generating numerous descriptive codes that reflected different aspects addressed. Simultaneously, to strengthen the credibility of the emerging codes, a different researcher carried out the same process. Then, comparison and discussion of the results took place, resulting in a final list of codes and categories.

In the third round, an analysis of the relationship between codes was conducted to subsequently group them into predefined categories that were re-analyzed, interview by interview and across interviews, to identify subthemes based on participants' narratives. This approach followed an abductive methodology that combines deductive and inductive analysis (Awuzie and McDermott 2017).

In the fourth round, the constant comparative method allowed researchers to search for patterns in the data and compare emerging codes for similarities and differences. Codes and subcategories were integrated to reach a manageable number of categories. Each new case was evaluated according to the original coding structure, adjusting codes as necessary. This process continued until saturation was reached and new cases did not contribute additional codes.

### 2.6. Data Analysis

To analyze the content of the semi-structured interviews, NVivo version 14 software was used. The analytical process was divided into three main stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin and Strauss 2015; Estrada-Acuña et al. 2021).

In the first stage, open coding, the data were explored to identify relevant codes. This involved a detailed examination of each interview to find patterns, themes, and emerging concepts. Data were broken down into smaller units, and descriptive codes were assigned to each of these units.

Subsequently, axial coding was carried out to look for relationships between the identified codes in the previous stage. This process made it possible to group related codes into broader categories. Connections and associations between different codes were explored to better understand the structure and underlying themes in the data. During open and axial coding, certain recurring words or phrases were identified as fundamental to understanding the main themes of the study. For example, words such as autonomy or support appeared repeatedly in the responses, indicating their relevance to the participants. The constant comparative method allowed us to look for patterns in the data and compare the emerging codes for similarities and differences (Corbin and Strauss 2015). In this analysis, paragraphs that did not add new or significant information to the emerging categories or contribute to the theoretical saturation of the categories developed during coding were excluded.

Finally, selective coding was performed to identify the central categories or main themes that emerged from the analysis. Categories identified in the previous stages were reviewed, selecting those that best represented the main findings and conclusions of the study. Theoretical codes were incorporated, and emerging concepts were compared with pre-existing literature. The development of the coding structure continued until saturation was reached and the new cases did not offer any additional codes.

In addition to these stages, a data triangulation process was conducted to validate the results. This process involved comparing and contrasting the findings obtained from different sources of information: experts in integrated employment in the field of ID, workers with ID, and team supervisors.

## 3. Results

Given our research objectives, we established two initial categories: (a) organizational context factors that facilitate the satisfaction of basic needs in persons with ID, and (b) satisfaction of basic needs of workers with ID. As the coding process progressed, a new category emerged: (c) organizational context factors that impede the satisfaction of basic needs in workers with ID.

We coded 158 references related to the three categories, with the satisfaction of basic needs of workers with ID representing 50% of the coding (79 references), organizational context factors that facilitate inclusion, and the positive contributions of workers with ID representing 39% (62 references), and organizational context factors that hinder inclusion and the positive contributions of workers with ID representing 11% (17 references).

In the category of organizational context factors favoring inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID, eight codes were identified: (a) adaptation of working conditions according to the particular characteristics of workers with ID; (b) climate for inclusion; (c) procedural justice climate; (d) inclusive leadership; (e) recognition of the capabilities of persons with ID; (f) corporate social responsibility; (g) raising awareness about the labor inclusion of persons with ID; and (h) involvement of families in the employability process of the worker with ID. In the category of organizational contextual factors hindering inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID, seven codes were identified: (a) low participation in decision making by persons with ID; (b) challenges in obtaining a decent wage; (c) temporary employment contracts; (d) lack of awareness of intellectual disability in the business sector; (e) ostracism; (f) peers without intellectual disability perceiving persons with ID as a threat; and (g) internalization of discrimination.

Finally, in the category of organizational practices satisfying basic needs of workers with ID, three codes were identified: (a) organizational practices that foster a sense of belonging of persons with ID in their work; (b) organizational practices that promote the autonomy of persons with ID in their work; and (c) organizational practices that facilitate the development of work skills in persons with ID and increase their sense of efficacy and contribution to their team. In summary, the coding system comprises three categories and 18 codes, as Table 1 reveals.

**Table 1.** Codes: references coded and corresponding reports.

<b>Category 1: Factors in the Organizational Context Favoring Inclusion and Positive Contributions of Workers with ID</b>	<b>Coded References</b>	<b>% of All Coded Codes</b>	<b>Reports</b>
(a) Adaptation of working conditions according to the particular characteristics of persons with ID	7	11%	3
(b) Climate for inclusion	23	37%	10
(c) Procedural justice climate	5	8%	3
(d) Inclusive Leadership	12	19%	7
(e) Recognition of the capabilities of persons with ID	8	13%	5
(f) Corporate Social responsibility	1	2%	1
(g) Raising awareness about the labor inclusion of persons with ID	5	8%	4
(h) Involvement of families in the employability process of the person with ID	1	2%	1
<b>Category 2: Factors of the Organizational Context Hindering Inclusion and Positive Contributions of Workers with ID</b>	<b>Coded References</b>	<b>% of All Coded Codes</b>	<b>Reports</b>
(a) Low participation in decision-making by persons with ID	4	23.6%	4
(b) Challenges in obtaining a decent wage	3	17.6%	2
(c) Temporary employment contracts	3	17.6%	1
(d) Lack of awareness of intellectual disability in the business sector	1	5.9%	1
(e) Ostracism	2	11.8%	2
(f) Peers without intellectual disability perceiving persons with ID as a threat	3	17.6%	2
(g) Internalization of discrimination	1	5.9%	1
<b>Category 3: Organizational Practices Satisfying Basic Needs of Workers with ID</b>	<b>Coded References</b>	<b>% of All Coded Codes</b>	<b>Reports</b>
(a) Organizational practices that foster a sense of belonging of persons with ID in their work	18	23%	8
(b) Organizational practices that promote the autonomy of persons with ID in their work	50	63%	10
(c) Organizational practices that facilitate the development of competences in persons with ID and increase their sense of efficacy and contribution to their team	11	14%	6

### 3.1. Interview Content Analysis

From the data analysis of the interviews, the three aforementioned main categories emerged: (a) organizational contextual factors favoring inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID; (b) organizational contextual factors hindering inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID; and (c) organizational practices satisfying the basic needs of workers with ID. Participants' quotes were replaced with the initials of their role and the interview number, as follows: Ex\_001 (expert), SU\_001 (supervisor), and PID\_001 (person with intellectual disabilities).

#### 3.1.1. Theme 1: Organizational Contextual Factors Favoring Inclusion and Positive Contributions: Identified Factors within the Organizational Environment That Support the Inclusion and Positive Contributions of Workers with ID

- (a) Adaptation of working conditions according to the particular characteristics of persons with ID



One of the organizational context factors favoring inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID is related to the adaptation of working conditions according to their particular characteristics. In this regard, participants indicated that working conditions are frequently adapted to the specific needs of persons with intellectual disabilities, such as shorter workdays, more rest periods, or reduced workload.

*“...Normally these individuals don't usually work full-time; it's either part-time or because we've also noticed that they get tired or bored with long shifts...” (SU\_002\_Man)*

*“...In summary, for me, it's about making those individuals feel comfortable performing the task... The previous guy, he couldn't be outdoors because he would have epileptic seizures, so he had to work in the shade... We give him more breaks to drink water, to hydrate, those things. But it's about adapting the workplace for him...” (SU\_002\_Man)*

*“When a person with a disability starts, I think they try to adapt the job a little more and assign tasks. For example, two tasks are organized for them when they start, and they don't deviate from those two tasks. What happens is that when the person is capable and is progressing with this work, then they are given many more tasks.” (EX\_001\_Woman)*

#### (b) Climate for inclusion

Another key factor is the climate for inclusion perceived by workers with ID. In fact, participants pointed out that some organizations carry out various activities to integrate their members with ID into the team, as reflected in the following direct quotations:

*“...Treating them like any other worker and including them in everything, well, if they have dinners, if they have company meals, all those kinds of things also help the organization's context to be more inclusive.” (EX\_004\_Man)*

*“Well, the reality is we have a whiteboard, so they write down birthdays, dinners, and there I see things. Basically, that's been done, then if they do something else, well, it'll be seen on the whiteboard... I see the paper there and I approach and say, 'well, look, today we're going to do this, tomorrow we'll do that, '...” (PID\_003\_Woman)*

*“...Well, during the breaks, like I was saying, in the coffee break, we're with them, the trainer and others, to try to break that ice that may exist on both sides so that later, when we aren't there, this integration continues, right? And that inclusion with all the workers...” (SU\_001\_Woman)*

#### (c) Procedural justice climate

Participants referred to procedures that are fairly implemented for persons with ID as a good practice.

*“...And then on the business side, they ask us for advice about how to conduct the selection process, and I always say that they should do it completely normally as they would for any other person without a disability. I mean, just because they have a disability, if we have already evaluated the job and know the person, and we know it's a job they can perform, why should we give them a different selection process?” (EX\_003\_Woman)*

*“Well, I think that right now, giving them a job position, as it currently has to be, a permanent one like any other person, an ordinary job, etc.” (EX\_001\_Woman)*

#### (d) Inclusive leadership

In the case of inclusive leadership, participants confirmed the importance of leaders who accept and support the contribution of persons with ID.

*“...we are indeed seeing that they are being, well, leaders of a change in the way of understanding, seeing disability and accepting that any person can perform a job position, if they are qualified for it.” (EX\_003\_Woman)*

*“...Well, the boss also praised me once. (What did he say to you?)... That your parents should be proud of you, or something like that.” (PID\_002\_Woman)*

## (e) Recognition of the abilities of persons with ID

Participants mentioned the abilities of workers with ID, who in most cases have mild intellectual disabilities, which allow them to do jobs similar to those of their peers without intellectual disabilities.

*“The work team I manage maintains the philosophy that we must believe in people’s abilities and believe that it is possible, and that we all have capacities and skills that allow us to perform certain jobs.” (EX\_003\_Woman)*

*“...what we have is the idea and the vision of a person with a disability, very dependent individuals with difficulties, and maybe we realize that without knowing it, the person sitting next to us has a very mild intellectual disability, and physically or speaking with the person you don’t notice it. So I think we should have more vision, see that there are very capable people, regardless of whether they have a disability, and that they can be included in the labor market without the need for the label of ‘I have a disability’, because they don’t need it.” (EX\_001\_Woman)*

## (f) Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is another element that, according to participants, facilitates the integrated employment of persons with ID.

*“...aside from the legislation that mandates hiring people, it is true that we are seeing the issue of corporate social responsibility, which is increasingly committed to the employment inclusion of people with disabilities. So, for us, that is very valuable, for a company to say to us: ‘I want it to be seen in my work team or in my company that we are committed to the employment inclusion of people with disabilities within social responsibility’.” (EX\_003\_Woman)*

## (g) Raising awareness about labor inclusion of persons with ID

Another aspect highlighted by the participants has to do with the importance of increasing awareness about the employment inclusion of persons with ID, given that there is a significant lack of awareness in the business sector.

*“...we promote not only the fiscal advantages, right? for hiring people with disabilities, we also promote the capabilities of our people, because truly the companies that hire our community are companies that are not motivated solely by the economic incentive, because with that incentive they could hire any other group, right? They are motivated more by, well, a sensitivity...” (SU\_001\_Woman)*

## (h) Involvement of families in the employability process of the person with ID

Finally, participants reported about the important role of families in supporting the employment of their relatives with ID.

*“Once we interview the person we are offering the job to, we call the family, right? We interview them, tell them about this job opportunity, that their son or daughter is interested, and so on, but we also express that we want the family’s involvement. If the family agrees, we have a protocol in place, where the family signs. We know it doesn’t hold legal weight, right? But the family commits to certain basic things, as I was saying, handling money and very basic matters; they commit to ensuring that their son or daughter will have it.” (SU\_001\_Woman)*

### 3.1.2. Theme 2: Organizational Contextual Factors Hindering Inclusion and Positive Contributions: Uncovered Factors within the Organizational Setting That Act as Barriers to the Inclusion and Positive Contributions of Workers with ID

During the interviews, some aspects of the organizational environment that could hinder the inclusion and positive contributions of workers were highlighted. As [Luo et al. \(2022\)](#) pointed out, a negative external environment in the workplace obstructs the inclusion and participation of workers with ID and fosters deviant behaviors in the workplace.

## (a) Low involvement in decision making by persons with ID

One of the crucial factors that can hinder the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID is related to their limited involvement in organizational decision making. The lack of inclusion of this group in decision-making processes is confirmed by participants.

*“Well, the experience we have, the truth is that we don’t. They are low-level workers and don’t make any decisions in the company.” (EX\_004\_Man)*

## (b) Challenges in obtaining a decent wage

Another factor that influences a lack of inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID is the presence of inadequate working conditions. Specifically, participants pointed out that, in many cases, workers with ID receive lower wages compared to peers without intellectual disabilities performing the same type of work.

*“And it is true that, on many occasions, their salary tends to be lower. I specifically have a girl working 36 h a week. I mean, what would be more or less equivalent to a full-time job with Saturdays and Sundays, holidays, rotating, and she doesn’t even earn 800 euros.” (EX\_002\_Woman)*

*“We had a case of a person who was in a company, came to our service, and was already working. To give you an idea of how perverse it gets, they worked two days a week in the contracted company and three in practice. They worked the whole week, but they were paid for two.” (SU\_001\_Woman)*

## (c) Temporary employment contracts

Participants also noted that it is common practice in the business sector to temporarily hire persons with ID for three-month periods while they undergo their internships, only to be replaced by another person with ID afterward.

*“There’s a reality, I don’t know if it happens to you, but here in Galicia, people who are in an organization lose their position after working 45 days.” (SU\_001\_Woman)*

*“... there are companies that have a person with a disability in an internship for three months; they leave, we bring in another for three months, and in the end, they have positions filled for free...” (SU\_001\_Woman)*

## (d) Lack of awareness of intellectual disability in the business sector

As mentioned earlier, a lack of awareness about ID and a lack of understanding about how to properly integrate these individuals into organizations are significant challenges, even today.

*“Well, the world of disability is still very unknown to employers.” (EX\_003\_Woman)*

## (e) Ostracism

Participants also highlighted exclusion in the workplace as an additional factor hindering the positive contributions of workers with ID. We interpreted this phenomenon as ostracism, which refers to the feeling experienced by employees when they are excluded or ignored by their colleagues or superiors (Choi 2020).

*“Well, you see, I always have the reference that there are people with intellectual disabilities who, just because they are present, are not included. I mean, you can have people in a company who eat their sandwich alone, have lunch alone, and don’t interact with colleagues, so in the end, they are alone. They are included in work, but really, in terms of personal relationships, they are not included.” (EX\_003\_Woman)*

*“... as for this Christmas dinner, I haven’t signed up yet; they didn’t say anything to me. They do it on their own. Let’s see if they invite me sometime.” (PID\_004\_Man)*

- (f) Peer without intellectual disabilities can perceive persons with ID as a threat

Additionally, participants highlighted a worrisome perception that sometimes arises in organizations: considering colleagues with ID a threat to employees who have been working in the company for years with temporary contracts. This occurs because, on occasion, managers choose to replace these temporary employees with workers with disabilities, either to meet regulatory requirements for hiring a certain number of persons with disabilities or simply because it is more cost-effective to hire this group. This phenomenon creates tension in the workplace.

*“It may have happened in companies that maybe they have fired people or have not hired people who have been working for years on temporary contracts, and when there has been a need to hire someone, they have resorted to people with disabilities, and they understand that it is because in the end the expense for the company is lower. So there have been times when they haven’t said anything because they may clearly say: ‘I understand that everyone has to have a job and they have the same right as me,’ but it is true that I know that my boss above hires someone because it costs him less than hiring this person who may deserve it more because he has been doing temporary contracts for many years. . .”* (EX\_002\_Woman)

- (g) Internalization of discrimination

Finally, another factor identified through the interviews, related to the social context of the organization, seems crucial: the internalization of discrimination by some workers with ID toward co-workers with ID, possibly due to a lack of identification with them. This phenomenon reveals the complexity of social dynamics within the community of workers with disabilities, where discrimination can be manifested internally, further exacerbating the barriers and challenges faced by this group.

*“ . . . for the person, it’s wonderful to find themselves in a regular position with people without disabilities because many people with disabilities even reject other people with disabilities and prefer to be in more ordinary environments.”* (EX\_001\_Woman)

### 3.1.3. Theme 3: Organizational Practices Satisfying Basic Needs: Explored Specific Practices Implemented within Organizations That Address the Basic Needs (Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness) of Workers with ID, Thereby Promoting Their Well-Being

- (a) Organizational practices that foster a sense of belonging of persons with ID in their work

We identified several organizational practices that foster a sense of belonging among workers with ID. Based on the gathered testimonies, one of these practices is active inclusion by co-workers, who often effectively integrate them into work and social dynamics. For instance, participants highlighted the gesture of inviting them to share everyday activities, such as lunch, and including them in communication groups such as WhatsApp chats where they can participate in conversations and stay updated about team activities.

*“ . . . usually, colleagues tend to integrate them very well; perhaps the simple act of saying, ‘Let’s have lunch, come with me,’ or ‘I’ll add you to the WhatsApp group, where we discuss things if there’s anything.’”* (EX\_002\_Woman)

*“ . . . we had a guy. . . we even followed up on the job, and I asked him, I said, ‘Well, how about the colleagues? Do you feel comfortable here, and do you feel that your concerns are taken into account by the team?’ and he said, ‘Of course, they take me into account,’ he says, ‘I’ve already organized a WhatsApp group, and I’m the one organizing things like meetings or outings, and such.’ And of course, there, I mean, it was super noticeable that he was part of the team and that he felt that way.”* (EX\_003\_Woman)

Furthermore, the importance of concrete actions by the organization were mentioned, such as providing work uniforms, which not only serve a practical function but also foster a sense of belonging to the group.

*“...actions like, for example, providing uniforms, right? Having everyone wear the same uniform gives a sense of belonging to the group. Eating together, for example, having lunch together, right? During break times, when they have to rest, being together, right? And that always helps to improve the atmosphere.” (EX\_004\_Man)*

*“...Yes, I have a work uniform; it's red and black. And they're going to change it to orange. And we would look very handsome.” (PID\_004\_Man)*

(b) Organizational practices that promote the autonomy of persons with ID in their work

The analysis of the interviews identified various organizational practices that positively influence the autonomy of workers with ID. Among these practices, supported employment stands out, provided by specialists in vocational preparation, which facilitates the development of necessary competences for effective job performance. Additionally, it was observed that natural supports coming from co-workers play a crucial role in promoting integration and learning in the workplace. The learning process, based on observation, modeling, and continuous feedback, also emerged as a key factor in fostering the autonomy and independence of workers with ID in their workplace. This approach allows individuals to acquire skills actively, strengthening their ability to function autonomously in the workplace.

*“Typically, it's usually done by a support person from the association, right? They come to the workplace, intervene in the context, and provide support in the context. Well, they serve as a model for the tasks that need to be done, right? For example, if they have to sweep, they explain how to sweep, where to sweep, and support them to improve in that regard.” (EX\_004\_Man)*

*“Well, I was taught through my colleagues. The more experienced ones, you know. And to this day, they still help me.” (PID\_002\_Woman)*

*“Yeah. Maybe when I'm doing the first round with them, I explain, 'You have to pick up this or take the garbage bag.' I explain with words, observe if they're doing it or not. Okay, if not, I'll do it myself. 'See how it's done?' If I see that they're doing it well after imitation, maybe they do it. Look, this person learns by imitation.” (SU\_002\_Man)*

(c) Organizational practices that foster the development of competences in persons with ID and increase their sense of efficacy and contribution to their team

Organizational practices that facilitate the development of competences in workers with ID and enhance their sense of efficacy and contribution to the team are fundamental for their integration and success in the workplace. A crucial practice mentioned was the detailed analysis of the capabilities and labor competences of each individual, as well as the precise identification of tasks associated with each job position. This involves prior work by professionals to understand the specific demands of the position and adequately prepare the worker with ID.

*“The employer wants them to be just another worker and to be getting the job done. So, we have to analyze their capabilities and labor competencies beforehand, and have all the tasks of the job position well identified. When I visit companies and if a company tells me they 'need two warehouse assistants', I go to the workplace with my notebook and ask: 'So, what does a warehouse assistant do? What time do they start? What time do they finish? When do they take breaks? What do they have to do? Do they operate forklifts? If so, will they encounter four others in the aisle, moving boxes, considering the weight, whether they'll lift 20 kg or 5 kg, etc.' So, you have to have everything under control, and there's also an important role for professionals to play in analyzing job positions. Then, you train the person, meaning you have to have the person ready, and even if I believe they have the capabilities to perform that job, I still say, 'Let's see what you need to prepare for, what you need to train for', just like how we prepare for a job interview, preparing for things like lifting weights or knowing how to scan if it's an office job... In other words, the person has to be prepared.” (EX\_003\_Woman)*

*“And then, we also offer associations these pre-employment courses, basic computer skills, basic things to access the job market.” (SU\_001\_Woman)*

#### 4. Discussion

This qualitative study had two main goals to achieve through the content analysis of semi-structured interviews with workers with ID, experts in integrated employment, and supervisors. First, the study explored the factors in the organizational context that facilitate or hinder the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID in their workplaces and teams. Second, we examined the organizational practices, also as part of the context, that help to satisfy the basic needs of workers with ID (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). This study has allowed us to identify the facets of the organizational context that promote (or hinder) the creation of positive environments for workers with ID that influence their well-being.

After reviewing the content of the interviews, we concluded that organizational contextual factors play both positive and negative roles. Our results emphasized the importance of organizational contextual factors in promoting (or hindering) the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID in their workplaces and teams. Although this aligns with previous approaches (e.g., [Hebl et al. 2020](#)), our study identifies specific organizational contextual factors that are particularly significant. Below, we discuss these contextual factors in more detail, following the same structure used in the Results section.

##### *4.1. Theme 1: Organizational Contextual Factors Favoring Inclusion and Positive Contributions: Identified Factors within the Organizational Environment That Support the Inclusion and Positive Contributions of Workers with ID*

###### (a) Adaptation of working conditions according to the particular characteristics of persons with ID

Logically, organizations vary in the extent to which they adapt their working conditions to the needs, interests, and specific characteristics of individuals with ID. This is the rationale behind customized employment for individuals with significant disabilities ([Riesen et al. 2015](#); [Wehman et al. 2007](#)), where negotiating relevant aspects of jobs is central to achieving their integrated employment. Adaptations can involve adjustments to employment terms, such as the number of working hours and vacation days, as well as modifications to the work environment, including physical characteristics such as noise levels, temperature, hygiene, and safety ([Akkerman et al. 2014](#)). These would include ergonomic interventions oriented toward preventing psychosocial risks and promoting well-being (e.g., [de Paula Nunes Sobrinho and de Lucena 2012](#)). According to the participants in our study, adaptations were essential for promoting the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID. They are not just useful for meeting the needs of the employer, but they also involve achieving mutual benefit by adapting the working conditions to the worker with ID.

###### (b) Climate for inclusion

Generally, research has indicated that acceptance and a tolerance for diversity within an organization (climate for inclusion) can encourage employees to develop and apply their skills, which, in turn, contributes to the organization ([Shore et al. 2011](#)). Employees' perception of an inclusive climate within the organization is a positive factor that can counteract negative influences ([Luo et al. 2022](#)). The positive effects of a climate for inclusion have also been observed in terms of retention ([Habeck et al. 2010](#)) and stigma avoidance ([Iwanaga et al. 2018](#)) among workers with disabilities. Consistent with these findings, our study also confirmed that a climate for inclusion helps to integrate workers with ID into work teams.

###### (c) Procedural justice climate

When organizational procedures are implemented fairly and equitably, which is consistent with the individual psychological need for inclusion and respect, employees perceive

inclusion in the organization positively (Thibaut and Walker 1975). This approach involves respecting the uniqueness of each person, maintaining a high level of organizational justice, fostering cultural compatibility, and demonstrating a willingness to listen to employees' opinions. The impartial application of procedures promotes equal opportunities, even for individuals with ID (Snyder et al. 2010). This idea aligns with our findings, which suggest that procedural justice can help to reduce discrimination against individuals with ID in their employment opportunities.

(d) Inclusive leadership

Research has highlighted that support from top management is one of the most critical factors in the success of diversity initiatives (e.g., Jayne and Dipboye 2004; Rynes and Rosen 1995). This support has been particularly emphasized in the context of disability diversity, where it can help to counteract entrenched stereotypes and negative attitudes held by various organizational stakeholders, such as colleagues and direct supervisors (Schur et al. 2005). Our findings also supported this argument.

(e) Recognition of the abilities of persons with ID

Traditionally, research has considered ID from a deficit perspective. Accordingly, ID has been associated with problems, impairments, and limitations in various areas of social life. This perspective has obscured the possibility that persons with ID can make contributions through their strengths and abilities. However, recent positive psychology has shown increasing interest in their potentially valuable contributions (Albaum et al. 2021). In this vein, our results corroborated that recognizing the capabilities of workers with ID is a positive factor in integrated employment.

(f) Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is typically defined as the way organizations design policies and conduct practices aimed at positively impacting the community in accordance with the common good (Fenwick and Bierema 2008). Although corporate social responsibility is increasingly popular, the inclusion of people with disabilities and their integrated employment remain limited (Gould et al. 2020), despite the positive effects on the organizational reputation (Dwertmann et al. 2023). Our results showed that the integrated employment of persons with ID can be part of an organization's corporate social responsibility, thus enhancing integration.

(g) Raising awareness about labor inclusion of persons with ID

It is reasonable to expect that awareness of the potential for labor inclusion of persons with ID is a prerequisite for achieving integrated employment. After all, if individuals and institutions are not aware of employment opportunities for people with disabilities, it is unlikely that concrete actions will be implemented. Unfortunately, despite interesting initiatives around the world (e.g., Office of Disability Employment Policy 2015; Plena Inclusión España 2022), awareness about these initiatives remains low, even among self-advocates (Rogan and Rinne 2021). Our results also indicated a lack of awareness, despite the perception that it could be a positive factor in the integrated employment of persons with ID.

(h) Involvement of families in the employability process of the person with ID

It is crucial to highlight the fundamental role that families play in the employability processes of persons with ID. Families sometimes start their own businesses, creating an entrepreneurial context that facilitates employment for their relatives with ID (Percival 2022). Additionally, although relatively unexplored, families are able to implement practices that support the integrated employment of their relatives with ID (Schwartzman et al. 2023), and this is consistent with our results. Participants perceived that families' active participation and continuous support are essential to ensure the success and sustainability of the labor inclusion of persons with ID.

#### 4.2. Theme 2: Organizational Contextual Factors Hindering Inclusion and Positive Contributions: Uncovered Factors within the Organizational Setting That Act as Barriers to the Inclusion and Positive Contributions of Workers with ID

##### (a) Low involvement in decision making by persons with ID

Traditionally, persons with ID have faced significant social obstacles that limit their possibilities of making decisions in various areas of their lives. Despite the well-documented benefits of decision making for their quality of life (Bigby et al. 2017) and the existence of programs designed to enhance decision-making opportunities for persons with ID (e.g., Beadle-Brown 2015), barriers persist. Our findings confirmed that this situation also exists in the workplace context. Participants reported that participation in decision making by workers with ID is generally not expected in companies.

##### (b) Challenges in obtaining a decent wage

One crucial working condition for workers in general is to have a decent wage that allows them to reach an adequate quality of life. This is also true for people with ID. In fact, Taylor et al. (2022) concluded in their review that economic prosperity through employment of persons with ID leads to a higher quality of life, greater inclusion and independence, and better overall health. However, achieving a decent wage for workers with ID is still a challenge (Lindstrom et al. 2014). Our findings confirmed this situation, describing important obstacles to receiving adequate wages.

##### (c) Temporary employment contracts

Previous research has shown that, despite efforts to increase the employability of persons with ID, unemployment remains persistent, along with difficulties in maintaining employment over time (e.g., Jacob et al. 2023; Riesen et al. 2015). Our findings suggested that a common practice helps to explain this challenging situation in our context: the widespread use of temporary contracts for persons with ID, often in the form of internships, that are not renewed or sustained over time.

##### (d) Lack of awareness of intellectual disability in the business sector

Despite progress made in the social inclusion of persons with ID, employers' knowledge about ID remains limited. Jacob et al. (2023) observed that employers perceive persons with ID as a subordinate group incapable of performing a job. Our findings were aligned with this unfortunate view, given that participants reported that the business sector is largely unaware of ID and the potential contributions that persons with this disability can make to companies.

##### (e) Ostracism

Generally, ostracism in the workplace can be manifested through the refusal to collaborate, avoidance of communication, and even ignoring the presence of others (Choi 2020). Moreover, previous research has shown that ostracism negatively impacts basic needs such as self-esteem, a sense of belonging, control, and self-worth (Al-Atwi et al. 2021). Scholars have observed that ostracism is particularly experienced by persons with ID (e.g., Edwards et al. 2019; Ouattara et al. 2023). According to our findings, it was also present in the workplace, where workers without ID may exclude or avoid contact with co-workers with ID. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that the social interactions of workers with ID are restricted to work-related activities, rather than including other activities (e.g., having coffee together) that promote inclusion.

##### (f) Peers without intellectual disabilities can perceive persons with ID as a threat

An unexpected result of our research was related to the fact that workers without ID who had temporary contracts and the possibility of losing their jobs perceived workers with ID as a threat. This situation may be quite specific to the context of our study, but it would be beneficial for future research to address this issue to find out whether it is a more widespread phenomenon.



## (g) Internalization of discrimination

It is well known that identity is a complex issue for persons with disabilities in the workplace as well (Santuzzi and Waltz 2016). This complexity can lead workers with disabilities to deny their disability in order to avoid stigmatization (Livneh 2009a, 2009b). This situation was closely related to our findings for persons with ID, given that we observed that it is possible for workers with ID to discriminate against other co-workers with ID.

#### 4.3. Theme 3: Organizational Practices Satisfying Basic Needs: Explored Specific Practices Implemented within Organizations That Address the Basic Needs (Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness) of Workers with ID, Thereby Promoting Their Well-Being

## (a) Organizational practices that foster a sense of belonging of persons with ID in their work

Relatedness, or a sense of belonging, is a universal basic need for all humans (Deci and Ryan 2000; Luo et al. 2022), including those with ID (e.g., Melchiori and Church 1997). Previous research has confirmed that participation in integrated employment serves as a source of relatedness for persons with ID, enhancing their sense of belonging (Jahoda et al. 2009; Soeker et al. 2021). In this vein, our findings confirmed that organizations can implement concrete practices to meet this basic need, such as active inclusion by co-workers (e.g., inviting them to lunch) and providing work uniforms.

## (b) Organizational practices that promote the autonomy of persons with ID in their work

Another universal basic need for humans is autonomy. However, satisfying this need is a persistent challenge for persons with ID, who are often subject to excessive control and overprotection (e.g., Callus et al. 2019), creating barriers to independence and inclusion. Previous research has demonstrated the positive impact of customized support, such as supported employment, on the autonomy of persons with ID. For example, Wehmeyer (1994) highlighted the association between employment and a greater sense of internal control in these individuals. These findings underscore the importance of integrated employment in meeting the autonomy needs of workers with ID. Our results also provided evidence that organizational practices can promote this autonomy, practices such as support from specialists in vocational preparation and co-workers.

## (c) Organizational practices that foster the development of competences in persons with ID and increase their sense of efficacy and contribution to their team

Finally, competence—feeling effective in interacting with the environment—is also a universal need whose satisfaction can impact individuals with ID. Nota et al. (2010) specifically discussed how self-efficacy beliefs influence the career choices of individuals with ID. Based on unrealistic beliefs about their limitations, often reinforced by others, these individuals may experience indecision and delays in making career decisions (see Nota et al. 2010). This highlights the importance of self-efficacy beliefs in fostering career interests and promoting work inclusion (e.g., Panagos and DuBois 1999). According to our findings, meeting the competence needs of individuals with ID could be further supported in integrated employment settings by improving the alignment between the individual and the job requirements. In other words, assessing job demands and preparing individuals with ID to meet those demands can enhance their sense of effectiveness in the workplace.

#### 4.4. Implications for Practice

In identifying the factors that facilitate the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with ID in their workplaces and teams, the importance of inclusive leadership stands out. The training and performance evaluation of leaders can be geared towards accepting and leveraging diversity, viewing ID as an asset to teams and the organization as a whole. This leadership is likely to foster the perception of an inclusive climate among organizational members, in addition to efforts to adapt the working conditions to workers with ID.

The barriers most cited by participants also provide us with relevant inputs for professional practice. One area of intervention consists of achieving working conditions (participation in decision making, salary, temporality) for workers with ID that are comparable to those of workers without ID. Companies can be involved in this action, but also policymakers, legislators, and non-governmental organizations advocating for better working conditions for workers with ID. Another area of intervention is more subtle and requires specific awareness programs for workers without ID so that they are able to recognize the contributions of their co-workers with ID as an opportunity and asset. Likewise, it is important to promote policies and practices (e.g., communication, clarification of expectations) that keep the worker with ID from being perceived as a potential threat to the worker without ID.

Regarding organizational practices that directly satisfy the basic needs of workers with ID, there are three main aspects to consider from a practical perspective: (a) promotion of training programs for workers with ID that foster their autonomy and their sense of efficacy on the job; (b) customizing support for workers with ID through the identification of their capabilities and preferences, as well as adapting the demands of the job position; and (c) actions for the integration of workers with ID both from a formal approach (e.g., use of uniforms) and from an approach that promotes informal bonds with their peers without intellectual disabilities (for example, inviting workers with ID to team celebrations).

#### *4.5. Limitations, Future Research, and Strengths*

As with all research studies, our investigation has certain limitations. First, the small sample size restricts the generalizability of the results, though we believe an adequate number of participants and interviews was achieved for the specific objectives of the study. Second, the sample is limited to Spain, which raises concerns about the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Finally, although our qualitative approach has allowed us to gain a deep understanding of the contextual factors that facilitate or hinder appropriate integrated employment for workers with ID, relying on a single methodological strategy is limiting.

In light of these limitations, we propose directions for future research. First, it would be advisable to increase the sample size to ensure the generalizability of our findings. Second, while our results are likely to be applicable in other countries, given the global challenges faced by workers with ID, it would be valuable to validate our findings in different cultural contexts. Lastly, for future research, we recommend employing a strategy that combines both qualitative and quantitative data. Merging our qualitative approach with quantitative methodologies could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

It is relevant to highlight that this study also has at least two relevant strengths. First, our study considered the participation of experts in integrated employment, team supervisors, and workers with ID. The consideration of multiple viewpoints, including the voice of workers with ID, provides a comprehensive understanding of inclusion, positive contributions in workplaces and teams, and satisfaction of basic needs, all of which are positive for the well-being of workers with ID. Second, our study expands the knowledge related to the integrated employment of workers with ID. Previous efforts mainly focused on the positive effects of employment for persons with ID. By contrast, our study examined the complex organizational contextual factors that affect the experiences of workers with ID and their well-being, with important implications for practice.

## **5. Conclusions**

Based on semi-structured interviews with a total of 10 participants, including four experts in integrated employment, four workers with ID, and two team supervisors, our qualitative research offers a valuable analysis of the organizational contextual factors that promote (or hinder) inclusion, positive contributions in the workplace and teams, and the satisfaction of basic needs of workers with ID. The design of organizations and their practices allows different options, rather than following only one path. Our research has

identified the aspects of the context that should be considered in the organizational design (and those that should be avoided or removed) in order to achieve a work environment that leads to the well-being of everyone, especially workers with ID.

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