# Disability-Inclusive Employment as a Market-Facing Capability: Evidence from Building Economics and Business Value Creation

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## ABSTRACT

Disability-inclusive employment is frequently framed in terms of legal compliance, ethical obligation, or corporate responsibility, yet there is limited empirical understanding of how inclusive practices become economically consequential in operational service environments. This qualitative study examines disability-inclusive employment as an organizational capability and pursues three objectives: to analyze routinised accommodation practices, supervisory coordination mechanisms, and the generation of reliability-based credibility signals in building- and facilities-related service contexts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees with disabilities, their direct supervisors, and members of top management in building- and facilities-related organizations. Data were analyzed using iterative thematic analysis with constant comparison across participant groups to trace process-level mechanisms linking inclusion to service outcomes. The analysis identifies three interrelated mechanisms: routinised accommodation stabilizes task–environment fit by reducing uncertainty and standardizing task execution; supervisory capability embeds inclusive practices into scheduling, communication, and service governance; and stable service routines generate reliability-based credibility signals observable to external stakeholders during service encounters. Rather than operating as a visible signal in itself, disability-inclusive employment contributes to organizational value indirectly through consistent service performance and the accumulation of trust over time. The study contributes to building economics by demonstrating how socially embedded employment practices can function as operational capabilities that link internal routine stability to external credibility and business value in real-time service environments. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of Kelaniya Ethical Review Committee (2023, No. 07).

## ARTICLE INFO

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Disability-inclusive employment has attracted sustained attention across policy, organizational, and academic domains, largely driven by legal mandates, human rights frameworks, and corporate responsibility agendas. Much of the existing literature conceptualizes inclusion primarily in normative terms, focusing on compliance, formal accommodation, and ethical obligation (Power, Lord, & DeFranco, 2013). While these perspectives have played an important role in advancing access and equity, they provide limited insight into how inclusion is enacted in everyday organizational practice or how it relates to operational performance and economic value.

This limitation becomes particularly evident in building- and facilities-related service contexts, where organizational outcomes are shaped by real-time coordination, task interdependence, and service encounters rather than by standardized or easily observable outputs. In such settings, clients and stakeholders often infer organizational quality from repeated experiences of service reliability, continuity, and interaction quality, rather than from stated values or internal policies (Schaedler, Graf-Vlachy, & König, 2022). As a result, employment practices that influence routine stability and coordination may carry economic significance even when they are not explicitly visible or communicated as inclusive initiatives.

Recent organizational and service research has begun to suggest that disability-inclusive employment may be more productively examined as an operational capability rather than solely as a compliance requirement or reputational signal. From this perspective, the relevance of inclusion depends on how workplace accommodations, supervisory practices, and communication routines are embedded within everyday work processes (Bonaccio, Connelly, Gellatly, Jetha, & Martin Ginis, 2020; Schaedler et al., 2022). However, empirical studies that trace these mechanisms in detail remain limited, particularly within building economics and facilities management, where service reliability is both economically consequential and highly sensitive to coordination breakdowns.

Against this background, the present study examines disability-inclusive employment in building- and facilities-related organizations through a qualitative, process-oriented lens. Drawing on interviews with employees with disabilities, their direct supervisors, and top management, the study investigates how inclusive employment practices are enacted through routine coordination and supervisory processes, and how these practices relate to operational reliability and organizational value creation. By focusing on routine-level mechanisms rather than symbolic commitments, the study seeks to contribute to ongoing debates on inclusion, service reliability, and value creation within the context of building economics (Shaw, Wickenden, Thompson, & Mader, 2022).

In order to address these gaps, this study pursues three interrelated objectives. First, it seeks to examine how disability-inclusive employment is operationalized through routinised accommodation practices within building- and facilities-related service contexts. Second, it investigates how supervisory capability functions as a coordination mechanism that embeds inclusive practices into everyday operational governance. Third, it evaluates how routine stabilization and supervisory coordination generate observable reliability signals that accumulate into organizational credibility and business value. By articulating these objectives explicitly, the study adopts a mechanism-focused approach to understanding inclusion as an operational

capability rather than solely a normative commitment.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Disability-inclusive employment beyond compliance

Research on disability-inclusive employment has traditionally been anchored in legal compliance, corporate social responsibility, and human rights frameworks. Within this literature, inclusion is frequently treated as a normative obligation or a reputational signal, emphasizing policy adoption, formal accommodation, and organizational commitment statements. While these perspectives have been instrumental in advancing access and equity, they offer limited insight into how inclusion is enacted in daily work or how it affects operational performance (Gould, Harris, Mullin, & Jones, 2020; Katsui, 2025; Stein & Bantekas, 2021).

An emerging organizational perspective reframes disability-inclusive employment as a capability that must be enacted through reliable routines, managerial coordination, and role alignment (van Berkel & Breit, 2025). From this view, inclusion is not realized through policy presence alone, but through how accommodation, supervision, and task design are stabilized within everyday operations. This shift in emphasis is particularly important in service-oriented contexts, where performance is produced through interaction, coordination, and timing rather than through discrete outputs.

This capability-based framing suggests that the economic relevance of inclusive employment depends on its integration into routine organizational processes. Without such integration, accommodation risks remaining episodic or symbolic, limiting its potential impact on performance outcomes that matter to organizations and their stakeholders.

### 2.2 Building economics, service reliability, and value creation

According to Nazali Mohd Noor and Pitt (2009) in building and facilities management contexts, value creation is closely tied to service reliability, operational continuity, and interaction quality. Unlike product-based industries, building-related services are delivered in real time and are highly sensitive to coordination breakdowns, delays, and variability in performance (Milani, 2005; Swarup, 2010). As a result, customers and clients often infer organizational quality not from stated commitments, but from repeated experiences of consistent service delivery.

Building economics research has long emphasized the role of reliability and continuity in shaping cost efficiency, contract renewal, and reputational standing Milani (2005); Power et al. (2013). Reliability functions as a key economic signal, reducing uncertainty for clients and supporting trust-based relationships over time (Glückler & Armbrüster, 2003). From this perspective, organizational practices that stabilize service routines can contribute to value creation even when they are not directly visible to external stakeholders.

This opens a pathway for disability-inclusive employment to matter economically if inclusive practices contribute to routine stability and reduce coordination failures. Rather than being valued for inclusion per se, such practices become relevant insofar as they shape service outcomes that are observable in building-related operations.

### 2.3 Routine-based mechanisms, supervisory capability, and internal reinforcement

Workplace accommodations do not generate value automatically. Their effects depend on how they are enacted, coordinated, and sustained over time gates2000workplace. A routine based

perspective highlights that accommodation becomes consequential when embedded in clear task design, supportive supervision, and stable communication patterns that improve task–environment fit (Haberberg, 2005).

According to Ali, Baker, Grabarski, and Islam (2025) and Williams-Whitt, Kristman, Shaw, Soklaridis, and Reguly (2016) supervisory capability is central within this mechanism. Supervisors translate accommodation into scheduling decisions, performance expectations, and coordination practices, thereby determining whether inclusion is treated as an exception or normalized as part of routine operations. When supervisory practices are aligned with inclusive intent, accommodation can enhance predictability and reduce uncertainty across service processes.

Over time, these routinised practices may also produce internal reinforcement effects. Stable routines can foster confidence, commitment, and consistency among employees, reinforcing service delivery quality and reducing the likelihood of breakdowns. This aligns with qualitative methodological approaches that emphasize tracing mechanisms through process-level evidence in organizational settings (Yin, 2018), as well as with decision research highlighting the importance of reliability and uncertainty reduction in shaping stakeholder judgments under risk (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Together, these strands of literature suggest that disability-inclusive employment can be understood as a latent organizational capability whose economic significance emerges through routine stabilization, supervisory coordination, and the generation of reliability-based credibility signals.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This section describes the research design, materials, procedures, and analytical approach in sufficient detail to allow replication and extension of the study. All protocols were implemented in accordance with institutional ethical requirements, and no restrictions apply to the methodological transparency of the study.

### 3.1 Research design

This study adopted a qualitative research design based on semi-structured interviews to examine how disability-inclusive employment is enacted within building- and facilities-related organizational contexts and how such practices are interpreted in relation to operational reliability and business value creation. A qualitative approach was selected to capture process-level dynamics, routine enactment, and interactional mechanisms that are not readily observable through quantitative measures, particularly in service-oriented and organizational settings.

The study was exploratory and interpretive in nature, focusing on participants' lived experiences, managerial practices, and organizational interpretations of inclusion as part of everyday operational routines rather than as a standalone policy or compliance initiative.

### 3.2 Sampling and participants

Participants were purposively sampled to capture multiple organizational perspectives relevant to disability-inclusive employment. Three participant groups were included: (i) employees with disabilities engaged in operational or service-facing roles, (ii) their direct managers or supervisors, and (iii) members of top management responsible for organizational strategy, governance, or human resource oversight.

Sampling prioritized variation in organizational role, responsibility, and

hierarchical position in order to enable triangulation between frontline experiences, supervisory practices, and strategic intent. This approach allowed the study to examine how inclusive employment practices are translated across organizational levels and embedded within routine coordination and service delivery processes.

## 3.3 Interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility to explore participant-specific experiences and organizational contexts. The guide was informed by prior literature on disability-inclusive employment, service routines, and organizational value creation, and was refined through pilot discussions to ensure clarity and relevance.

The interview guide was organized around five core domains. While wording and probing varied depending on participant role (employee with a disability, manager/supervisor, or top management), the thematic structure remained consistent to support analytical comparison.

1. Work role and context Participants were asked to describe their current role, primary responsibilities, and how their work fits within broader building- or facilities-related operations.

2. Workplace accommodation and support practices Questions explored the types of accommodations provided, how these were introduced and adjusted over time, and participants' perceptions of their effectiveness in supporting task performance.

3. Supervisory and coordination practices This domain examined supervisory involvement, communication routines, task coordination, and responses to operational challenges,

with particular attention to how inclusion was managed in day-to-day work.

4. Service delivery and reliability Participants were asked to reflect on how work practices affected service continuity, interaction quality, error reduction, and customer-facing outcomes in building and facilities contexts.

5. Organizational outcomes and value creation Questions addressed perceived links between inclusive employment practices and organizational credibility, reputation, efficiency, and longer-term business value.

Example prompts included:

Can you describe how workplace accommodations are handled in your daily work, and whether they influence how reliably tasks are completed or services are delivered?

Follow-up probes were used to clarify examples, explore changes over time, and identify differences between formal policies and actual practices. This structure ensured comparability across interviews while preserving sensitivity to participant role and organizational context.

## 3.4. Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted using a flexible interview guide. Interview topics included workplace accommodations, supervisory inclusion practices, task coordination, service reliability, customer interaction points, and perceived organizational outcomes related to performance and credibility.

Interviews were conducted with the informed consent of participants and were audio recorded to ensure accuracy. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and anonymized during transcription. Identifying information related to

individuals and organizations was removed to protect confidentiality. Field notes were maintained to document contextual observations and reflexive considerations during data collection.

## 3.5. Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of the University of Kelaniya (2023, No. 07). Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of the study objectives, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and data protection. All data were stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes.

## 3.6. Data analysis

Data were analyzed using an iterative thematic analysis approach with constant comparison across the three participant groups. Analysis proceeded in multiple stages. First, transcripts

were subjected to descriptive coding to identify segments related to workplace accommodation, supervision, coordination practices, and service delivery. Second, codes were compared across interviews to identify recurring patterns and divergences between employee, managerial, and top-management perspectives. Finally, descriptive codes were consolidated into higher-order analytic themes reflecting routine stabilization, credibility formation, and internal communication mechanisms.

An audit trail was maintained throughout the analysis to document coding decisions, theme development, and analytical refinements. This process enhanced transparency and analytical rigor and allowed for systematic reflection on the relationship between empirical evidence and conceptual interpretation.

## 3.7. Data availability and materials

Given the qualitative nature of the study and the sensitivity of participant information, full interview transcripts are not publicly available. However, anonymized coding structures, analytic procedures, and methodological protocols can be made available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author, subject to ethical approval conditions.

## 3.8. Use of generative artificial intelligence

Generative artificial intelligence tools were used solely for superficial language refinement, including grammar and clarity improvements, during manuscript preparation. No generative artificial intelligence tools were used in study design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or generation of figures or empirical content.
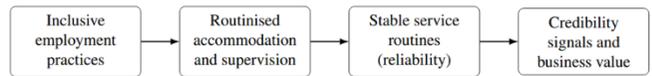


## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings derived from the qualitative analysis of interviews with employees with disabilities, their direct managers, and top management personnel in building- and facilities-related organizational contexts. The results are organized into three analytically distinct but interrelated themes that explain how disability-inclusive employment practices are enacted through routine coordination and how these practices contribute to operational reliability and business value creation.

4.1. Theme 1: Routinising accommodation to stabilize task–environment fit

Participants consistently reported that workplace accommodation was most effective when embedded into predictable and repeatable routines rather than implemented as ad hoc or exceptional

adjustments. Employees with disabilities described how routinised task redesign, assistive tools, and clearly defined work handoffs reduced uncertainty and enabled consistent performance in service-facing roles.

Employees emphasized that when accommodation practices were standardized, cognitive load was reduced and attention could be directed toward task execution and customer interaction rather than toward managing uncertainty or improvising workarounds. Managers similarly noted that routinised accommodation reduced operational disruptions and improved coordination within teams.

As one employee (Res#3) explained: 'Once the tasks were clearly structured and tools adjusted properly, I didn't have to constantly worry about whether I could complete the work. It became part of the normal routine.'

A supervisor similarly noted (Res#7): 'When we standardized the handoffs, the team stopped seeing accommodation as an exception it just became how we operate.

These findings indicate that accommodation contributes to performance by stabilizing the relationship between tasks, tools, and the working environment. In building and facilities contexts, where service delivery depends on timing, coordination, and continuity, routinised accommodation reduced breakdowns and variability in service outcomes.

4.2. Theme 2: Supervisory capability as a coordination multiplier

Supervisory practices emerged as a central mechanism linking disability-inclusive employment to operational reliability. Managers and supervisors described their role in aligning schedules, clarifying service standards, and resolving emerging coordination issues before they escalated into service failures.

Employees with disabilities highlighted that supervisory awareness and proactive support increased confidence and reduced hesitation during service delivery. Supervisors who treated inclusion as an integral component of operational management - rather than as a special or separate concern - were able to embed accommodation into routine planning and performance monitoring.

One supervisor (Res#5) emphasized: 'Inclusion works when it is part of daily scheduling and monitoring- not something separate. If we plan properly, problems don't escalate.'

An employee participant added (Res#2): 'Knowing my supervisor understands the adjustments gives me confidence during client interactions.

These accounts suggest that supervisory capability functioned as a coordination multiplier, amplifying the effectiveness of inclusive employment practices. Rather than increasing managerial burden, effective supervision integrated inclusion into everyday operational routines, contributing to more resilient and predictable service delivery.

4.3. Theme 3: Credibility and reliability as observable market signals

Top management and managerial participants linked routinised inclusive practices to organizational credibility, particularly in interactions with clients, partners, and external stakeholders. While inclusion itself was not always visible externally, its effects were observable through consistent service delivery, reduced errors, and predictable interactions.

Participants described how repeated exposure to reliable service performance shaped client perceptions of professionalism and trustworthiness. In this way, disability-inclusive employment functioned as an indirect credibility mechanism when enacted through stable routines and effective coordination.

A senior manager (Res#9) reflected: 'Clients don't necessarily see our inclusion policies, but they notice when service is consistently smooth. That builds trust.'

Another participant observed (Res#8): 'Over time, reliability speaks for itself. It shapes how partners view the organization.

This theme highlights how inclusive employment contributes to business value not through immediate cost efficiencies, but through the accumulation of reliability-based signals that support trust, legitimacy, and longer-term relationship stability in building- and facilities-related service environments.

Table 1 summarizes the three empirically derived themes and clarifies how routine-level practices associated with disability-

inclusive employment translate into distinct but related forms of business value. The table highlights that value creation does not emerge directly from inclusion as a normative commitment; rather, it is mediated through the stabilization of everyday work routines and service interactions.

As shown in Table 1, routinised accommodation contributes to value by reducing operational breakdowns and enabling more predictable service delivery. Task redesign, assistive tools, and standardized handoffs collectively reduce uncertainty at the point of task execution, which is particularly important in building- and facilities-related service environments where coordination failures are immediately visible.

**Table 1:Summary of qualitative themes and value-creation mechanisms**

| 1. Theme | 2. Routine-level practice | 3. Business value implication |
|---|---|---|
| **4. Routinised accommodation** | 5. Task redesign, assistive tools, standardized handoffs | 6. Reduced breakdowns; more predictable service delivery |
| **7. Supervisory capability** | 8. Scheduling, coaching, rapid issue resolution | 9. Higher interaction quality; consistent service standards |
| **10. Credibility mechanism** | 11. Repeated reliable performance during service encounters | 12. Trust formation; stronger legitimacy and retention |

Supervisory capability, as presented in Table 1, operates as an integrative mechanism that aligns individual accommodations with team-level performance. Through scheduling, coaching, and rapid issue resolution, supervisors convert inclusive practices into consistent service standards and higher interaction quality, thereby strengthening operational reliability.

Finally, Table 1 shows that the credibility

mechanism represents the outward-facing consequence of internal routine stability. Repeated reliable performance during service encounters generates trust and organisational legitimacy among external stakeholders. This process explains how disability-inclusive employment becomes economically consequential not through direct visibility, but through the accumulation of reliability-based signals that support client retention and longer-term business value.
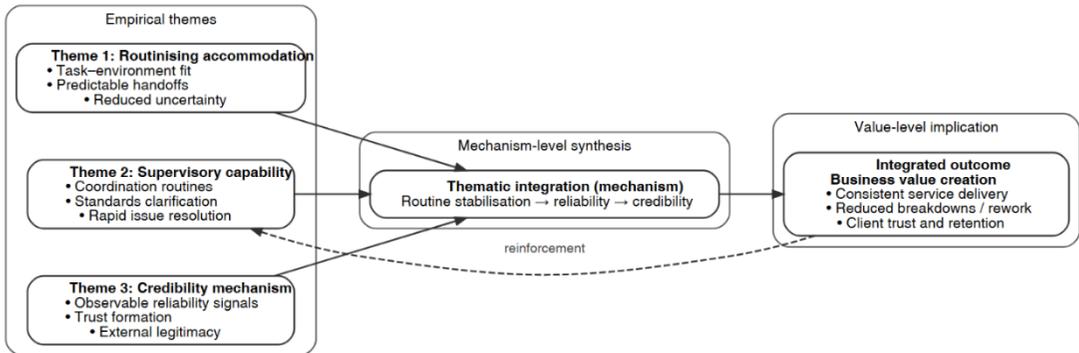
Figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2, the three themes do not operate as isolated findings; rather, they form an integrated mechanism through which disability-inclusive employment becomes economically consequential in building- and facilities-related service contexts. Theme 1 (routinising accommodation) establishes a stable task–environment fit by reducing uncertainty and standardising handoffs, which creates the basic conditions for consistent performance. Theme 2 (supervisory capability) functions as the coordination multiplier that embeds these accommodations into everyday scheduling, standards clarification, and rapid issue resolution, thereby converting individual adjustments into team-level operational reliability. Theme 3 (credibility mechanism) captures how this reliability becomes externally meaningful: stakeholders may not directly observe inclusion practices, but they experience the downstream signals of predictable service delivery and interaction quality, which accumulate into trust and legitimacy over time.

Figure 2 therefore illustrates a routine-based pathway in which internal stabilisation (Themes 1 and 2) produces observable reliability, and reliability produces credibility signals (Theme 3) that support business value creation. The dashed feedback link further indicates that credibility and retained stakeholder trust can reinforce operational routines by strengthening managerial commitment and normalising inclusive practices as part of standard service governance.

## 4.4. Analytical integration of findings

Taken together, the results demonstrate that disability-inclusive employment contributes to business value when translated into dependable coordination routines supported by capable supervision. Inclusion did not operate as a symbolic or reputational initiative alone; instead, it functioned as an operational capability that stabilised service delivery and generated credibility-based value signals.

The findings illustrate how internal organisational practices shape external perceptions of reliability and trust, particularly in building and facilities contexts where services are delivered in real time and performance variability is readily observable. This positions disability-inclusive employment as a mechanism linking internal routine stability to external legitimacy and value creation.

## 4.5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate

that disability-inclusive employment becomes economically consequential in building- and facilities-related service contexts when inclusive practices are translated into stable operational routines supported by effective supervision. As summarised in Table 1 and synthesised in Figure 2, routinised accommodation reduces task-level uncertainty and stabilises task–environment fit, while supervisory capability embeds these adjustments into everyday coordination, scheduling, and service governance. Together, these internal processes produce reliable service routines that reduce breakdowns and variability in real-time service delivery. Taken together, these findings demonstrate a clear mechanism-level pathway in which inclusion contributes to economic value indirectly through routine stabilisation, rather than directly through symbolic visibility or compliance-based signalling.

This routine-based interpretation extends prior disability-inclusive employment research that has predominantly framed inclusion through compliance, rights-based, or corporate responsibility lenses (Gould et al., 2020; Power et al., 2013; Stein & Bantekas, 2021). While these perspectives have been central in advancing inclusive norms, they offer limited explanation of how inclusion is enacted in daily organisational practice or how it shapes operational and economic outcomes. The present findings support recent critiques that question whether prevailing inclusion strategies are sufficiently deep to alter organisational processes in meaningful ways (Shaw et al., 2022; van Berkel & Breit, 2025). By contrast, the evidence here suggests that inclusion becomes consequential precisely when it is normalised within routine coordination rather than treated as an exceptional or symbolic intervention.

The centrality of supervisory capability identified in this study aligns with and extends existing research on accommodation as a social and managerial process. Early work by Gates (2000) emphasised that accommodation outcomes depend on interactional dynamics rather than formal provisions alone. More recent studies have highlighted supervisors as key decisionmakers shaping accommodation effectiveness and employee retention (Ali et al., 2025; Williams Whitt et al., 2016). The present study builds on this literature by showing that supervisory capability operates not only at the individual accommodation level, but also as a coordination multiplier that integrates inclusive practices into broader service routines, thereby enhancing operational reliability in building-related contexts.

From a building economics perspective, the findings resonate with research emphasising service reliability, continuity, and reputation as central value drivers in facilities management and construction-related services (Nazali Mohd Noor & Pitt, 2009; Swarup, 2010). Unlike manufacturing environments, building and facilities services are delivered under conditions of high interdependence and limited buffering capacity, making them particularly sensitive to coordination breakdowns. In such settings, organisational practices that stabilise routines can generate economic value by reducing rework, service disruptions, and reputational risk. This helps explain why disability-inclusive employment, when routinised, can contribute indirectly to business value even when it is not externally visible as an inclusion initiative. This mechanism-based interpretation situates disability-inclusive employment within reliability-centred models of value creation in building economics, where continuity and predictability function as primary economic drivers.

The credibility mechanism identified in this study further contributes to economic and organisational theory by clarifying how internal routines translate into external legitimacy. Research on trust and

reputation under uncertainty suggests that stakeholders rely on repeated performance cues rather than direct knowledge of internal processes when forming judgments (Glückler & Armbrüster, 2003; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Consistent with this perspective, participants reported that clients and partners rarely observed inclusive practices directly, but inferred organisational quality from dependable service delivery over time. This positions disability-inclusive employment as a latent capability whose value emerges through reliability-based credibility signals rather than through explicit signalling or branding.

The findings also intersect with broader debates on strategic leadership and organisational resilience. While crisis-oriented leadership research highlights the role of top management in shaping organisational responses under uncertainty (Schaedler et al., 2022), the present study suggests that day-to-day supervisory coordination plays an equally critical role in sustaining operational reliability outside acute crisis contexts. Inclusion, when embedded in routine governance rather than episodic leadership intervention, contributes to organisational resilience by stabilising everyday service performance.

Methodologically, the routine-based mechanisms identified here align with qualitative approaches that emphasise process tracing and analytical generalisation rather than variable-centric explanation (Yin, 2018). By tracing how accommodation, supervision, and coordination interact across organisational levels, the study responds to calls for more mechanism-focused research in both disability studies and building economics. In doing so, it shifts the analytical focus from whether organisations adopt inclusive policies to how inclusion is enacted, sustained, and rendered economically meaningful through routine practice.

Overall, the discussion reframes disability-inclusive employment as an operational and economic phenomenon rather than solely a normative or symbolic one. The findings suggest that inclusion contributes to business value in building- and facilities-related service environments by stabilising routines, reducing uncertainty, and generating credibility-based trust, thereby linking internal organisational practice to external legitimacy and value creation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to (1) examine how disability-inclusive employment is operationalised through routine-level accommodation practices, (2) analyse supervisory capability as a coordination mechanism, and (3) evaluate how these processes generate reliability-based credibility and business value in building- and facilities-related service environments. The findings demonstrate that inclusion becomes economically meaningful when accommodation is routinised and embedded within capable supervisory governance, producing stable task–environment fit and predictable service delivery.

## 6. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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