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Employer Training Interventions in Supported Employment Workplaces and Their Impact on Hiring Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of training interventions in public, institutional or private organizations for promoting positive attitudes among employers towards hiring individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD) in supported employment settings. The study included 60 employers, divided into three groups: video case studies, analysis case studies and a treatment group. Over the course of a year, participants attended nine structured training interventions. Pre-, post- and 6-month post-training questionnaires were administered to measure psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes towards hiring individuals with disabilities. Employers exposed to video case studies exhibited more positive attitudes than those engaged in case study analyses. The study found a positive correlation between training intervention strategies (video and analysis case studies) and their effectiveness. The positive psychological effects persisted 6 months after the intervention. This study suggests training that provides a supportive environment for employers hiring individuals with IDD to address ethical dilemmas, leading to improvement in their psychological indicators over time. Authentic simulation videos showcasing real-life managerial experiences proved effective in fostering positive psychological dimensions. The study facilitates a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

1 | Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (World Health Organization 2022), approximately 15% of the world's population consists of people with disabilities. This minority is excluded due to various environmental barriers, such as poor health conditions, low academic achievements, low employment rates and high poverty rates. In 2008, the U.N. Treaty for Human Rights was approved to protect the rights and honour of individuals with disabilities. This treaty is part of a global movement aimed at changing public perceptions regarding persons with disabilities as objects of charity, medical treatment and social protection, instead leading to the realization that they are full equal partners in society, with inherent rights. Research shows that the workplace in the free market plays an important role in reducing social isolation for people with disabilities. Yet, they experience many challenges in achieving equal employment, due to psychological and social barriers as well as prejudice among employers, employees and the public (Østerud and Vedeler 2022).

This study focuses on supported employment of people with IDD. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) (Schalock et al. 2021) defined intellectual disabilities as disabilities characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. These disabilities usually manifest before the age of 18 (Patel et al. 2020; Shree and Shukla 2016).

Araten-Bergman and Bigby ([2022](#)) claimed that employment is a major domain for creating policies concerning people with disabilities, since their lack of employment in the free market is detrimental not only to them but also influences society. Their nonparticipation in the workforce leads to a loss of personnel in the free market and an overload on the social services system.

In recent years, there has been progress in legislation both internationally and in Israel. In Israel, every disabled person now has the right to integrate into employment supported employment plans, which provide them with professional training and training interventions by a social worker in the workplace (Merrells et al. [2018](#)). Miethlich and Šlahor ([2018](#)) claimed that despite the benefits and social responsibility associated with employing people with IDD, employers complain about the difficulties that such employment entails. These issues might reduce their willingness to employ people with IDD.

Consequently, the aim of this study is to examine training intervention strategies among employers dealing with dilemmas regarding the employment of individuals with IDD and their influence on psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes towards long-term employment of workers with IDD. Adjustments can include physical changes in the work environment and/or organizational and social adjustments (e.g., in job definitions, role division, flexibility in working hours and training and guidance of workplace employees regarding the effective integration of employees with disabilities). Implementing such adjustments can involve financial costs and/or require allocating management and employee time. It may also involve a need for changes in current ways of operating within the organization.

Employers may need to guide employees regarding the effective integration of employees with disabilities in their team. There may be fear of potentially harming a disabled employee, or an employee with a disability who is found unsuitable during a probationary period may not be accepted. In addition, there might be concerns about deterring customers (Van Beukering et al. [2021](#)). On the other hand, there are benefits for employers in employing individuals with disabilities. These include very high loyalty of workers with IDD to the workplace, expanding the human pool for locating employees, increasing accessibility to customers with disabilities, diversifying the composition of employees and opening up new business opportunities, improving the public image and interest groups, and strengthening the security of all employees in the workplace and their commitment to it.

Previous studies have shown that working in the free market is very important for individuals with IDD. Working reduces social isolation and increases financial independence (Ginevra et al. [2021](#)). Yet, workers with IDD experience unequal employment and difficulties due to psychological obstacles and prejudice regarding their occupational performance (Shapira-Lishchinsky [2016](#)). Integrating people with disabilities in the labour market is extremely important as it contributes to their quality of life and to optimal integration in the community.

1.1 | Discussion of Ethical Dilemmas Obligates Participants to Confront Complexities, Develop Critical Thinking and Reach Decisions Amid Conditions of Uncertainty

This has a direct contribution to their sense of self-efficacy and perceived psychological empowerment. The more confident the individual feels in his ability to analyze and handle ethical dilemmas, the stronger his sense of efficacy and his impact on the organizational and social setting. This may involve visiting and touring potential workplaces, accompanying individuals with IDD during their initial days of work to facilitate optimal integration in the workplace, and ongoing support and mediation between the worker with IDD and the open market employer (Wehman et al. [2018](#)).

Employers with a high sense of psychological empowerment and self-efficacy may be more proactive in recruiting employees with IDD, as they are more confident in their ability to successfully manage the process. Employers with a low sense of empowerment and efficacy may be more hesitant, concerned about the organizational challenges involved and even object to employing these individuals because they do not feel capable of handling their integration. Huang ([2017](#)) found an association between employees' psychological empowerment and their proactive behaviour and investigated the mediating role of self-efficacy. The results showed that psychological empowerment and self-efficacy led to proactive behaviour. In addition, self-efficacy partially mediated the association between psychological empowerment and proactive behaviour. These findings emphasize how important it is for workplace managers to nurture employees' psychological empowerment and self-efficacy to advance their proactive behaviour.

1.2 | The Aim of This Study

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of training intervention strategies, such as video case studies and case study discussions, on psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes towards employing workers with IDD among employers. Additionally, treatment groups were used in the study, consisting of individuals who did not participate in the intervention processes (video case studies and case study discussions) but completed the same questionnaires at similar time points as the experimental groups. The focus question was: What changes occurred among employers in the experimental and treatment groups during the study, regarding psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes towards employment of workers with IDD? In the study, employers were asked about the organization's culture and its vision for employing people with IDD. They were also asked about common dilemmas, as well as their difficulty in handling the employment of these individuals. For instance, when an employee with IDD causes financial damage to an organization, should he be promptly laid off?

2 | Theoretical Framework

Despite legislation intended to boost employment of workers with IDD in different countries around the world, their employment rate is much lower than that of workers without disabilities, as

shown by World Health Organization data (World Health Organization 2022) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2010). These low rates are due to barriers raised by employers, stemming from stigmas and prejudice (Gustafsson et al. 2014; Østerud 2023). Employers tend to think that workers with IDD are inefficient, lack skills and supply relatively low output at work. They may be absent and therefore hiring them will not be economical (Ra 2023). In addition, employers fear that hiring workers with IDD will involve high expenses, including those resulting from layoffs and lawsuits (Gormley 2014). Other obstacles include a lack of knowledge about how to deal with workers with IDD in the workplace and a lack of understanding of general subjects related to workers with IDD (Houtenville and Kalargyrou 2012). Moreover, there is an exclusionary organizational culture that does not promote the inclusion of workers with IDD in organizations (Jacob et al. 2022).

Iddagoda and Opatha (2020) claimed that employment is important for designing policy regarding workers with IDD, since the lack of employment of workers with IDD in the labour market is detrimental not only for them but also for the rest of society because of the loss of personnel and needless overload on the social services system. Public policy regarding workers with IDD seeks to achieve two aims with potential dissonance. The first aim is to ensure the conditions under which workers with IDD can achieve full integration in society, especially in the labour market. The second is to provide social security for those who are unable to achieve the level of income sufficient for their subsistence.

Employing workers with IDD creates a variety in human resources (HR) and creates a positive social climate. It also strengthens the trust and commitment of other employees. It creates a moral management perception and demands implementation of openness, tolerance and loyalty by all employees (Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al. 2020). In addition, drafting costs are reduced, as there is a direct link between HR in government organizations (the Israel Electric Company, hospitals, old age homes) and private organizations (hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, nurseries, law offices, companies that manufacture electrical appliances) and agencies that specialize in classifying, drafting and accompanying employees with IDD. In addition, it improves the reputation of the organization in the eyes of the public (Lindsay et al. 2018).

Employment is a basic part of human well-being (Biggio and Cortese 2013), since work provides a response to a vital need for subsistence, a need for belonging and a need for self-identification (Levin and Gati 2015). Workers with IDD regard employment as an opportunity for social inclusion (Paez and Arendt 2014; Vornholt et al. 2013). It also helps social bonding through inclusion in society and in the community (Schur 2016). Inclusion at work might improve one's health and well-being, as well as decrease depression, improve the self-esteem of workers with IDD, lead to more satisfaction with life and improve the financial situation and life quality of these workers (Park et al. 2023; Dean et al. 2022).

2.1 | Employer Training Interventions

In addition to negative attitudes of employers, positive attitudes can also be found, attributed to their unique abilities and skills (Jansen-van Vuuren and Aldersey 2020). Employers have reported satisfaction with employees' performance, acknowledging their positive impact on the organization. In addition, they also reported being willing to integrate more such workers in the organization (Athamanah et al. 2022) because they are reliable, devoted, productive, highly motivated and hardly ever absent from work. Moreover, they have a very positive influence on co-workers in the organization. They reported that the quality of work provided by workers with IDD is as good as that of their co-workers and sometimes even higher. Moreover, turnover rates are very low, and there is an improvement in profitability (Vashishth and Jhamb 2021). This strengthens the claim that a lot of the negative attitudes, misperceptions and fears of employers derive from a lack of knowledge (Heron et al. 2020). Therefore, it is important to guide and help employers with decision-making processes in cases of ethical dilemmas in supported employment.

Employers may deal with a variety of dilemmas typical of supported employment; therefore, there is a need to prepare for various situations that occur in the organization and deal with them. Events in the organization can include a variety of ethical dilemmas. Ethical dilemmas are problems that are difficult to solve, where there is more than one solution that is right (Shapira-Lishchinsky 2013); for instance, should an employee with IDD be laid off due to lower input compared to other employees; that is, should we treat this employee the same as all other employees or should we consider his special needs?

2.2 | Ethical Dilemmas in Employing Workers With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

In an ethical decision-making process, people reflect their personal values regarding a specific event and come to a decision that aligns with the social consensus (Shapira-Lishchinsky 2014). Uitto et al. (2016) claim that the decision regarding how to act depends on the timing, the people involved and the cultural context. Hence, at different points in time, with different employers and diverse cultural backgrounds, people may react differently to the same dilemma due to previous factors such as prior evaluation, organizational culture, obedience to rules, past experience, personal motivation, attitudes and individual characteristics. The employer should be aware of all this to ensure that each future decision will be balanced and unbiased, leading to the most ideal solution (Shapira-Lishchinsky 2012). Action learning as a management development technique can be more effective in promoting ethical decision making than more traditional approaches (Harris and Bacon 2019).

Employment is considered one of the most important areas for forming policies concerning workers with IDD. Failure to fully integrate these individuals in the employment market not only hurts them but also affects society at large, due to the loss of HRs in the labour market and the burden on the social services system (Shapira-Lishchinsky 2016). In recent years, there has been progress in legislation, whereby every person, including workers with IDD, has the right to be integrated in supported employment programmes that provide professional training interventions in workplaces and guidance. Furthermore, those

with IDD have the right to fully participate in the community, which also includes the employment market (Araten-Bergman 2016).

About 0.5% of the general population worldwide are workers with IDD, at various functional levels that require lifelong support and guidance. Workers with IDD are less likely to integrate into the free market, as compared to the nondisabled (Merrells et al. 2018). For example, Arvidsson, Widén, and Tideman (Arvidsson et al. 2015) found in previous Swedish research reports that only 22% of individuals with IDD were employed in 2011 in the free market. In the Netherlands, the employment prospects of workers with IDD were found to be 3–4 times lower than those of individuals without disabilities. Internationally, employment disparities persist: OECD countries (2020) show 44% employment for persons with disabilities versus 75% for nondisabled individuals. Israel (53%) and the United Kingdom (53%) exceed this average, yet gaps remain substantial (Office for National Statistics 2024). For individuals with IDD specifically, only 15%–26% achieve integrated employment (Barlev et al. 2022), underscoring the global need for evidence-based employer interventions.

According to Gutiérrez-Cruz et al. (2023), there are indications that demand is increasing among workers with IDD to integrate into the community through employment in the free market. Workers with IDD are showing interest in supported employment opportunities, which provide more financial independence and emotional welfare than rehabilitative enterprises, where the pay is minimal. Workplaces that employ workers with IDD enjoy benefits such as diverse HRs, which helps create a positive social climate, strengthening trust and increasing commitment of all workers in the workplace; assimilating values of tolerance, social responsibility, and creating a positive image of the workplace among its clients and suppliers (Santuzzi et al. 2014).

Despite the benefits associated with employing workers with IDD, employers often experience difficulties and a variety of ethical dilemmas that accompany such employment, which can reduce their willingness to hire these individuals (Cho et al. 2017). Ethical dilemmas are defined by Shapira-Lishchinsky (2013) as the existence of values and issues that are difficult to decide upon, since they have more than one appropriate solution. For example, the requirement to meet the organization's standards and objectives versus the benefit accruing from employing an individual with IDD who is unable to meet them.

Increased confidence in knowledge acquired in the classroom has been shown to lead to increased self-confidence in nursing practice (Kavanagh and Szweda 2017). It has also been proven that using simulations in collaboration with classroom lectures improves student knowledge and confidence when caring for complex patient populations (O'flaherty and Costabile 2020). As simulations have been shown to improve student outcomes, integrating them in the classroom would be one method of bringing active learning to this setting. However, there are challenges to doing so, such as the need to transport expensive and heavy simulation manikins and equipment, as well as space constraints (Herron et al. 2019).

2.3 | Training Interventions in Organizational Settings: Video Simulations and Case Study Methodologies

Use of realistic video simulations may have the potential to add an experiential component to learning in organizations. Research has shown that learning can occur through observation of simulations in the organization (Rode et al. 2016), supporting this study's aim of investigating the effect of an organization-based video-simulated unfolding case study on workers' satisfaction, self-confidence and knowledge. Training interventions in the workplace involve a process of imparting both capabilities and content-based skills to individuals within an organization, while creating motivation to act, with the aid of a coach. The goal of training interventions in workplaces is to develop the organization's workers personally and professionally to be able to express unique and independent thinking, along with openness and flexibility towards attitudes that differ from their own, to the point of changing their attitude (Pattnaik and Sahoo 2021).

Support for professional development and training interventions in workplaces is pivotal. This support serves as a vital resource, equipping employees to effectively navigate ethical dilemmas and enhancing their capacity to tackle work assignments with competence. Notably, training interventions hold a high degree of significance for empowering workers, a significance particularly pronounced in the context of supported employment, where employers are required to be active in a variety of roles (Chaverri et al. 2018).

A foundation of employee empowerment lies in the acknowledgement of inherent talents and skills. However, the realization of these attributes often hinges on the provision of structured training interventions within organizational processes. Sosik and Jung (2018) emphasize this point, underlining the necessity of training interventions to effectively unlock and channel these inherent capacities. The well-being of employees, which is the responsibility of the workplace, further underscores the importance of such interventions. By establishing a stable organizational environment characterized by ethical behavioural norms, training interventions foster an atmosphere where employees can not only retain their position but also carry it out efficiently, thus safeguarding their emotional well-being and professional growth (Strindlund et al. 2019).

The dynamic landscape of the business world constantly precipitates changes to which workplaces must adapt. This reality accentuates the need for strategic training interventions tailored to organizational contexts. Such interventions are instrumental in cultivating an understanding of the complex business environment, particularly concerning ethical decision-making processes (Steiger et al. 2021). As workplaces evolve, training interventions in organizational strategies assume the critical role of equipping managers to recognize and address dilemmas that permeate every level of the organization.

The concept of training interventions in the workplace is multifaceted, encompassing diverse strategies aimed at cultivating employee skills and abilities. Pattnaik and Sahoo aptly define training interventions as a process through which abilities and

skills are imparted, leveraging the organization′s content as the foundational material. These interventions are oriented towards motivating action and fostering mentorship-driven learning experiences. By embracing training interventions, employees cultivate not only professional growth but also openness, flexibility and adaptive attitudes, even facilitating a transformative shift in their overall mindset (Pattnaik and Sahoo 2021).

Within the realm of training interventions in organizational strategies, two distinct methodologies warrant attention: video case studies and case study discussions. These approaches serve as potent tools for enabling immersive learning experiences that extend beyond traditional classroom settings. Youngs et al. (2023) highlight the efficacy of video-based interventions in cultivating an ethical organizational climate. Real-life ethical dilemmas presented in videos mirror authentic scenarios, enhancing participants′ engagement and understanding. Moreover, the dynamic nature of video content permits repeated viewings, allowing participants to focus on different facets with each iteration.

In conjunction with video case studies, case study discussions constitute a compelling avenue for training interventions. This strategy encourages participants to scrutinize authentic organizational events, extracting meaningful insights and lessons embedded within these scenarios. Rendtorff (2015), underscores the value of case study discussions for honing participants′ analytical abilities, enabling them to dissect events comprehensively and explore diverse pathways towards resolving ethical dilemmas. The process of analyzing cases in a group setting nurtures independent thinking, critical evaluation and the articulation of informed stances—all vital attributes for effective problem solving and decision making (Gentles et al. 2015).

Integral to the success of training interventions is the participants′ active role in constructing knowledge. Ütkür (2019) illuminates the empowering impact of self-directed knowledge accumulation. Training interventions, particularly those centred on case study discussions, offer a platform for participants to actively engage in constructing their understanding. This mode of learning not only fosters a deeper grasp of concepts but also instils a sense of ownership and autonomy in the learning process.

The intricate interplay between training interventions and participants′ psychological perceptions is noteworthy. Studies indicate that training interventions have the capacity to influence participants′ cognitive and emotional responses. This presents fertile ground for examining the intricate relationship between training interventions in organizational strategies and their impact on participants′ self-efficacy, psychological empowerment and attitude transformation. The goal is to explore the enduring influence of these interventions over an extended period, shedding light on their capacity to effect lasting change.

Research has found indications that specific interventions may help workplaces encourage a particular social dynamic that increases the sharing of general knowledge within the organization, to be ready to face and deal with conflicts inherent in dilemmas in the organization, thereby increasing the capital

and organizational knowledge (Zhao et al. 2021). This includes knowing and practising an alternative theory of action that can guide efforts to be productive in addressing the problem (Tellhed et al. 2017)

The decision to employ two separate interventions rather than a single intervention or combined approach was grounded in established principles of intervention research. First, this approach aligns with comparative effectiveness research, which emphasizes the importance of comparing multiple active interventions to identify specific effective components and distinguish between different mechanisms of change (Creswell and Clark 2017; Shadish et al. 2002). Second, organizational training literature indicates that exposure to multiple intervention modalities enables examination of individual differences in response patterns, as different participants respond differently to interventions based on learning preferences, prior experience and contextual factors (Salas et al. 2012). Finally, from a practical standpoint, offering two separate options (rather than combining them) facilitated participant recruitment and engagement by providing autonomy in selection, while preserving the ability to identify independent effects of each interventional capability that would be lost in a combined design (Shadish et al. 2002).

2.4 | Employer Training Interventions

2.4.1 | Psychological Variables

In the current study, we will examine different training styles utilized by businesses or senior managers to address ethical dilemmas they may face. Previous studies indicate that engagement with ethical dilemmas fosters the development of critical thinking, informed decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and a strengthened sense of personal capability (Rest 1986; Walker 2004; Bandura 1977). At the same time, these processes activate the dimensions of psychological empowerment, meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, by encouraging value clarification, autonomous reasoning and recognition of one′s ability to influence outcomes (Spreitzer 1995; Huang 2017). Although the two constructs are related, they are theoretically and empirically distinct: self-efficacy refers to an individual′s belief in their ability to perform a specific task, whereas psychological empowerment pertains to the experience of meaning, autonomy and impact within one′s professional role (Seibert et al. 2011). Measuring both constructs allows for a more precise assessment of the intervention′s effects and the identification of mechanisms through which ethical reflection processes contribute to participants′ professional and personal development. Consequently, we will examine the following three psychological variables.

2.4.2 | Psychological Empowerment

Usually, employees with a high level of psychological empowerment tend to feel that they possess knowledge that might improve their actions and help them solve problems efficiently (Spreitzer 1995). They tend to see themselves as free to make

decisions and feel that they are empowered by the workplace and capable of bringing about change. For example, training interventions in organizational processes contribute to the individual's sense of significance in the workplace and enhance organizational effectiveness (Appelbaum et al. 2015).

2.4.3 | Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as a person's expectation to do well in their job, after investing effort, and constitutes a mechanism that motivates the person towards goal-achieving behaviour (Bandura 1977). This mechanism depends on the individual's belief in oneself, one's skills and abilities; it influences cognitive and emotional aspects that drive motivation (Schwarzer and Luszczynska 2016). In a similar manner, during the training processes, self-efficacy may support the dynamic cognitive process people undergo when they consider their ability to perform, through their perception of the relationship between their skills and the job demands (Consiglio et al. 2016). Previous studies have shown that among employers, self-efficacy is based on the perception of their ability to cause learning, development and growth in different areas among all workers and mentees within the organization (Iqbal and Dastgeer 2017).

2.4.4 | Attitudes Towards Workers With IDD

The professional literature in this field relates to five main factors that influence attitudes towards workers with IDD and their integration in society:

1. **Socio-demographic traits.** (Santilli et al. 2014) found that a person's age, maturity and attitude towards others have a decisive effect on positive attitudes towards workers with IDD. Another trait is gender, as women have a more positive attitude towards workers with IDD than do men (Mirete et al. 2022). Similarly, educated people hold a more positive attitude towards workers with IDD than less educated people.

2. **Social culture.** The social status of workers with IDD and attitudes towards them are affected by societal values rooted in perceptions of abnormality and of workers with IDD (Mackelprang et al. 2021).

3. **Acquaintance and contact with the population of workers with IDD.** Studies indicate that the positive impact of acquaintance and contact with IDD workers may affect their treatment and attitudes towards them. The more a person is acquainted with a person with disabilities, the better his attitude and behaviour towards them (Vaz et al. 2015).

4. **Knowledge of the population of workers with IDD.** A positive relationship was found between knowledge of IDD workers' skills and positive attitudes towards them (Murch et al. 2018).

5. **Socialization.** It was found that children are influenced by their parents' attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. Children of parents who hold positive attitudes towards workers with IDD develop positive attitudes towards this

population (Zychlinski et al. 2016). Santilli et al. (2014) found that exposure to handicapped employees and understanding their abilities and skills resulted in positive attitudes towards them.

A previous study (Ben Amram and Shapira-Lishchinsky 2021) indicated that a training intervention in organizational processes may promote positive attitudes towards workers with IDD. Employers frequently face intricate ethical dilemmas regarding supported employment, navigating a complex terrain of decision making and moral considerations. To effectively address these challenges and make informed choices, it is imperative to empower employers within the context of their workplace (DeMarchis et al. 2022). This empowerment is underpinned by the fundamental belief that individuals inherently possess skills and capabilities, which can be harnessed through experiential learning and structured training interventions within organizational settings.

A pivotal outcome of these training interventions is the cultivation of heightened self-efficacy among workers, a psychological state that significantly influences motivation and success in professional roles (Maddux and Kleiman 2016). However, the significance of empowerment extends beyond the individual level. It resonates particularly strongly in the face of prevailing biases and prejudices that often surround workers with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), especially within the realm of employment (McBride et al. 2015). A deeper exploration by Nelissen et al. (2016) reveals the intricate interplay between these biases and preconceived notions regarding the capabilities of individuals with IDD. These negative attitudes pose substantial barriers to their equitable employment, further emphasizing the need for guided interventions that transform workplace perceptions.

In this transformative journey, the integration of individuals with IDD into organizational frameworks takes on significant importance. Schur et al (2016) shed light on the positive impact of adopting a moral policy that embraces inclusion. This step towards inclusivity not only contributes to the organization's performance but also triggers a shift in employers' attitudes towardsethical considerations associated with IDD integration. Building on this notion, Lysaght et al. (2017) emphasize the role of comprehensive management systems, including structured training interventions, in fostering long-term shifts in attitudes, values and beliefs among employees. This gradual transformation ultimately leads to tangible changes in behaviour and attitudes, especially concerning the employment of individuals with IDD.

Different modalities of training interventions offer unique avenues for achieving these transformative outcomes. Visual representations possess the potential to effectively convey the intricate pedagogical principles underlying training interventions, resulting in a deeper and more enduring understanding among employees.

Expanding the scope further, Sartori et al. (2018) present a broader perspective on training interventions, asserting their role in influencing organizational innovation. This broader impact underscores the imperative to invest in employee

development through training interventions, particularly to enhance learning and interpersonal skills. This investment becomes especially pertinent within organizational cultures that prioritize employee growth and empowerment, as evidenced by positive correlations with effective performance and the nurturing of an innovative environment.

By weaving together these diverse research threads, this study seeks to illuminate the multifaceted impacts of training interventions within organizational contexts. Through a comprehensive investigation of their effects on attitudes, self-efficacy and psychological empowerment, the study endeavours to contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of these interventions, paving the way for more inclusive, empowered and innovative workplaces.

This relationship extends to encompass the transformation of perceptions concerning psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes towards the employment of workers with IDD among employers. By weaving together these diverse research threads, this study seeks to illuminate the multifaceted impacts of training interventions within organizational contexts. Through a comprehensive investigation of their effects on attitudes, self-efficacy and psychological empowerment, the study endeavours to contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of these interventions, paving the way for more inclusive, empowered and innovative workplaces. Cross-cultural research has shown that employer attitudes towards individuals with disabilities vary considerably across welfare regimes and cultural settings. Studies conducted in Northern Europe (Østerud 2023; Arvidsson et al. 2015) and comparative analyses across OECD countries indicate that national policy frameworks, social norms and the strength of welfare institutions significantly shape inclusive employment practices. For instance, in Scandinavian countries with strong social support systems, employers tend to report more positive attitudes and higher readiness to implement inclusive hiring. These findings emphasize the importance of considering cultural and structural moderators when interpreting our results and suggest that future research should examine such differences more systematically.

2.5 | Research Hypotheses

H1. *Participants exposed to video case studies will demonstrate more positive attitudes towards the employment of workers with IDD, higher self-efficacy and greater psychological empowerment compared to participants exposed only to case study discussions.*

H2. *The strategies employed in training interventions will have a sustained impact, such that exposure to these interventions will lead to lasting changes in psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes towards the employment of workers with IDD among employers.*

These hypotheses explicitly specify the expected relationships between the intervention type and the outcome constructs, as well as the expected short-term and long-term effects, thereby addressing the reviewer's concern for clearer, testable scientific statements.

2.6 | Theoretical Model

The research model suggests that experiential interventions in employer training through video simulations or case analyses affect attitudes towards employing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) via the mediating mechanisms of psychological empowerment and self-efficacy. According to Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment encompasses a sense of meaning, competence, autonomy and impact, while Bandura (1977) emphasizes the role of experiential learning in strengthening self-efficacy. In line with experiential learning theories (Kolb 2014; Salas et al. 2012), such interventions trigger emotional and cognitive processes that enhance control and confidence, thereby fostering more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of employees with disabilities.

3 | Methods

3.1 | Sample

The recruitment process for this study involved diligent efforts by research assistants, employing a mix of media and social network platforms, particularly Facebook, to identify workplaces that employ workers with IDDs. From this pool, a total of 60 employers were randomly selected, ensuring that each employed at least one individual with IDD. These participants were subsequently divided into three distinct groups.

The first group comprised 20 employers who engaged in training interventions within organizational contexts facilitated by video case study dilemmas. In the second group, an equal number of 20 employers underwent training interventions through case study discussions. Finally, the third group encompassed 20 participants who formed a treatment group, undergoing no specific training interventions within organizational settings.

3.2 | Participants

The participants in this study were drawn from a diverse array of organizational backgrounds. Notably, the employers were affiliated with larger establishments, exemplified by entities such as the Israel Electric Company ($n = 7$), pharmacy chains ($n = 6$), coffee shop chains ($n = 7$), hotels ($n = 9$), nursing homes ($n = 5$), hospitals ($n = 6$) and an ecological garden ($n = 7$). Concurrently, a representation from smaller privately owned workplaces was also ensured, encompassing restaurants ($n = 5$), garages ($n = 4$) and bakeries ($n = 4$).

This deliberate assortment of participants from various organizational scales and sectors serves to enhance the study's breadth and applicability, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the impacts of training interventions on attitudes, self-efficacy and psychological empowerment within the context of employing individuals with IDD. Not all research participants are the final decision-makers regarding the employment of people with IDD. The people who participated in the sample are employees or direct employers who interact with workers with IDD during their workday.

3.2.1 | Employer Training Interventions

The breakdown of the participants was as follows: Gender: 36 men, 24 women; age: mean age = 37.8 years, SD = 5.1; education: mean education level = 13.8 years, SD = 3.1; length of experience: mean = 10.3 years, SD = 2.9.

The study encompassed participants from diverse geographical areas within the country. The distribution of participants among the different regions was as follows: North: 10 participants, South: 15 participants, Centre: 35 participants.

3.3 | Procedure

This study focused on examining changes in employers' perceptions after undergoing training interventions with video case study dilemmas and case studies, over about 1 year, during which they met nine times. Employers received an explanation of the study's goals and research procedures while maintaining ethical research standards (World Health Organization 2020). Questionnaires were completed at three points in time: before training interventions, after training interventions in workplaces ended and 6 months after training had concluded. The assessments were conducted at identical points in time. By means of this longitudinal study, we were able to test employers' changes in perception due to the different types of training interventions in workplaces.

Phase A: Employers were interviewed in the workplace to understand their backgrounds, the dilemmas they face and the challenges encountered in supported employment. Phase B—Video case studies based on ethical dilemmas were produced: a group of actors were told to play various figures according to the dilemmas documented (an employee with IDD, parents and employer). We produced nine different videos with nine scenarios. The research assistants came to the workplaces and met with two to three employers in each organization. The employers met three times in the same group. During the experiment, each participant watched nine case study dilemma videos (Figure 1).

The second group was asked to analyze the events according to case studies (without videos) that were sent by email. They were asked to identify the dilemmas using structured forms (i.e., questionnaires), with each form containing three case study dilemmas.

The third group did not undergo any training interventions at all but completed questionnaires at intervals similar to the experimental research groups.

Each intervention session lasted approximately 60 min and followed a structured format. In the Video Case Study group, participants first watched a 5-min video depicting an ethical dilemma, followed by a facilitated group discussion addressing key questions about values, prior experiences and resolution strategies. This was followed by individual reflection on applying the learned strategies in their own workplace and completion of questionnaires measuring psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes. In the Case Study Discussion group, participants received written case descriptions before the session, reviewed them individually, engaged in a group discussion using the same core questions, reflected on workplace applications and completed the same questionnaires.

The three groups completed questionnaires on psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes regarding the employment of workers with IDD. Replies to the questionnaires were given on a Likert scale of 1–5 (1–strongly disagree, 5—strongly agree). The questionnaires were completed 3 times, before and after the intervention and again 6 months later. In each meeting, all employers watched the 5-min video together. After watching the video or analyzing the events according to case studies, a discussion was held with the research coordinators. The following questions were asked: What values clash in the dilemma? Did they encounter this dilemma? How do they resolve this dilemma in their workplace?

Each employer then completed the three questionnaires on perceptions concerning psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes towards the employment of workers with IDD among employers.

3.4 | Quantitative Research Tools

3.4.1 | Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire

Based on a 12-item questionnaire by Spreitzer (1995), which tests the belief of the individual in the workplace and his/her ability to execute actions requiring skills, while relating to aspects such as meaning in work, personal efficiency and influence, and freedom to reach decisions ($\alpha = 0.84$) (e.g., I have self-confidence in my ability to perform the job).

3.4.2 | Self-Efficacy

Based on a scale developed by Bandura (1977). This scale tests the self-efficacy of the participant regarding his working skills and belief in his/her ability to cope with challenges within the
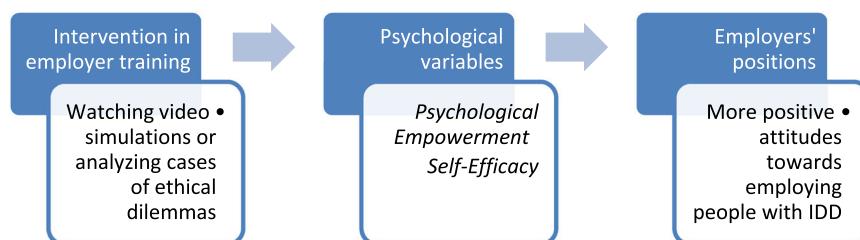

FIGURE 1 | Theoretical model.

workplace. The questionnaire contains 10 items that relate to achievements, development of skills and social interaction within the workplace ($\alpha = 0.79$) (e.g., I am convinced that I can develop creative ways of dealing with ethical dilemmas in supported employment).

3.4.3 | Positive Attitudes Questionnaire Towards Employing Workers With IDD in the Workplace

This scale is based on the work of Hazarika et al (2017). The questionnaire contains 32 items, covering aspects such as the impact of the work of individuals with IDD on the workplace and the workers, perceptions of the vocational skills of individuals with IDD and perception of their ability to be integrated at work ($\alpha = 0.77$) (e.g., Hiring an employee with a mental disability sometimes improves morale within the organization).

The three questionnaires were collected by the research assistant at the end of each meeting with the employers.

4 | Findings

Three *t*-tests were conducted to examine whether the psychological variables, psychological empowerment perceptions, self-efficacy and attitudes, towards the employment of workers with IDD are more positive among employers who underwent video case study interventions than among employers who underwent case study discussion interventions. The three tests also examined whether there is a relationship between the training interventions and their long-term effects on the psychological variables among the employers.

4.1 | Psychological Empowerment

The analysis showed an association with high significance between the training intervention and the level of psychological empowerment [$F(4,114) = 6.91$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.195$]. In addition, one-way analyses of variance were conducted to explore the differences in psychological empowerment throughout the study. A significant improvement was found in all three groups throughout the study. Also, one-way analyses of variance found significantly lower results in the treatment group and in the case study analyses group than in the video case study dilemmas group (see Table 1).

4.2 | Self-Efficacy

The analyses showed a significant interaction between the measurement points of employers' self-efficacy [F (4,114) = 3.30, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.104$]. Throughout the research, one-way analyses of variance were conducted again to test the differences in self-efficacy. A significant improvement in the results was found in all three groups. In addition, one-way analyses of variance were conducted, indicating that self-efficacy in the treatment group and in the case studies group was significantly lower than in the video case studies group (Table 2).

4.3 | Attitudes Towards Employment of Workers With IDD in the Organization

The analyses showed a significant interaction between the measurement points and attitudes towards employment of workers with IDD [$F(4,114) = 12.36$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.302$]. In addition, during the research, one-way analyses of variance were conducted to check the differences in attitudes. A significant increase was found in the results in all three groups. In addition, within the one-way analysis of variance, we found that the attitudes in the treatment group and in the case studies analysis group were significantly lower than the results in the video case study dilemmas group (Table 3).

4.4 | Two-Way Analysis of Variance of the Three Research Variables Among Employers: Examining Differences by Intervention Type and Measurement Time

Two-way analyses of variance revealed significant interactions between training method and measurement time across all three variables: psychological empowerment ($F(4,114) = 6.91$,

TABLE 1 | Psychological empowerment (means and SD) among employers by training interventions in workplaces and measurement period.

Participants	Measurement period	Activity	*n*	*M*	SD
Employers:	Treatment	Pre-intervention	20	4.25	0.26
		Post- intervention	20	4.44	0.26
		6 months later	20	4.49	0.27
	Case study	Pre-intervention	20	4.27	0.27
		Post- intervention	20	4.49	0.25
		6 months later	20	4.57	0.24
	Video case	Pre-intervention	20	4.36	0.29
		Post-intervention	20	4.54	0.23
		6 months later	20	4.76	0.23

TABLE 2 | Self-efficacy (means and SD) among employers by training interventions in organizations and time of measurement.

Participants	Measurement period	Activity	*n*	*M*	SD
Employers:	Treatment	Pre-tervention	20	3.51	0.33
		Post-intervention	20	3.83	0.24
		6 months later	20	3.94	0.24
	Case study	Pre-intervention	20	3.61	0.31
		Post-intervention	20	3.90	0.26
		6 months later	20	4.05	0.29
	Video case study	Pre-intervention	20	3.62	0.36
		Post-intervention	20	4.93	0.26
		6 months later	20	4.19	0.28

TABLE 3 | Means and SDs for attitudes among employers, by training interventions in workplaces and time of measurement.

Participants	Measurement period	Activity	*n*	*M*	SD
Employers:	Treatment	Pre-intervention	20	4.28	0.30
		Post-intervention	20	4.41	0.30
		6 months later	20	4.51	0.22
	Case study	Pre-intervention	20	4.26	0.35
		Post-intervention	20	4.42	0.30
		6 months later	20	4.55	0.21
	Video case study	Pre-intervention	20	4.16	0.43
		Post-intervention	20	4.46	0.29
		6 months later	20	4.70	0.13

$p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.195$), self-efficacy ($F(4,114) = 3.30$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.104$) and attitudes towards employing people with disabilities ($F(4,114) = 12.36$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.302$). Repeated measures analyses conducted separately for each group revealed significant increases in all three variables across all intervention groups throughout the study period. Additional analyses examined differences between groups at each measurement point. At baseline and immediately post-intervention, no significant differences were found between groups on any of the variables.

In contrast, at the follow-up measurement (6 months after intervention completion), a consistent pattern emerged: for psychological empowerment and self-efficacy, the control group displayed significantly lower scores than the simulation group. For attitudes towards employing people with disabilities, both the control group and the scenario group displayed significantly lower scores than the simulation group. These findings indicate the superiority of the simulation method in sustaining long-term intervention effects.

5 | Discussion

The importance of the employment of workers with IDD in supported employment within the free market is gaining prominence in public policies around the world. Acknowledging the rights of disabled individuals to actively and equally participate in all aspects of life in society is expressed in legislation regarding equal rights for workers with IDD. The significance of employing people with disabilities in the open market within supported employment settings underlies the importance of this study. The aim of this study was to explore the effect of different training interventions (such as watching video case studies and discussion of case studies) on employers in the context of dealing with ethical dilemmas regarding supported employment. This was done by measuring participants' psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes towards the employment of workers with IDD.

Yet, employing workers with IDD raises complex dilemmas due to various obstacles and barriers regarding their involvement within the free market. (Wehman et al. 2018) claimed that some of the challenges stem from the disability itself; for example, obstacles involving motor skills make it hard for them to perform certain jobs, and mental disabilities raise dilemmas for the rest of the employees. Hemphill and Kulik (2019) said that employers, like the rest of the public, have many prejudices regarding persons with disabilities in general and regarding their employment. This raises additional obstacles.

5.1 | The Relationship Between Training Interventions and Psychological Perceptions

To achieve the goals of any organization it is important to activate HRs in a correct manner through training interventions and professional development within the organization. The main purpose of modern organizational management lies in establishing a point of encounter between the aims of the organization and the needs of the employees (Cameron and Green 2019). Training interventions help refresh and assimilate rules, work methods and appropriate working procedures.

According to this hypothesis, employers who participated in interventions involving video case studies would demonstrate more positive attitudes toward employing workers with intellectual and developmental disabilities, higher self-efficacy, and greater psychological empowerment — compared to employers who participated in interventions based solely on case study discussions. It was found that training interventions incorporating the experience of viewing video case studies have a more significant impact, and this effect persists even six months after the intervention concludes. It should be noted that an organization's "espoused values" may differ substantially from its "values in practice." This gap between employer attitudes and organizational practice is particularly pronounced in sensitive moral issues, such as the employment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Schein and Schein 2018).

The findings show differences between the various training interventions. The greatest impact on the video case studies group was found during the intervention, but it also persisted 6 months after the end of the intervention. It is important to note that the case studies intervention also influenced employers' attitudes but in a more moderate manner. Another reinforcement of the relationship between the different training intervention strategies and the psychological variables was found in the treatment group. In this group, no changes were found at the three points of assessment throughout the study, since the participants in this group did not receive any training interventions.

The second hypothesis assessed was that a direct relationship would be found between the strategies employed in training interventions and their lasting effects over time as evident in employers' psychological empowerment, self-efficacy and attitudes regarding the employment of workers with IDD. Regular training interventions are essential for all employees in organizations. Training interventions contribute to the assimilation of regulations, provide treatment and supervision, raise motivation and help integrate employees into teams.

The influence of the training interventions lasted moderately, as evident when psychological variables were checked 6 months after the training interventions ended. An improvement was evident in the measures explored in the treatment group, too, although it was more moderate than in the intervention groups. For instance, in the psychological empowerment measure the treatment group's mean score rose from 4.25 (SD = 0.26) at the beginning of the intervention to 4.49 (SD = 0.27) 6 months later. In contrast, in the video case study group, the improvement was more significant, from 4.36 to 4.76.

A similar trend was observed in the measure of perceived self-efficacy, where the treatment group's mean increased from 4.28 (SD = 0.30) to 4.51 (SD = 0.22), but nonetheless it remained lower than in the other intervention groups and particularly in the video case study group (whose mean increased from 4.16 to 4.70). Also, in the measure of attitudes towards employees with IDD, an improvement was evident in the treatment group: The mean increased from 3.51 (SD = 0.33) to 3.94 (SD = 0.24) after 6 months. Then again, the sharpest improvement was evident in the video case study group, where the mean increased from 3.62 to 4.19.

5.2 | Employer Training Interventions

More support for the moderate effect of training interventions was found in the treatment group that did not undergo such interventions but completed the questionnaires. Nonetheless, they showed a small increase in the psychological variables. Being asked to complete the questionnaires and reflect on their attitudes to the subject may have caused the observed change among employers in this group. The improvement in the treatment group might attest to a trend whereby participation in the study and awareness of the issue contributed to employer perceptions to a certain degree, but the significant differences between the groups indicate that immersive interventions, and particularly the video case study, were the most significant cause of improvement in perceptions over time.

5.3 | The Influence of Training Intervention Strategies on Psychological Measures Over Time

In all three psychological measures studied, an increase was found after the intervention, and it persisted even 6 months after the intervention ended. These findings show that the employers assimilated the change and developed changes after the intervention. This means that the training interventions had both a short-term and a long-term effect in the organizations, showing that training interventions and professional development are of great importance. The treatment group, which did not undergo any training intervention process during the study, showed only a minor increase. We can assume that since the participants in this group were asked to complete questionnaires and spend some time and thought reading them and reflecting about their attitudes, this might have caused a change, though very minor.

Summarizing all the above, as an increase occurred in all three psychological variables examined during the active training interventions (video case study dilemmas, discussions of case studies) and even after conclusion of the intervention, it is important to provide training interventions for employers using active training intervention methods. It is possible that the research intervention, together with the social sharing and the employers' group discussion with the research assistants, where the aim was to hold the discussion after watching the video or analyzing the events according to case studies and the reflection, are those that affected the research variables.

The discussion primarily refers to Western countries with well-developed social welfare systems. Therefore, the interpretation

of the findings should be viewed within the context of countries where public welfare structures, employment legislation and social inclusion policies support such interventions. The transferability of these results to countries with different economic or welfare models may be limited.

6 | Research Contribution

The paper presents several operational innovations concerning employer training and supports the employment of persons with IDD. It portrays an innovative approach to examining the most efficient ways of improving employer attitudes towards the employment of workers with IDD. Watching video simulations that depict ethical dilemmas was found to be more efficient than only analyzing case descriptions. Moreover, the effect of this training intervention persisted even 6 months after the end of the intervention, indicating a long-term cognitive change.

Integrating the research model, this study examines how employer training interventions through video simulations of ethical dilemmas or case study discussions serve as the independent variable, while psychological empowerment and self-efficacy act as mediating mechanisms influencing attitudes towards employing individuals with IDD. This model, grounded in the theories of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer 1995) and self-efficacy (Bandura 1977), provides a clear framework for interpreting the findings: immersive, reflective training enhances employers' confidence and sense of agency, which in turn supports more positive attitudes and inclusive practices in the workplace. The results demonstrate that video-based interventions were particularly effective, with improvements persisting 6 months post-intervention, highlighting the practical relevance of the model for designing evidence-based organizational training programmes.

The practical meaning of the study is evident in recommending regular inclusion of video-based training interventions as part of organizational training processes. It suggests that HRs departments embrace these strategies to promote inclusion in the workplace. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by emphasizing the effectiveness of training based on video simulations for changing attitudes, psychological empowerment and improving the self-efficacy of employers regarding employing persons with IDD.

In addition to examining the effectiveness of various training intervention strategies, the study contributes to the organization and development of a management team that can resolve ethical dilemmas faced in video clips or scenario analyses. The results of the research show the importance of psychological variables that cultivate a positive organizational climate that includes values common to all employees in the organization who interact with employees with IDD. Also, the psychological variables facilitate personal and professional aspects that are part of a process of nurturing proactive managers and employees who display commitment and responsibility when dealing with ethical dilemmas efficiently over time. The contribution from the methodological respect is that the study was conducted within a period of 1 year and examined the psychological aspects of employers three times during this year.

The effectiveness of the training intervention strategies was also examined 6 months after the training interventions process ended.

We clarify that our sample consisted of 60 employers who were directly responsible for supervising or managing employees with IDD in their daily work context. As detailed in the Method section, participants included HR managers, shift managers, department managers and logistic warehouse managers from larger organizations, as well as owners of smaller family businesses such as garages and bakeries. While these individuals varied in their level of organizational authority, all participants were in positions that required regular interaction with workers with IDD and involvement in workplace decision-making related to their employment. We have revised generalizations throughout the manuscript to specify that findings reflect the perceptions, attitudes and psychological responses of 'employers and managers who directly supervise workers with IDD' rather than making broad claims about entire organizations. For example, we now state that 'training interventions improved psychological empowerment among participating employers' rather than suggesting organization-wide changes.

7 | Conclusion

To develop an organizational culture that enables inclusion of disabled employees, there is a need for training interventions and professional development among employers who work with individuals with IDD. For example, training interventions based on authentic video case studies can encourage active reflection by participants. This approach can lead to changes in self-efficacy and psychological empowerment, as well as improved attitudes towards employing workers with IDD within the organization.

7.1 | Practical Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate that video case studies represent the most effective training intervention strategy for improving self-efficacy, psychological empowerment and positive attitudes towards the employment of workers with IDD, with effects that persisted longer than those of case study discussions. HR departments should integrate authentic video case study dilemmas into workplace training processes, while facilitating dialogue to enrich the variety of possible solutions for ethical dilemmas. Training interventions based on video simulations of ethical dilemmas may have long-term impacts on employer attitudes, perceived efficacy and psychological empowerment regarding the employment of persons with IDD, suggesting that organizations striving to advance inclusive employment can benefit from continuous structured training interventions (Beatty et al. 2019).

HR departments supported employment agencies, and professional training providers can readily implement these time-efficient, scalable video-based interventions within existing professional development programmes, requiring minimal resources while maximizing sustained impact.

However, the generalizability of these findings warrants careful consideration, as participants were drawn from diverse industries and organizations of varying sizes, ranging from large establishments, such as the Israel Electric Company, pharmacy chains and hospitals, to smaller privately owned workplaces, including restaurants, garages and bakeries. Future research should examine whether the effectiveness of video-based training interventions varies systematically across organizational types, sizes and industry sectors to better understand the contextual factors that may moderate intervention outcomes.

8 | Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study included employers from a wide variety of positions, such as HR managers, shift managers, department managers, logistic warehouse managers as well as owners of family businesses such as garages and bakeries. The variety of positions and of daily interactions with disabled employees differed considerably among the employers, which may impact the generalizability of the findings.

In future research, it is advised to examine additional populations, such as parents of disabled children or social workers who work with individuals with disabilities. The latter should accompany these individuals in the workplace and examine how psychological variables can change as a result of various training interventions. Also, various training strategies for employers can be added, such as simulations with actors, where the employees take place in the interaction from an emotional angle and then the influence of psychological variables is examined. Further limitation concerns the socioeconomic and welfare context in which the study was conducted. The findings reflect characteristics of Western welfare systems, such as Israel's, and may not directly apply to countries lacking similar institutional or policy frameworks that promote supported employment and employer training initiatives. Our findings are limited to the Israeli context. Cultural differences, employment norms and welfare systems may limit international generalizability. Future cross-cultural research is needed.

Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the authors' university.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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