Journal of Business Ethics
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05457-2

ORIGINAL PAPER

Beyond the Inclusion–Exclusion Binary: Right Mindfulness and Its Implications for Perceived Inclusion and Exclusion in the Workplace

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Received: 1 April 2022 / Accepted: 23 May 2023
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Abstract
This study examines non-Western perceptions of inclusion and exclusion through an examination of right mindfulness practitioners in Vietnam. It contributes to the critical inclusion literature that problematizes inclusion by showing how right mindfulness practitioners rejected the concepts of inclusion and exclusion, and moreover, resisted attachments to feelings of inclusion or exclusion, treating both states as empty and non-enduring. Surprisingly, our study shows how inclusion can generate fear at fulfilling others' collective expectations, whereas exclusion generated a sense of freedom arising from a release from those expectations. Further, our study traces these counter-intuitive findings to right mindfulness practitioners' moral reasoning based upon Buddhism's canonical philosophical ideas. We conclude by highlighting the pressing need for critical perspectives and for further non-Western perspectives to inclusion that contribute to a body of cross-cultural work.

Keywords Inclusion · Exclusion · Mindfulness · Spirituality · Moral reasoning

Introduction

> *"The real inclusion for me is when I do not need to feel included. That is freedom."*

The concept of inclusion is complex, influenced by institutional, organizational, and individual factors and experiences (Ferdman, 2017). In a recent meta-analysis of inclusion scholarship, inclusion is typically associated with generating a sense of safety, a sense of being respected and sharing common values, and involvement and influence for all members of the organization, including socially marginalized groups (Shore et al, 2018). Inclusion is often imbued with a positive tone, and exclusion with a negative tone (e.g., for a review see Adamson et al., 2021). Weick and Sutcliffe (2001), for instance, noted that we are more likely to cling to concepts associated with a positive tone, treating them as fixed and enduring, and reject concepts associated with a negative tone.

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Furthermore, organizations try to mobilize our attachment to inclusion through mission statements, values statements, inclusive work practices, and diversity initiatives, but which may perpetuate negative experiences when our lived experiences run counter to our expectations. The 'costs' of inclusion often include the need to assimilate into organization life (Shore, et al., 2011), and which often constrain and suppress an individuals' uniqueness (Tyler, 2019). Such demands for assimilation and conformity shape self-identity (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013) inflicting a kind of normative violence (Tyler, 2019, p. 53) by requiring consent to the terms of inclusion as a technology of governance (Ahmed, 2012, p. 163). As a result, the experience of inclusion is not a genuine one but rather a form of subjection (Tyler, 2019). To address such problematic conceptualizations, critical scholarship (e,g., Adamson et al., 2021; Dobusch et al., 2021; Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021) has called for the need to explore heterogeneous approaches to inclusion. For instance, Tyler (2019) suggested feminist theorizing within the literature of inclusion to rethink its coerciveness and power dynamics. Dobusch and colleagues (2021) argued for a postcolonial lens to recognize the inherent inequalities and imbalances of power when constructing the notions of majority and minority perspectives.

Following these emerging lines of enquiry, we argue that there is also a need to explore inclusion and exclusion

Published online: 13 June 2023

through a business ethics lens to address shortfalls in existing theory. There is a surprising lack of integration between theories of business ethics and inclusion (Rabl et al., 2020) and the moral implications of inclusion practices (Pless & Maak, 2004). Schwartz (2016) suggested that ethical decision making is a process related to moral reasoning—a cognitive activity of processing information about issues to make moral judgments (Jones, 1991). It is considered to be one of the strongest predictors of ethical behavior (Shao et al., 2008). Despite the importance of moral reasoning in shaping experiences of inclusion and exclusion, studies examining the link between the two have been surprisingly limited (Itani & Chaker, 2021). Existing research has shown a positive association between moral reasoning and the inclusion of 'others' (Ashforth et al., 2016; Choi & Winterich, 2013; Winterich et al., 2009), and forms of moral reasoning can even inform acts of resistance towards inclusion (Jammaers, 2022). Moral reasoning can enhance individuals' moral awareness to question when authority figures impose physical power upon the individual (Warming-Rasmussen & Windsor, 2003). This possible connection between an individual's moral reasoning and experiences of inclusion and exclusion in the workplace motivated our interest in exploring how moral reasoning may help navigate the coerciveness and normative violence (Tyler, 2019) that are often implicit in organizational attempts at inclusion.

Shore et al (2018) highlighted that the majority of inclusion studies are conducted in European and US contexts, and there remains an important gap in our understanding of how inclusion or exclusion is experienced in non-Western contexts (Adamson, et al., 2021; Farndale, et al., 2015). Extending an understanding of non-Western experiences of inclusion can shed light on cultural sensitivities (Cooke et al, 2013) that could address the need for reflexive human resource management (HRM) practices to navigate the moral contours of inclusion and diversity management (Lozano & Escrich, 2017; Pless & Maak, 2004; Rabl et al., 2020). For instance, the notion of reciprocity is embedded in inclusion practices in China and other countries in Asia (House et al., 2004; Tang et al., 2015). Thus, we draw together insights from critical discussions within the inclusion/exclusion and business ethics literatures to explore *how religious minorities (Buddhist mindfulness practitioners in Vietnam) perceive and reason experiences of inclusion or exclusion in organizational contexts?*

To set out the context of our paper, inclusion and exclusion are understood as the lived experiences of individuals (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Sahin, et al., 2019; Shore, et al., 2011). First, we selected Vietnam as the context of our study responding to the challenge presented by Adamson and et al. (2021) and Farndale and et al., (2015) that future scholarship should seek to understand the relevance of cultural context and geography in inclusion and diversity studies. Second, we rely on the narratives of forty-six Buddhist right mindfulness practitioners from across eighteen Vietnamese organizations to explore our research question. Right mindfulness (Pāli: *sati*; Sanskrit: *smṛti*) is an ethics-based state of mindfulness (Purser & Milillo, 2015; Vu & Burton, 2020; Vu & Nguyen, 2022), rooted in the Buddhist philosophy of impermanence (the constant change of phenomena) and emptiness (perceived phenomena are empty of intrinsic existence, subject to interdependence). It reflects a Buddhist relational ontology, holding that what really '*is*' are relations and processes unfolding constantly (Nelson, 2004). This approach reflects a non-conceptual approach to mindfulness (Weick & Putnam, 2006) with more intuition, and less rule-bound perceptions (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). In addition, the ethical dimension of right mindfulness encourages the realization of 'right action' and gives a sense of an obligation to act on the basis of 'right view' (Purser & Milillo, 2015) that informs moral reasoning in Buddhist philosophy (Rest, 1986; Small & Lew, 2021).

Our study highlights how inclusion (e.g., fear of fulfilling expectations) and exclusion (e.g., freedom from fulfilling expectations) were perceived in a nonlinear, non-conceptual, and counter-intuitive way. We introduce the concept of *nondual inclusion* and show how moral reasoning embedded in Buddhism can facilitate an experience of nondual inclusion and thereby collapse the distinction between perceived inclusion and exclusion. We define nondual inclusion as a discerning and non-conceptual state that collapses the binary distinction between the experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Our findings deepen understandings of how moral reasoning is associated with individuals' perceptions of inclusion and exclusion. We used Buddhist philosophical concepts, such as impermanence (recognizing that people and expectations change over time due to their impermanent nature) and emptiness (recognizing that people's agency, willingness, and capabilities are dependent on their interdependent and empty surroundings) in moral reasoning to theorize the concept of nondual inclusion.

We proceed by undertaking a review of the existing inclusion and exclusion literature and introduce canonical ideas of right mindfulness. Next, we elaborate our research method. We then interpret our findings and follow with an extended discussion. Our conclusion confirms our contributions and offers pathways for future research.

Inclusion, Exclusion, and Moral Reasoning

Several different inclusion themes have been presented in the literature, consisting of feeling safe, respected and valued, being involved and having influence, self-authenticity, and recognizing and honoring diversity (for a review, see Shore et al., 2018). Inclusion has been defined in multiple ways with different foci (organizational and individual

levels of foci), including explorations of organizational inclusion practices (Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2006; Solebello et al., 2016), inclusive leadership (Cottrill et al., 2014), inclusive climate (Nishii & Rich, 2014), and the lived experience of inclusion by individuals (e.g., Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Sahin et al., 2019). According to Nishii and Rich (2014), inclusion is defined as a fundamental principle that should be integrated into an organization's practices, norms, and functions. Meanwhile, Shore et al. (2018) describe inclusion as the creation of an organizational environment that all employees experience as inclusive. Thus, inclusion is often treated as a positive and desirable outcome (Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2006).

In organizational contexts, the majority of studies relating to inclusion have tended to focus upon the lived experience of an individual within a work group (e.g., Combs et al., 2019; Roberson, 2006). Lived experiences of inclusion, however, are shaped by how people experience it, including national, cultural and institutional factors, organizational norms, and subjective experiences. Perceived experiences of inclusion are influenced by an individuals' psychological experience of inclusion (Ferdman & Deane, 2014), and the fundamental emotional need for both personal uniqueness and collective belongingness (Lirio et al., 2008; Shore et al., 2011). Inclusion is often seen as a good practice, an opposite to 'exclusion' (Dobusch, 2014).

Workplace exclusion, on the other hand, is "a non-violent form of social sanction (ignoring, avoiding, not including) against those who fail to adhere to commonly held norms and expectations and threaten social stability" (Scott et al., 2014, p. 1236) and can have negative effects on physical and psychological health, regardless of whether exclusion occurs through prejudice, discrimination, or more subtle forms (Shore et al., 2018). For instance, Shore and colleagues argued that high levels of both uniqueness and belonging represent inclusive experiences, whereas low levels of each result in exclusionary experiences. In between these two 'idealized' positions, belonging without uniqueness reflects situations in which individuals are assimilated only when they conform to the organizational culture and its prevailing norms. Further, individuals valued for their uniqueness without a sense of belonging are not considered as part of the relevant group. In other words, inclusion is experienced when there is balance between a sense of uniqueness and a sense of belonging; however, how individuals should maintain their uniqueness and seek to fit in and assimilate in different social and cultural contexts remains unclear. Mor Barak (2015) also recognized that individuals can experience social exclusion in the workplace, and who often must "give up their unique identities" (Mor Barak, 2015, p. 85), thereby stressing that the ability to express uniqueness is key to existing ideas of inclusion.

Such dualistic conceptualization that encourage/force individuals to conform to organizational norms of inclusion have profound implications for minority employees where inequalities and minority/majority constructions often go unacknowledged (Pio, 2021). Minority employees often experience stigmatization and struggle to experience a sense of belonging and inclusion (Dobusch, 2017; Ortlieb, 2020). Further, the experiences of inclusion by different minority groups are likely to be highly specific (Adamson et al., 2021). As a consequence, minority employees are often faced with a decision whether to reveal or hide a personal aspect of uniqueness (Cha et al., 2019; Clair et al., 2005). The decision whether to reveal or hide is shaped not only by the threat of a negative reaction by others but also by concerns of self-expression and authenticity (Brown, 2017; Caza et al., 2018; Winkler, 2018). For example, in the context of minority LGBT employees, Priola et al. (2014; 2018) remarked that heteronormativity leads LGBT individuals to keep their sexuality a private matter by constructing and fragmenting 'sexual' and 'work' identities which contributes to a fear of social exclusion and isolation. Turning to religion and spirituality, there is evidently a further paradox which have crucial implications for inclusion/exclusion practices in the workplace (Pio & Syed, 2018). On the one hand, much of the extant literature has detailed the exclusionary nature of religion and religious practice and rituals (e.g., Aydin et al., 2010; Mitroff, 2003), while the workplace spirituality literature has often remarked that expressing one's spirituality in the workplace is a positive experience (Neal, 1999) and that spiritual expression is connected to experiences of inclusion (Lund Dean & Safranski, 2008). However, while empirical studies are limited, Lips-Wiersma and Mills (2002) found that spiritual expression occurred only when the perceived likelihood of negative reactions from others was low, while Mitroff and Denton (1999) found that expressing spirituality at work was hidden where individual's held doubts about offending their peers.

Perceptions of inclusion and exclusion are, therefore, complex, multifaceted, and paradoxical (Ferdman, 2017; Solebello et al., 2016), intertwined by a "constitutive interrelationship" (Dobusch, 2014, p. 226). There are diverse and contested definitions of inclusion in the literature, as it can be regarded as a process and practice through which organizations and groups capitalize on their diversity management initiatives (Ferdman & Deane, 2014). Inclusion is generally interpreted as maximizing diversity benefits (Combs et al., 2019), yet, inclusion has a 'dark side' and it is necessary to critically examine this dark side in the wider context of organizations and society to expose the power dynamics and normativity that underpin organizational inclusion (Adamson et al., 2021). For example, being included may entail hiding or downplaying unique characteristics of self-identity that are not considered relevant, valuable, or appropriable

(Tyler, 2019), and therefore, is often perceived an act of 'normative violence' used by organizations to satisfy organizational purposes (e.g., Bryer, 2020; Tyler, 2019, p53) enacted through managerial control over the narratives of inclusion (Noon & Ogbonna, 2021). What these kinds of insights suggest is that uniqueness is continually shaped and instrumentalized by the conforming pressures of inclusion, particularly for minority groups. The stark choice, according to Tyler (2019), is between an "alienating, abjecting exclusion on the one hand or an 'assimilatory inclusion' on the other" (p. 57).

According to Pio (2021), it is crucial to hear a wider range of voices through inclusive paradigms which may lead to new critical models of inclusion adapted to different cultural contexts (Adamson, et al., 2021) since inclusive or exclusionary experiences are strongly influenced by the broader social and cultural context (Adamson et al., 2021). Importantly, Dobusch and colleagues (2021) draw attention to the deep-rooted Western-centric idea(l)s of inclusion which shape binary conceptualizations. Furthermore, Mor Barak and Daya (2014, p. 394) suggested that inclusion is one that "respects all cultural perspectives," as inclusion means different things to different people, despite some collective, contextualized, or traditioned understandings. For example, through exploring an indigenous community, Pio (2021) highlights how inclusion is enacted through contemplative action and discernment and provides a definition of inclusion as "the engagement with and of all peoples through enacting processes of honoring each other's unique potential" (p. 21). While embracing different cultural perspectives towards inclusion has been emphasized, there are many minority groups who struggle for inclusion within Western organizations, yet geography and culture have also been largely ignored in critical debates (e.g., Adamson et al., 2021).

To overcome dominant dualistic conceptualization of inclusion in the literature (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013), different attempts have been made to widen scholarship such as feminist theorizations of inclusion to unpack its coerciveness (Tyler, 2019) and postcolonial approaches that deconstruct its inherent inequalities (Dobusch et al., 2021). Tyler (2019) proposed that incorporating feminist theories on recognition, embodiment, and ethics into inclusion literature can help us to re-evaluate its power dynamics and coerciveness. This can be achieved by critically examining our assumptions of inclusion. Tyler challenges us to question the fundamentalist notion of the sameness/difference binary as the only way to understand or practice inclusion. Therefore, feminist theorizing can help us to avoid living a life of exclusion or perpetuating the problem of living in a world where differences are not acknowledged or celebrated, emphasizing the need to move beyond such binary approaches (Knights, 2015). On the other hand, Dobusch and colleagues (2021) advocate using a postcolonial perspective to explore the inclusion of inferior minorities into the superior majority. Arciniega (2021) remarked that the business case of inclusion reproduces institutional whiteness as 'white men' tend to join inclusion efforts when they can achieve specific business benefits and seek advantage out of it. Conceptions of inclusion based on morality are often side-lined (Adamson et al., 2021) and important questions still remain about the ethical foundation and moral implications of inclusion practices and how they can be navigated and negotiated (Jammaers, 2022; Pless & Maak, 2004).

In this paper, we speak to this emerging scholarship to argue that re-thinking inclusion via a business ethics lens is pressing in contemporary organizations. The existing forms of normative violence and minority/majority constructions associated with the concept of inclusion (Dobusch et al., 2021; Tyler, 2019) suggest that inclusion can be used instrumentally as a means to leverage the benefits of diversity (Ferman & Deane, 2014) and gain organizational legitimacy (Lee & Krammer, 2016). If organizations adopt inclusion as a 'technology of governance' (Ahmed, 2012) or a means of subjugation (Tyler, 2019), it is essential for individuals to examine how they may be exploited by inclusion (Rhodes & Wray-Bliss, 2013, p. 46). To navigate being coerced, individuals must construct their own morality (Bardon & Josserand, 2011) as it is important to recognize ontologically who they are and what they are capable of (Foucault, 2008). Through Foucault's 'practices of freedom' (Fornet- Bettancourt et al., 1987), individuals must critically reflect on their situation and challenge dominant norms and values that restrict their actions and to resist domination (Tamboukou 1999) that may place individuals in a morally questionable interpretation of inclusion. We argue that to recognize the problematic nature of the binary logics that shape conceptualizations of inclusion, individuals need to engage in moral reasoning to increase their awareness of coerciveness and power relations (Peters, 2004). Moral reasoning is useful for individuals to develop *moral awareness* (awareness of the moral nature and moral dilemma of the situation) and *moral judgment* (judgment is made between right and wrong) (Craft, 2013; Crossan et al., 2013). Engaging with moral reasoning is important to further unpack experiences of inclusion since moral reasoning is grounded in an 'ethic of care' (Gilligan, 1993) and can help individuals to navigate the moral implications of inclusion practices (Pless & Maak, 2004). In addition, moral reasoning can help individuals to unpack perceived senses of inclusion whereby individuals can be otherwise immersed into normatively controlled senses of inclusion, regulated by organizational structure and climate (Ashforth & Anand, 2003).

Buddhism and Right Mindfulness

Buddhist philosophy reflects an ethical and moral way of living based on the Four Noble Truths (Sanskrit: *catvāri āryasatyāni*; Pali: *cattāri ariyasaccāni*) that highlights the 'right principles' of the Noble Eightfold Path (Sanskrit: *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*; Pali: *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*) (e.g., right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration) to guide practitioners to overcome suffering caused by different forms of excessive attachment (e.g., attachment to desires, greed) (Bodhi, 1984). Right mindfulness, which is part of the eight principles of the Noble Eightfold Path represents an ethics-based state; thus, it is not reducible to meditation (Brown & Ryan, 2003; du Plessis & Just, 2021), but consists of accumulating experience and knowledge leading to self-transformation. Right mindfulness is founded on accumulating wisdom, and which involves being sensitive to one's surroundings and controlling unwanted desires, and alleviates the suffering that arises from being attached to phenomena. As a result, right mindfulness enables individuals to reflect on their experiences (Vu & Burton, 2020), giving rise to self-transformation (Vu & Gill, 2018).

Unlike secular mindfulness practices that aim at promoting mindfulness as a stress-reduction instrument for all employees (Purser & Loy, 2013), leaders who practice right mindfulness customize and personalize mindfulness according to personal needs, contextual choices, and conditions (Vu & Gill, 2018). The practice of right mindfulness is, therefore, inherently nonlinear and non-conceptual (Shapiro et al., 2018) and allows practitioners to experience life in a discerning way. Embedded in Buddhist philosophies of impermanence and emptiness, right mindfulness allows individuals to be free from grasping and clinging onto phenomena as it acknowledges the nature of reality without conditioned patterns of perception that cloud awareness (Shapiro et al., 2018). Such an approach can generate acceptance, nonjudgment, and openness (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2005), attitudes that make it difficult for individuals to rationalize immoral perspectives and behaviors since there is a negative relationship between mindfulness and all forms of moral disengagement (e.g., Brendel & Hankerson, 2021).

Impermanence

The principle of impermanence[1] helps individuals to understand that phenomena are in constant state of flux and are non-enduring (Van Gordon et al, 2018), facilitating a willingness to reflect and be open to change. It helps the release of attachments, such as to selfhood or organizational purposes, and acknowledges the important role of perpetual change to facilitate a context-sensitive approach that helps prevent unethical intentions. Understanding impermanence also involves the understanding of the principle of dependent arising, referring to the conditioned genesis of phenomena, expressing 'the invariable concomitance between the arising and ceasing of any given phenomenon and the functional efficacy of its originative conditions' (Bodhi, 1980, p. 7). For instance, the notion of impermanence may help explain why perceived experiences are not static but momentary and transcendental, and are context dependent.

Emptiness

Emptiness is a fundamental Buddhist principle that explains all phenomena, including the 'self,' are "empty" of intrinsic existence (Thich, 1999). Emptiness represents the concept that nothing exists forever, and "the notion of having a personal self with any fixity is an illusion" (Schuyler, 2012, p6). It means that having an illusion of a definite self or clinging onto concepts as fixed and enduring states can lead to suffering (Fry & Vu, 2023). From an ethical point of view, what is good is relative to human interests and what is 'good in itself' vanishes due to an 'either-or' perspective that does not arise in emptiness (Vokey, 2001). In other words, goodness should not be judged with reference to human interest (Vu & Burton, 2021). On the other hand, emptiness also highlights how the notions of self, having an identity, or even clinging onto the idea of individual uniqueness is situated in impermanence, and is thus temporal in nature (Vu, 2021b). According to emptiness theory and the two truths doctrine,[2] if right mindfulness is practiced unwholesomely, interpretations remain at a conventional level of truth,[3] where illusions of the self and phenomenon continue to exist, whereas at the ultimate level of truth,[4] the mind is 'empty of specific materiality' (Schuyler, 2012: p. 6). Mental representations of the self as a desirable object are incompatible with the impermanent nature of reality (Sahdra, et al, 2010). This indicates that there are expectations or desires that can never be fulfilled due to the impermanence of phenomena that are beyond an individuals' control and intervention.

Right mindfulness engages with a range of perceptual, cognitive, and affective phenomena (Bodhi, 1994; Kudesia

[1] (Pāli: anicca; Sanskrit: anitya)—the universe is in constant change, independent of human desires.

[2] Nāgārjuna's 'two truths' doctrine (*satyadvaya*) in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (The Fundamental Verses of the Middle Path) (XXIV.8-10) – an epistemological/pedagogical notion of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

[3] (Sanskrit: *saṃvṛti-satya*, Pāli: *sammuti sacca*) – experience of a concrete world.

[4] (Sanskrit: *paramārtha-satya*, Pāli: *paramattha sacca*) – experience of a world which is empty of concrete and inherent characteristics.

& Nyima, 2015) which expands consciousness beyond a mental faculty to an emergent experience (Kudesia & Nyima, 2015). This characteristic of right mindfulness might help individuals to more deeply understand the multiplicity of experiences in organizational life (Zanoni et al, 2010). Furthermore, while studies have highlighted the positive effects of right mindfulness remarking how it can promote moral reasoning (Pandey et al., 2018; Shapiro et al., 2012), it remains unclear whether right mindfulness can have implications for perceived experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

Research Context

After the 'đổi mới' (renovation) policy in 1986, Vietnam has been a transitional economy, moving from a state-controlled to less restricted market-orientation. However, unlike its economic reforms, reforms to the legal and regulatory systems have not generated well-functioning markets, and in general terms, this has led to ineffective law enforcement resulting in institutionalized corruption (Cuadra et al, 2010; Vu, 2021a) and a reduced level of trust in institutions and society (Vu & Tran, 2021). Buddhists in Vietnam are considered a minority and account for 4.8% of the country's population (Government News, 2019). Yet, Vietnam has experienced a rising 'Engaged Buddhist' movement that encourages the application of Buddhist practices in organizational contexts (e.g., Shin et al., 2021; Vu & Burton, 2021), in response to the rapid socio-economic changes which have brought feelings of powerlessness in people's lives (Taylor, 2004). In the scope of this paper, we examined Buddhist practitioners of the Mahayana school since this tradition embraces the idea of 'seeing things as they are,' appreciating the conditioned nature of propositional truth and the experiential knowledge of intrinsic goodness (Vokey, 2001). Our sample of right mindfulness practitioners in Vietnam therefore represented an intriguing sample from which to explore our research questions.

Method

Forming part of a larger study of the application of Buddhist philosophy in the workplace, we recruited forty-six participants from across eighteen Vietnamese organizations across a number of different industrial sectors. The profile of our interviewees is shown in Table 1.

Participants in our study self-reported that they followed the Mahāyāna school. They claimed that there were practicing right mindfulness with an emphasis on emptiness (Pāli: *suññatā*, Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*). The philosophy of Madhyamika in the Mahāyāna school propounded by Nāgārjuna is based on the insights of emptiness (*sunyata).* The participants were recruited between 2018 and 2019, and interviews were conducted during this period as part of a larger and ongoing project examining the application of Buddhist philosophies and practices in business management. We interviewed all participants face to face and each interview was conducted at the participants' place of work in a private meeting room. Each interview lasted about one hour. We approached the interviews without an extensive interview schedule, preferring instead to adopt a largely unstructured and emergent approach. We began the interviews by describing to participants that we were interested in their experiences of spirituality in a work setting, their feelings, emotions, and the tensions and challenges they faced. Thus, we located the interview within the field of spirituality and work to align with our research interests but allowed any specific connections to concepts in the literature such as 'inclusion,' 'exclusion,' or 'moral reasoning' to emerge spontaneously. We posed an initial opening question: "How does your spiritual practice relate to the work context?"; however, follow-up questions varied in each interview in order to more deeply explore responses that related to our research interests. We recognize that by disclosing a priori our interests in the connection between spirituality and work, subsequent remarks by participants may be colored accordingly. Therefore, in our follow-up questioning, we were mindful to search for alternative explanations. For instance, where participants remarked that Buddhist philosophy influenced their perceptions, attitudes, or actions, our follow-up questions offered opportunities for the narration of other personal, organizational, social, or cultural influences, such as "What else was going on that might have influenced this?" This approach helped us consider pragmatic validity (Sandberg, 2005) by asking follow-up questions that encourages interviewees to provide concrete contexts and demonstrate how they related their reflections on inclusion/exclusion experiences. The interviews were conducted in the form of a dialog because we wanted to avoid one-sided probing that could have limited our exploration of the lived experiences of Buddhist practitioners and their understanding and reasoning of their experiences (Sandberg, 2005).

The interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim in Vietnamese by the lead author and double-translated in English by the lead author and a translation agency. Differences in translation were resolved through discussion between the lead author and the agency. Template analysis was used to analyze the transcribed interview data. Our coding followed the approach developed by King (2004) which has gained traction in multiple disciplines including management and organization studies. Template analysis is a flexible type of thematic analysis that emphasizes hierarchal coding but balances structure with flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study. As an interpretivist and inductive study, we were primarily concerned with the richness of the narratives of participants and we judged that the

Table 1 Respondents' information

Person	Gender	Position	Company	Sector
B1	F	Medical Staff	C1	Pharmaceutical
B2	F	Product Development Staff		
B3	M	Project Manager		
B4	F	Marketing Staff		
B5	M	Public Relations Coordinator	C2	Hospitality
B6	M	Customer Service Manager	C3	Advertisement
B7	M	CEO Assistant		
B8	F	Secretary	C4	Manufacturing
B9	M	HR professional	C5	Information Technology
B10	M	Team leader	C6	Insurance
B11	F	Customer relations supervisor	C7	Law
B12	F	Lawyer		
B13	M	Finance Staff	C8	Banking and Finance
B14	F	Customer service support staff		
B15	M	Journalist	C9	Journalism
B16	F	Corporate lawyer	C10	Business Consultant
B17	M	Accountant	C11	Transportation
B18	F	Manging Director	C12	Construction
B19	M	Financial Manager		
B20	F	Financial Analyst	C13	Banking and Finance
B21	F	Broker	C14	Financial Services
B22	M	Broker		
B23	F	Project Manager	C15	Telecommunication
B24	M	Customer Service Manager	C14	Hospitality
B25	F	Human Resource Manager	C15	Retail
B26	F	Marketing Consultant		
B27	F	Product Consultant		
B28	M	Managing Director	C16	IT Consultancy
B29	M	Product Specialist		
B30	F	Training staff	C17	Management Consulting
B31	F	Expert Consultant		
B32	M	Design team leader	C18	Marketing Consulting
B34	F	Branch Manager	C19	Pharmaceutical
B35	M	IT Staff	C20	Hospitality
B36	F	Administrator	C21	Oil and Gas
B37	M	Credit Manager	C22	Finance & Banking
B38	F	Customer Relations Manager	C23	Retail
B39	F	Consultant	C24	Business Consulting
B40	M	Change Manager		
B41	M	Credit analyst	C25	Banking
B42	M	CEO	C26	Education
B43	F	Accountant	C27	Transportation Services
B44	M	HR Staff	C28	Pharmaceutical
B45	M	Marketing Staff		
B46	F	Product representative		

flexibility of template analysis would allow us to balance a search for 'integrative' themes that permeated the data but at the same time not lose sight of interesting and unusual detail (King & Brookes, 2016). To support this aim, and given the complexities involved in both Buddhist philosophy and translation, we emailed a copy of the interview transcript to each participant to check for accuracy as well as examples of our coding (King, 2004).

In our coding, we approached the data from a contextual constructivist perspective (e.g., Madill et al., 2000) and proceeded as follows: first, each author read through 6 randomly selected transcripts several times to familiarize ourselves with a sub-set of the data. We then developed an initial coding template for this sample of the data through inter-coder discussion and dialog (Miles et al., 2013). Although we were interested in ideas that related to our research interests, we avoided using any a priori codes derived from the literature in order to minimize the imposition of themes onto the data. We used NVivo11 to support our coding process.

As the interviews were wide ranging, the themes that we identified were similarly diverse. Following coding of the first 6 transcripts, however, we identified that the way in which participants perceived inclusion and exclusion at work were important themes and that philosophical ideas relating to Buddhism were frequently offered as explanations for attitudes, motivations, practices, and outcomes. Following discussion between the two authors, we were satisfied that 'Buddhist philosophy' was an important theme to our participants. Before proceeding further, we revisited the literature to identify existing theory that could help us interpret our data (King, 2004). Following, we coded the remainder of the data with the themes of 'inclusion,' 'exclusion,' and 'Buddhist philosophy' in mind but allowed space for other sub-themes and completely new themes and to emerge.

To attain transparency and reliability of the coding process, each interview transcript was coded separately one at a time by both authors. Where new themes emerged or other changes to the templates were made, previously analyzed interview transcripts were re-examined, and this iterative process continued ad-finetum. An example of our approach is as follows: while we had identified the theme of 'Buddhist philosophy,' it became evident that as we coded, particular Buddhist philosophical ideas were emerging as the foundation of their moral reasoning. For instance, impermanence, non-attachment, and emptiness were commonly mentioned as foundational explanations. As a consequence, we were able to add color to the 'Buddhist philosophy' theme by developing sub-themes of impermanence, non-attachment, and emptiness and identifying connections between these sub-themes. To ensure that our analysis reflects communicative validity (Sandberg, 2005), we relied on intersubjective judgment to determine the plausibility of our analysis. We accomplished this by cross-checking our coding and interpretations with the interviewees where necessary to check the interpretation of the data. Cross-checking interpretations with interviewees also allowed us to ensure that we did not overlook taken-for-granted phenomena (Lather, 1993; Sandberg, 2005). For instance, we shared some alternative interpretations with interviewees to seek their advice on our interpretation of the data. The integrative themes and differences in coding are shown in Table 2.

Interpretations of Right mindfulness

In line with Buddhist philosophy, the participants in our study identified that right mindfulness helped them to recognize forms of attachment and appreciate the impermanent and empty nature of all phenomena. As participants explained:

> Right mindfulness is a practice that guides and helps me to attain wisdom by realizing the truths. What I mean by truths is the ability to realize that any forms of attachment can lead to suffering because you can never be attached to things which are impermanent and non-existent in nature. For example, in a business context, your business partner could turn into your competitor overnight because people can change that easily. Attachment to things or relationships can be devastating. (B18C12)

Participants highlighted that right mindfulness is part of the path to comprehend the 'Noble Truths' and to eradicate different forms of suffering. There is a need to remove mental fixations to phenomena to suppress suffering, due to attachment to expectations. Though many participants shared with us that an essential aim of Buddhist practice is to overcome attachments; however, in the work context, they acknowledged that this is not always attainable and it requires long-term effort, and often it may be an aim that can never be fully achieved. For example,

> Learning about non-attachment has always been the hardest lesson for me. In Buddhism, everything has a solution if you learn how to let go. But for me, it has never been easy, and never will be. I practice mindfulness to be aware of my attachments, but sometimes it takes many lessons to learn form. When you have power like me in my leadership role, there is an ongoing struggle to fight against that leadership 'greed' to attain organizational goals and meet others' expectations. So it is not easy at all. (B42C26)

Participant B42C26 mentioned the difficulties in practicing non-attachment in leadership. More specifically, the participant shared that as a leader, there are goals and objectives that he needs to attain to fulfill expectation such as successfully bidding for a training project for middle managers in state-owned enterprises. However, to gain such contracts, unethical lobbying is necessary in the state-owned sector. He shared that

> Our investors constantly ask us to expand our training programs for middle managers in some local banks […] this requires a lot of lobbying activities to con-

Table 2 Coding template and themes

Integrative theme	Main themes	Example verbatim quotation
Interpretations of right mindfulness	Recognizing forms of attachment due to impermanence and emptiness Requires ongoing effort to overcome attachment Skilful application to experience impermanence and emptiness	■ Right mindfulness is a practice that guides and helps me to attain wisdom by realizing the truths. What I mean by truths is the ability to realize that any forms of attachment can lead to suffering because you can never be attached to things which are impermanent and non-existent in nature [emptiness]. (B18C12) ■ I practice mindfulness to be aware of my attachments, but sometimes it takes many lessons to learn form. When you have power like me in my leadership role, there is an ongoing struggle to fight against that leadership 'greed' to attain organizational goals and meet others' expectations. (B42C26) ■ Some people I know took more than 20 years to master right mindfulness (B3C1) ■ I practice mindfulness more freely now, without being attached to an outcome, which has helped me to experience impermanence and emptiness more effectively. (B34C19) ■ Many Buddhists are trapped into a self-fulfillment attitude when practicing mindfulness […] Those who practice wholesomely would be able to understand that no suffering lasts forever [impermanence] and there is no self to be fulfilled with mindfulness because the self does not exist independently [emptiness]. (B42C26)
Enactments of right mindfulness influencing sense of inclusion, exclusion	Empty of expectations (on the basis of and emptiness*)*	■ It is impossible to satisfy everyone's needs. For me, being excluded is neither good nor bad because it is empty in nature. (B28C16) ■ So, for me there is no need to be disappointed when there are signs that others may not like to share as much as I wanted them to because it may just be my assumption and it may not be the case [emptiness] (B40C24)
	Experiences of exclusion (on the basis of impermanence)	■ No expectations, no fear. Being excluded is an experience that everyone has had at some point [impermanence]. There's no need to be afraid of it. (B19C12) ■ I used to be afraid that I might not be accepted or included at work. But the more I practice Buddhism, the more I come to realize that it is impossible to have things as I want because I do not control people and the context [impermanence]. (B25C15) ■ It simply means that I respect differences while not being ignorant by trying to change others or trying too hard to fit in [impermanence] (B3C1)
	Experiences of inclusion (on the basis of impermanence and emptiness)	■ Fear is attachment. Because we are attached to something, we fear losing it or not being able to attain it. So, clinging onto the need to be included can easily lead to fear because a sense of inclusion is impermanent [impermanence]. (B24C14) ■ Inclusion? It is such an impermanent [impermanence]and fragile state that often rejected if I don't follow some certain rules of fulfil certain expectations of others and my company (B27C15) ■ From my experience, no sense of inclusion lasts forever [impermanence]. I feel included in some occasions but excluded in others. (B37C22) ■ Being included or not is a matter of the mind… [emptiness] (B37C22) ■ There is a difference between pretending to be included and recognizing that a sense of inclusion is empty [emptiness]. (B40C24)

nect with state officials through both financial and non-financial commissions to obtain approval for pilot projects and start bidding. To be honest, I'm not quite comfortable with this and struggle to align it with my mindfulness practice […] I have to be very careful to consider to what extent my decision to engage or not engage in those activities is acceptable or justifiable given the circumstances. (B42C26)

This highlights how mindfulness practice is associated with tensions in moral reasoning—whether to engage with lobbying activities to fulfill stakeholders' and shareholders' expectations.

In leadership positions, participant B3C1 also shared that sometimes he formed a strong attachment to his leadership image and that it becomes a 'leadership habit':

> Some people I know took more than 20 years to master right mindfulness but without success. Still, they

> are attached to daily life habits… I still sometimes cannot avoid caring for my image as a leader or worried about how people might look at what I do and say… (B3C1)

Because of the challenging nature of attaining non-attachment, practicing right mindfulness requires skillfulness. For instance,

> People practice mindfulness differently and it changes over time. […] In the early years of my practice, I was too concerned with staying alert all the time and started judging and analyzing everything around me. I thought that was right mindfulness. But right mindfulness is never 'right' when there is attachment associated with it […] I practice mindfulness more freely now, without being attached to an outcome, which has helped me to experience impermanence and emptiness more effectively. (B34C19)

> Most people practice right mindfulness knowing the principles but unable to practice them […] many Buddhists are trapped into a self-fulfillment attitude when practicing mindfulness […] Those who practice wholesomely would be able to understand that no suffering lasts forever and there is no self to be fulfilled with mindfulness because the self does not exist independently. Can we control the external environment that affects the illusion of the 'self'? The obvious answer is no. (B42C26)

Participants highlighted the crucial role of avoiding attachments—even the practice of right mindfulness. For instance, B42C26 shared that when there is attachment to the way he practices mindfulness, he can be trapped into an attitude of self-fulfillment that ironically can lead to the illusion of a self. In other words, being overly attached to the practice of mindfulness runs the risk of failing to acknowledge how the practice of right mindfulness is conditioned by not only the practitioner but also by others and the context (e.g., organizational norms, culture, practice, etc.). This highlights how mindfulness practice is associated with tensions between the self (in practicing mindfulness) and the context, whereby contextualization take place in navigating an individuals' sense-making of the world (Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2007).

Interpretations of right mindfulness highlighted three Buddhist philosophical ideas that influenced their moral reasoning towards inclusion/exclusion. First, interviewees reaffirmed that attachment to expectations regarding any phenomena (e.g., the expectation to fit in and assimilate) is a form of suffering that should be eliminated. Second, while removing expectations is encouraged, expectations of stakeholders cannot be ignored, which created tensions in moral reasoning. Participants explained that they considered whether it is morally acceptable to meet others' expectations at all costs. This reasoning highlights how morality is taken into account in the way interviewees interpret phenomena. Lastly, interviewees emphasized the need to be contextually relevant and sensitive to abandoning practices deemed inappropriate in organizations.

Based on the philosophical underpinnings guiding right mindfulness practitioners, next we unpack how the enactment of right mindfulness practices can influence the interpretation of experiences of inclusion/exclusion.

Enactment of Right Mindfulness Influencing Inclusion/Exclusion

Empty of Expectations

Participants highlighted that all concepts are empty in nature. Therefore, 'negative' concepts such as exclusion are not necessarily perceived as negative. Accepting the possibility of being excluded is embraced as it is perceived as impossible to meet all kinds of expectations and to fit in at all time. For example,

> Why should I try to be accepted by others? It is impossible to satisfy everyone's needs. For me, being excluded is neither good nor bad because it is empty in nature. Accepting exclusion is normal because the reality is that I cannot keep chasing after others' expectations to be accepted. (B28C16)

> I used to be excluded many times. So what? I cannot expect people to like me all the time. (B37C22)

Participants emphasized that avoiding exclusion is unnecessary for a number of reasons such as the impossibility to fulfill others' expectations (B28C16) and the impossibility of being liked by others all the time (B37C22). Particularly, accepting exclusion as an ethical choice was conveyed by some participants:

> I would certainly not want to be seen as an inclusive member of a group or culture that does not respect others' privacy and uses it as an advantage to backstab someone they dislike (B15C9)

> I would not fulfill expectations to bribe people to get the project done, even if that means I am not part of the 'gang' (B23C15)

For right mindfulness practitioners, inclusion at the cost of 'backstabbing' colleagues in journalism (B15C9) or engaging in bribery to speed up a project in a telecommunications company (B23C15) was not considered morally acceptable. Therefore, exclusion is perceived as a necessary state of being mindful and morally justifiable. It reflects how accepting the expectations to be 'included'

can be conditioned by others and the context and can be a source of suffering. Right mindfulness has helped practitioners raise their awareness of potential false assumptions and wrongdoings associated with the condition to be ‘included,’ which informs the realization of moral identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Choi & Winterich, 2013).

Participants rejected the need to pursue inclusion and explained how the concept of exclusion is not necessary a negative experience as it can be a state of mind that is made up of individuals’ assumptions:

> We all have assumptions. Being left out and being appreciated are all assumptions because we can only assume what others think about us. So, for me there is no need to be disappointed when there are signs that others may not like to share as much as I wanted them to because it may just be my assumption and it may not be the case. (B40C24)

Such justifications highlight how pursuing inclusion includes becoming aware of potential false assumptions and wrongdoings, and which informs a realization that choosing to be included does not necessarily align with moral principles. Likewise, perceptions of inclusion can also be experienced subjectively and that subject experiences may not reflect its true nature.

Over-attachment to the need to feel included can also reflect a form of suffering as it signifies a need to fulfill other’s expectations.

> Inclusiveness is a subjective feeling. It all depends on how I look at it. Everybody experiences inclusion differently because it is empty in nature. For you, inclusion is sharing, but others may only feel included if they have power and influence on others. For me, there is no such thing as definite inclusion, only moments of inclusion. So I cannot define it for you because it is undefinable in nature. (B42C26)

Participant B42C26 explained that inclusion only exists in moments rather than a state—which indicates its temporal and transient nature. Participant B42C26 shared that inclusion is mainly about power and influence, which shows how individuals can mistakenly co-opt inclusion to maintain power and influence (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). Approaches to self-fulfillment then become a moral judgment (Craft, 2013; Crossan et al., 2013) in how some individuals may engage with the experience of inclusion. However, for participant B42C26, experience of inclusion is not specifically the possession of power and influence, but is it an undefinable and complex phenomenon.

According to participants, perceiving a sense of inclusion/exclusion mindfully involves the ability to recognize their empty states, that neither states are permanent and the need to avoid one and pursue the other is incompatible with how phenomena are empty and are conditioned and condition by others rather than the self.

Experiences of Exclusion

Some participants shared that when they were able to practice right mindfulness skillfully, they were able to experience the notion of emptiness through understanding exclusion as an “empty state.” The practice of right mindfulness freed participants from the fear of being excluded: For instance,

> No expectations, no fear. Being excluded is an experience that everyone has had at some point. There’s no need to be afraid of it. (B19C12)

> I used to be afraid that I might not be accepted or included at work. But the more I practice Buddhism, the more I come to realize that it is impossible to have things as I want because I do not control people and the context. What I can control is my expectations. Without expectations, I have become free from fear, from the expectations to be included. (B25C15)

Without the need to fulfill individuals’ or organizational expectations, the fear of having to experience a sense of exclusion was eliminated and they abandon the fear of feeling excluded. Respondents rejected the need to care for others’ expectations and reasoned that it is beyond their capabilities to fulfill everyone’s expectations at all times, which reflects resistance to the need to maintain inclusion at all costs. However, participants who practiced right mindfulness also highlighted that it is important not to be overly attached to the idea of exclusion:

> It is OK to be excluded but I am also aware that I should not ignore others’ feelings and expectations… we work together and still need each other’s support in many work…I just tried not to be overly attached to and suffer from them […] (B34C19)

> Accepting exclusion is not the same as an ‘I don’t care’ attitude … [it] can harm professional collegial relationships and partnerships…It simply means that I respect differences while not being ignorant by trying to change others or trying too hard to fit in. (B3C1)

While exclusion can generate a sense of freedom, it should not be interpreted in an ‘extreme’ stance since ignoring other’s feelings (B34C19) is equally extreme and can lead to unintended consequences (e.g., jeopardizing collegial relationships and partnerships), or being perceived as reluctant or ambivalent. The need to fulfill other’s expectations comes with boundary conditions as explained by participant B3C1. Over-attachment to exclusion in forms of ambivalence or reluctance with an ‘I don’t care’ attitude is different than

skillfully accepting inclusion by not trying too hard to fit in. The above demonstrates how inclusion and exclusion should not be categorized as good and bad since accepting exclusion shows a mindful approach whereby individuals reject to fit it at all costs. While most literature positions exclusion as a negative effect on individuals physical and psychological health (e.g., Scott et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2018), our findings highlight exclusion is not entirely a negative state but can reflect a 'mindful state' in rejecting the need to fulfill expectations.

Experiences of Inclusion

Likewise, a sense of inclusion can generate a certain level of fear and may not always carry positive outcomes. For instance:

> Fear is attachment. Because we are attached to something, we fear losing it or not being able to attain it. So, clinging onto the need to be included can easily lead to fear because a sense of inclusion is impermanent. It changes all the time since I change and people around me change as well. So yes, I am happy to be accepted at this moment, but what about next month when I make someone unhappy or have a totally different opinion than my team? Do I have to suffer from not being included? Because if I do, that shows a desire and suffering. (B24C14)

According to the above participant, pursuing inclusion comes with the fear of having to keep up with a sense of being included by fulfilling others' expectations. That fear is a form of suffering, resulting in over-attachment to a sense of inclusion without acknowledging its impermanent and empty nature (e.g., a sense of inclusion changes as people and their expectations change over time). Such an experience highlights the hidden cost and boundary conditions of inclusion (Tyler, 2019), questioning the positivity of inclusion in organizations.

The impermanent nature of inclusion is further demonstrated by participant B27C15 below, highlighting the transient and fragile nature of relationships associated with experiences of inclusion.

> Relationships are empty. It may or may not last. I can nurture it but there is no guarantee. The same applies to the sense of inclusion. It takes only an opinion or even an action that can draw scepticism in a relationship. I once debated with my partner about his project as I had alternative networks of supply that can help the project to reduce cost. He thought I was gaining some sort of incentive and was taking advantage of our close relationship. It seems that openness was no longer an option after that. I tried to explain a couple of times but without success so I stopped. Inclusion? It is such an impermanent and fragile state that often rejected if I don't follow some certain rules of fulfil certain expectations of others and my company […] (B27C15)

The fragile nature of inclusion that the participant shared reflects how inclusion has a fragile and contradictory character as efforts to include are often grounded on normative principles, the need to fulfill expectations to adhere to dominant norms and values to fit it, thus generating dominant hierarchies and binaries (e.g., Adamson et al., 2020; Priola, et al. 2018; Tyler, 2019) rather than a genuine sense of inclusion. Participant B27C15 demonstrated how she chose to offer help using her relationships and networks in order to reduce costs for the project, despite organizational and collegial factors that could have influenced her willingness to do so. However, when 'openness was no longer an option', and she was criticized for taking advantage of her relationships and networks, her moral identity was challenged. This illustrates how the pursuit of inclusion can complicate one's moral identity.

By emphasizing how over-attachment to a desire for inclusion can lead to suffering, participants enacted right mindfulness with an awareness of the transient and empty nature of the notion of inclusion. For example:

> From my experience, no sense of inclusion lasts forever. I feel included in some occasions but excluded in others. So, it is no big deal for me to feel included. Being included or not is a matter of the mind…[and] a matter of what I can do, what attachment that I need to consider and what I am willing to let go…I think the experience of inclusion is no longer important for me in cases when 'right intention' and 'right action' are replaced with the groups' instrumental purposes to meet the monthly quota of signed loan contracts even when a firm is on the border line of meeting the credit requirements…(B37C22)

Participant B37C22 shared how being included is a state of mind that should be mindfully recognized. As a credit manager working in a team, he does not want to be included and rejected the sense of inclusion when he mindfully recognized that his moral compass would be compromised if he goes along with his teams' acceptance of low credit rating loan contracts. Participant C40C24 further clarified how the need to be included can be a source of suffering:

> Responding to pressures and the need to be included can lead to suffering. There is a difference between pretending to be included and recognizing that a sense of inclusion is empty. The real inclusion for me is when I do not need to feel to be included. That is freedom. (B40C24)

According to participant B40C24, the ability to recognize an experience of inclusion is key to avoiding suffering. Simply assimilating with the dominant organizational or group norms and expectations is a form of suffering. When the experience of inclusion emerges naturally in a discerning way that is a more genuine way of experiencing inclusion. In other words, our findings highlight how both states of inclusion and exclusion are perceived by right mindfulness practitioners as phenomena without absolute dualisms in the world of conditional relativity (Chinn, 2006; Garfield, 1994).

Discussion

We explored perceived experiences of inclusion and exclusion through a study of right mindfulness practitioners in Vietnam to unravel how their adherence to a moral tradition influenced their perceptions of inclusion and exclusion. Our findings enable us to make two important contributions.

First, the study contributes to critical inclusion scholarship by introducing the concept of *Nondual inclusion.*

From our findings, we conceptualize nondual inclusion as a non-conceptual experience (see Weick & Putnam, 2006) that collapses the binary between experiences of inclusion and exclusion. As we shall explain, experiences of nonduality mean treating each concept as a form of unhealthy attachment and, hence, according to the Buddhist philosophy, as a potential source of suffering (tensions, stress). Furthermore, drawing upon the Buddhist philosophical ideas of impermanence and emptiness, experiences of inclusion and exclusion are perceived as fleeting, transient and non-enduring, and empty of intrinsic existence. Through these three practices of right mindfulness, our study shows how practitioners strived to avoid attaching to inclusion and to cope with feelings of exclusion.

In the extant literature, inclusion is considered as an opposite to 'exclusion' (Dobusch, 2014). Experiences of inclusion have often been conceptualized positively and associated with a sense of belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011), psychological and physical safety (e.g., Shore et al., 2018), and with recognition (Tyler, 2019). Critical scholarship, however, has questioned the all-embracing positivity of inclusion (Adamson et al., 2021) remarking how inclusion has a fragile and contradictory character grounded on organizational-enforced normative principles, instrumentality, and a reinforcement of hierarchies (Priola, et al. 2018), and how there are costs and conditions attached to being included (Gagnon & Collinson, 2017), and how people's need for recognition is exploited (Tyler, 2019).

In our study, our concept of nondual inclusion extends these emerging lines of critical enquiry. Experiencing inclusion and exclusion as unhealthy attachments, which are impermanent and empty, navigated feelings of fear: '*clinging onto the need to be included can easily lead to fear*' (B24C14) through having to fulfill other's expectations: '*there is an ongoing struggle to fight against that leadership 'greed' to attain organizational goals and meet others' expectations'* (B42C26); and facing moral and ethical dilemmas and pressure to compromise between the Buddhist normative philosophy and organizational normativity such as compromising *''right intention' and 'right action' with the groups' instrumental purposes to meet the monthly quota of signed loan contracts even when a firm is on the border line of meeting the credit requirements'* (B37C22). Pursuing inclusion would produce a predictable organizational normativity that would risk being attached to and lead to self-justification. Moreover, as inclusion is perceived as impermanent, attaching to inclusion would produce unhealthy suffering as soon as the positive feeling of inclusion disappear and thereby producing an unhealthy rise and fall in emotions.

Likewise, most studies have positioned exclusion as a negative state (e.g., Scott et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2018) or associated the concept with feelings of isolation (Aydin & Ozeren, 2020). In our study, however, experiences of exclusion were perceived as a potential release from the risk of attachments to others' expectations and organizational normativity, and moments of exclusion were ultimately described by practitioners as senses of freedom: '*The real inclusion for me is when I do not need to feel to be included. That is freedom*' (B40C24). By releasing attachments to inclusion, practitioners were able to mitigate the inevitable rise and fall of emotions (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Furthermore, practitioners were also mindful to avoid attaching to experiences of exclusion. While they experienced a sense of freedom, they also recognized that co-workers could perceive their behavior as a form of reluctance to engage, ambivalence, or even as a source of conflict as '[*it*] *can harm professional collegial relationships and partnerships'*, (B3C1). Thus, practitioners relied upon the notion of impermanence to accept that everything is shifting, rising and falling, and that moment-to moment experience is all there is (Gunaratana, 2002): '*From my experience, no sense of inclusion lasts forever* '(B37C22) or '*there is no such thing as definite inclusion, only moments of inclusion*' (B42C26). Put another way, Bodhi (2000) suggested that the practice of right mindfulness is to "keep[s] the mind as steady as a stone instead of letting it bob about like a pumpkin in water" (Bodhi, 2000, p. 371), and nondual inclusion speaks to this metaphor as practitioners strived to avoid the inevitable bobbing between experiences of inclusion and exclusion and the rise and fall of emotional feelings.

Nondual inclusion—resisting attachment to inclusion and acknowledging its impermanence and emptiness—provides a counterpoint and challenge to recent (critical) inclusion scholarship. Recent scholarship that has attempted

to deconstruct the inclusion and exclusion binary include hybrid inclusion, presented by Dobusch and et al., (2021), who recognized the contradictions and conflicts in organizational inclusion in heterogeneous work contexts. Our findings also recognize the need to overcome "ambivalence, incompleteness and divergence" (p. 329). Nondual inclusion also provides a counterpoint to the idea of peripheral inclusion discussed by Rennstam and Sullivan (2018) who foreground a central role for silencing and voice as a struggle for inclusion and suggested that "inclusion and exclusion exist together" and is a location "not quite 'in' the organizational centre, nor quite 'out'" (p. 189). In both cases, inclusion is treated as a struggle to strive for, rather than as a state that is subjective, contextual, fleeting, and as an attachment to be avoided.

Our study also enables us to extend Shore and et al., (2011) typology that inclusion involves experiences of belongingness and where uniqueness is valued by others, and that inclusion happens when both experiences are fulfilled. Devoid of these criteria, people feel excluded. Our study, by treating inclusion and exclusion as nondual, offers valuable new insights. First, constructions of uniqueness (or difference) relating to spiritual beliefs are few and near absent in the extant literature. particularly in non-Western contexts. Second, our study shows how 'uniqueness' is also perceived as an attachment by right mindfulness practitioners and attaching to any conceptions of uniqueness (such as their right mindfulness practice) is perceived as a further source of suffering: '*right mindfulness is never 'right' when there is attachment associated with it*' (B34C19). Our respondents showed no appetite to be included due to their difference. Third, yet while practitioners strived to release attachments to their own uniqueness, they also resisted attaching to ideas of belongingness in expressions such as '*I cannot expect people to like me all the time'* (B37C22). In other words, right mindfulness practitioners do not act out a 'façade[s] of conformity' (Hewlin, 2003) by conforming with dominant inclusion narratives and inwardly resist assimilation into organizational activities, but rather use Buddhist philosophy as a normative and spiritual resource to exercise a degree of moral agency over work processes and decisions. Furthermore, Podsiadlowski and Hofbauer (2014) remarked that the term 'inclusive' carries an undercurrent of submission to the rules. Tyler (2019, p. 63) further explained that 'inclusion remains conditional upon (i) adding something deemed to be of value; (ii) accommodation to dominant norms, and (iii) making the 'right' (complicit) choices'. To this emerging debate, our study enables us to propose that pursuing inclusion may also be conditional on an erosion of moral agency. Returning to Shore et al., (2011), our study therefore offers a contextual critique of its core premises and that to strive for one's uniqueness to be valued and for belongingness are both attachments to be avoided and pursuing these states can lead to a rise and fall in emotions.

Our second contribution connects to our remarks on moral agency. We extend an understanding of how moral reasoning (at least in the Buddhist tradition) connects to experiences of inclusion and exclusion, an important area of the business ethics literature that has gone largely underexplored (Pless & Maak, 2004). The moral reasoning of our practitioners relied upon Buddhist philosophy and these philosophical ideas helped deconstruct how others' expectations can never be fully fulfilled. It reflects a Buddhist relational ontology (Nelson, 2004) that helps to identify the boundary conditions of how attachment to a sense of inclusion can lead to suffering—a false sense of inclusion. Our findings show how this form of moral reasoning helped individuals resist the coercive and normative control imposed by organizational inclusion practice through expressions such as: '*I would certainly not want to be seen as an inclusive member of a group or culture that does not respect others' privacy*' (B15C9) or 'I *would not fulfill expectations to bribe people to get the project done [to be] part of the 'gang*'' (B23C15). Drawing upon the philosophical notions in Buddhism, right mindfulness practitioners were able to resist attachments to inclusion and thereby rely upon their own forms of moral reasoning and moral agency when faced with ethical dilemmas relating to fulfilling expectations and participating in action that they considered to be unethical. When confronted by organizational pressure for conformity and assimilation, right mindfulness practitioners relied upon a tradition-constituted moral reasoning to navigate and deconstruct experiences of 'being included' or 'being excluded' (MacIntrye, 1988). As MacIntyre (1988) argued that practices (such as right mindfulness) possess their own moral traditions, our participants were less concerned with organizational forms of normativity and more concerned with upholding the moral and liberative ideals of their tradition. These ideals provided a moral canvas for navigating and deconstructing the inclusion and exclusion binary in the workplace.

Practical Implications

While our study focuses on Buddhist practitioners' experiences of inclusion and exclusion in organizational contexts, it contributes to the limited studies exploring the impact of non-Western contexts that influence the complexity of inclusion (e.g., Pio, 2021). Forms of moral reasoning from different moral traditions (in our case Buddhism) can be a useful approach to question the moral implications of inclusion practices (Pless & Maak, 2004). For instance, the practice of right mindfulness can increase awareness of attachments to feelings, judgments, or the need to belong or be unique at all costs. It is therefore probable that other spiritual practices

(from other moral traditions) can potentially become a form of moral reasoning to facilitate resistance to normatively controlled inclusion practices (Jammaers, 2022),

For Western organizations engaged in non-Western contexts, navigating cross-cultural complexity is not easy, and any organizational initiatives that aim to promote diversity or inclusion will need to respect various pluralistic (and often invisible) cultural (Mor Barak & Daya, 2014) and spiritual perspectives represented among its employees. For instance, Buddhist minorities have a tendency to reject attachment to phenomena including the instrumentalization of diversity of inclusion practices. How Western organizations navigate such scepticism require reflexive human resource management. Likewise, in collectivist cultures where group narratives and network relationships are valued, how would uniqueness fit in promoting inclusion practices? Reflexive international human resource management practices, for example, should be embraced in cross-cultural contexts (Francis et al, 2014) to engage with diverse interpretations of inclusion and diversity (Janssens & Steyaert, 2009) and allow space for practices to be contextualized to foster cultural sensitivity from various angles (Cooke et al, 2013). Minority voices should not be neglected but embraced to explore the impact of dynamic value systems and voices (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Shore et al., 2018) in organizations since experiences of inclusion and exclusion were expressed differently by right mindfulness practitioners.

Concluding Remarks

Our study contributes to the critical scholarship of inclusion/exclusion by demonstrating a non-Western perspective of inclusion/exclusion in response to the problematic inclusion–exclusion binary in the literature (Adamson et al., 2021; Rennstam & Sullivan, 2018). Within our context, individuals saw neither senses of inclusion and exclusion as permanent and have no expectations to be included, and no fear of being excluded, realizing the impracticability to fulfill everyone's expectations. This perspective highlights how organizational concepts (e.g., inclusion/exclusion) have no basis in reality and are just tools for interpretative purposes (Kudesia, 2019), and relying primarily on fixed concepts to interpret situations and contexts can overlook features of lived experience and perception (Ashforth & Fried, 1988). Mindfulness practice facilitated a capability to reframe experiences of inclusion/exclusion by recognizing that any categories or labels are ultimately transient and fleeting, and by letting go one can more-easily bring one's own experience and perceptions to bear upon organizational life. Moral reasoning based upon Buddhist philosophy was seen as a mechanism to navigate a normatively controlled sense of inclusion to attain a more organic one, free from attachment.

Our study raises questions on Western conceptualizations of inclusion–exclusion and leaves much room for future studies. In our study, we only examined Buddhist practitioners from the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. Buddhist practitioners from other schools (e.g., Theravada) or who practice Zen meditation within the Mahayana school may have different approaches, perspectives, or forms of moral reasoning when engaging with experiences of inclusion/exclusion. Research may wish to explore the perceived experiences of inclusion or exclusion by practitioners of other majority/minority spiritual/religious traditions in other non-Western contexts in order to develop a body of alternate conceptions of inclusion and exclusion, responding to recent calls to approach organizational inclusion from a relational ontology (Janssens & Steyaert, 2020; Tyler, 2019). This is important because workplace spirituality is often imbued with positive and inclusive tones, and the common assertion that spirituality enables you to bring your whole self to work has been recounted more than several times (e.g., Neal, 1999). However, our study suggests that right mindfulness practitioners rejected the need to attain inclusion and departs from much of the literature that has located spirituality as a positive factor for inclusion in the workplace (Pio & Syed, 2018).

The complexity of inclusion and exclusion that we draw attention to speaks more broadly to the need to further theorize intersectional perspectives to perceived experiences of inclusion and inclusion. Spirituality/religion is only one aspect of a wider intersectional lens that demands further research. There is a need to bring a more dynamic, process-oriented, nonhegemonic intersectional analysis to enhance existing understandings of inclusion, departing from the "normal science" of static, categorical comparisons to a normative-standard basis (Landry, 2007). For instance, placing marginalized groups and their perspectives at the center of studies of inclusion (Choo & Ferree, 2010) and utilizing intersectionality as an analytical tool can illuminate where oppressions and privileges exist (Cho et al., 2013; Collins, 2015).

In addition, we have not been able to address how the collectivist cultural values of our studied context—Vietnam—and the dynamic of 'face-saving' cultural norm could have influenced experiences of inclusion/exclusion or how individuals' nondual perspective navigated such experiences. Future studies would benefit from examining a deeper understanding of the coexistence or tensions between spiritual and religious practices and culture that influence how inclusion/exclusion is experienced in organizational life. Neither did our data enable us to distinguish between experiences of inclusion or exclusion and power dynamics. It is possible that the ability to express aspects of personal uniqueness may be deeply affected by power dynamics and hierarchy. In this case, adopting intersectionality as a processual analytical tool can unpack power as relational, illuminating the interactions at various points of

intersection and thus drawing attention to unmarked groups (Choo & Ferree, 2010).

Finally, moral reasoning and perceived experiences of inclusion and exclusion, examined from different traditions and cultural contexts, would also be an intriguing topic to further investigate the ethical foundation (Lozano & Escrich, 2017; Pless & Maak, 2004; Rabl et al., 2020) and conditions and boundaries (Tyler, 2019) of inclusion. Expanding scholarship in this area would be particularly beneficial at the nexus of business ethics and non-Western contexts.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in submitting this paper to the Journal of Business Ethics.

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