



# **Emerging challenges in Workplace Inclusion: Addressing Bias and Stigmatization Against Neurodivergent Employees through Organizational Training**

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Dissertation written under the supervision of Professor Rosa  
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the  
MSc in International Management Spc. Strategy and Consulting, at  
the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, March 2025.

## **Abstract**

**Titel of the dissertation:** Emerging challenges in Workplace Inclusion: Addressing Bias and Stigmatization Against Neurodivergent Employees through Organizational Training

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**Abstract:** Diversity and Inclusion literature has focused on organizational initiatives emphasizing gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. However, recently, a growing attention has been devoted to the inclusion of neurodivergent people, nonetheless remaining an understudied social group. This study seeks to enhance current knowledge on how organizations can support neurodivergent employees through training programs. More in detail, this study explores how training programs contribute to fostering an inclusive organizational culture. This study deploys an inductive approach, relying on primary and secondary data analyzed through qualitative Gioia methodology. The research focuses on how training programs help address structural, psychological, and cultural barriers faced by neurodivergent employees and the role of targeted training programs in overcoming these challenges. Findings of this study allowed to identify three key dimensions where training programs enhance neurodivergent inclusion: First, strengthening organizational infrastructure and leadership, through modified recruitment models, adapted performance evaluation criteria, and leadership training. Second, fostering psychological safety and authenticity by reducing environmental stressors, supporting peer networks, and promoting inclusive communication styles. Third, driving cultural change through strengths-based inclusion and increasing awareness of neurodivergent capabilities.

Based on these findings, the study provides suitable managerial implications for improving workplace inclusion by addressing bias and supporting neurodivergent employees.

Furthermore, the study contributes to literature on business ethics, by providing original insights into diversity and inclusion, to overcome current organizational challenges in aiming at ethical goals targeting neurodivergence in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Diversity Equity Inclusion, Neurodivergent, Cognitive Diversity, Training Programs, Workplace Inclusion, Psychological Safety, Structural Barriers,

## **Resumo**

**Título da dissertação:** Desafios emergentes na inclusão no local de trabalho: Abordar o preconceito e a estigmatização contra os trabalhadores neurodivergentes através da formação organizacional

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**Resumo:** A literatura sobre diversidade e inclusão tem-se centrado em género, etnia e orientação sexual, mas a inclusão de pessoas neurodivergentes continua pouco explorada. Este estudo investiga como os programas de formação podem apoiar os empregados neurodivergentes e promover uma cultura organizacional inclusiva. A pesquisa adota uma abordagem indutiva, baseada em dados primários e secundários, analisados pela metodologia qualitativa de Gioia. O estudo explora como os programas de formação ajudam a superar barreiras estruturais, psicológicas e culturais enfrentadas por trabalhadores neurodivergentes e o papel desses programas na superação de desafios. Os resultados identificam três dimensões principais em que os programas de formação melhoram a inclusão. Primeiro, o reforço da infraestrutura organizacional e da liderança, com modelos de recrutamento modificados, critérios de avaliação de desempenho adaptados e formação em liderança. Segundo, o fomento da segurança psicológica e autenticidade, reduzindo o stress ambiental, apoiando redes de pares e promovendo estilos de comunicação inclusivos. Terceiro, a promoção da mudança cultural, baseada nos pontos fortes e numa maior consciencialização das capacidades neurodivergentes. O estudo apresenta implicações para a gestão, abordando preconceitos e oferecendo suporte a trabalhadores neurodivergentes. Além disso, contribui para a literatura sobre ética empresarial, fornecendo novas perspetivas sobre diversidade e inclusão para enfrentar desafios organizacionais e promover objetivos éticos relacionados à neurodivergência no local de trabalho.

**Palavras-chave:** Diversidade Equidade Inclusão, Neurodivergente, Diversidade Cognitiva, Programas de Formação, Inclusão no Local de Trabalho, Segurança Psicológica, Barreiras Estruturais

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to my professor, Rosa Fioravante, for her invaluable advice and consistent support throughout my master's thesis at Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics. Her expertise and encouragement were essential to the development of this thesis. I also want to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the interviews for this project. My deepest appreciation goes to my family, who have always provided me with emotional support and motivating words. Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to my friends. Their help and companionship made this academic journey enjoyable and memorable. My time in Lisbon was truly unforgettable because of you all.

Thank you!

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## List of Abbreviations

DEI	Diversity Equity and Inclusion
CSR	Cooperate Social Responsibility
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

# 1 Introduction

For the past 30 years, there has been a growing focus on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within academic debate, business practices, and public opinion (Grosser et al., 2017). These discussions have primarily centered on aspects such as ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, which have gained visibility through social movements, media advocacy, and corporate policies aimed at fostering inclusivity. Issues of gender equality, for instance, have become increasingly relevant to corporate social responsibility (CSR), driven by feminist perspectives and the demand for greater representation in corporate ethics and governance (Borgerson, 2007). Likewise, research such as that by Van Dijk, T., et al. (2017) has highlighted the economic advantages of ethnic diversity, linking it to improved decision-making, innovation, and customer engagement. Similarly, Loiacono & Ren (2018) examine how organizations can create more inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ employees, demonstrating how companies have been encouraged to implement more inclusive policies and approaches. Overall, organizational efforts in managing inclusion have become a cornerstone area of reflection within business ethics scholarship (Schlag & Melé, 2020).

While the scope of DEI initiatives is broad, one area that has received comparatively limited attention is neurodiversity. The latter is a term introduced in the late 1990s to describe the natural variations in human cognitive functioning that encompasses conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyspraxia, and other neurological variations (Singer, 2017).

Unlike traditional deficit-based views, the neurodiversity paradigm emphasizes the strengths and unique capabilities of neurodivergent individuals. Many possess exceptional skills, such as deep analytical thinking, heightened pattern recognition, and creative problem-solving (LeFevre-Levy et al., 2023). Despite these strengths, people often experience several key challenges within the work environment, which hinder their full participation and career advancement (Doyle, 2020).

The major challenges confronted by neurodivergent individuals in professional environments can be summarized into the following areas. Firstly, numerous neurodivergent people are perceived through a deficit-based lens, leading to stereotypes about their abilities and workplace potential (Annabi & Locke, 2019). Secondly, workplaces often lack the physical, social, and structural accommodations needed to support neurodivergent employees, such as flexible work arrangements or sensory-friendly spaces (Doyle & McDowall, 2022). Thirdly, neurodivergent individuals face disproportionately high levels of unemployment, with studies indicating that

around 80% of people on the autism spectrum are unemployed, despite many being competent of working in the right environments (Austin & Pisano, 2017; Annabi & Locke, 2019). Lastly, implicit and explicit biases often result in neurodivergent employees being overlooked for opportunities or excluded from workplace activities, further marginalizing this group (Granger et al., 2023).

Indeed, organizational challenges arise when rigid workplace structures and standardized processes fail to accommodate cognitive diversity (Seitz & Smith, 2016). This can result in lower job satisfaction, higher turnover rates, and missed opportunities for leveraging cognitive differences, which has been linked to higher innovation and problem-solving capabilities (Van Dijk et al., 2017). On the other hand, companies that implement targeted DEI initiatives focusing on neurodivergency have reported improved workplace productivity, team performance, and employee engagement (Austin & Pisano, 2017). Furthermore, research on the topic has somewhat tied successful DEI programs targeting neurodivergency with higher productivity, thus enhancing the business case for DEI on neurodiversity. The business case for neurodivergent inclusion is therefore strong, illustrating that investing in neurodiverse talent benefits both employees and organizations (Ali et al., 2024)

Against this background, training programs hold a particular specific relevance when it comes to DEI practices. Training programs have long been recognized as means to decrease bias, improve communication, and promote inclusivity in the workplace (KALINOSKI et al., 2012). In the context of neurodiversity, they serve as cognitive translators, helping both neurodivergent and neurotypical employees better understand different cognitive and communication styles. They also provide structured approaches to overcoming workplace biases, ensuring that neurodivergent employees are not only accommodated but actively integrated into organizational culture (Wen et al., 2024). However, there is a lack of research on training and neurodivergency, which is striking because training programs can be crucial in fostering neurodivergent inclusion. Given the growing recognition of neurodiversity as a crucial aspect of DEI, this gap in the literature is particularly significant, as training programs have the potential to act as a bridge between awareness and actual inclusion (Khan et al., 2023).

To enhance our knowledge on the topic and overcome this gap, this dissertation aims to answer the research question: How do training programs contribute to fostering an inclusive organizational culture for neurodivergent employees?

To answer this question, the study will examine how training programs can effectively reduce bias and stigma faced by neurodivergence and identify key organizational dimensions of

inclusivity positively impacted by such initiatives. Specifically, the study explores which dimensions of inclusivity are positively influenced by training programs and how organizations can optimize their design. It does so through an inductive research approach, using qualitative data and the Gioia methodology to analyze organizational practices and employee experiences. The findings highlight the crucial role of training programs in challenging biases, reducing social pressure, and providing neurodivergent employees with the necessary support to thrive in the workplace. Besides, the study identifies key factors influencing the success of these programs, such as leadership commitment, structural accommodations, and continuous learning initiatives.

Overall, findings of this study contribute to: first, the literature on DEI by focusing on neurodivergency (Hartman, 2024), which has been a relatively underexplored area within organizational studies. Second, it contributes to our knowledge on literature on training programs aimed at inclusion goals (Ali et al., 2024), within organization studies by highlighting how tailored efforts can address the unique issues faced by neurodivergent employees. While prior research has focused on broader diversity initiatives, this study sheds light on the mechanisms through which training programs can facilitate neurodivergent inclusion, modifying recruitment processes to reduce cognitive bias, providing leadership training to improve communication with neurodivergent employees, and implementing peer support networks to foster psychological safety. Third, while most of the organization studies perspective on neurodivergence has so far focused on the so-called business case for neurodivergent inclusion (Austin & Pisano, 2017), this work focuses highlights the importance of structural, psychological, and cultural dimensions in fostering inclusive workplaces.

From a managerial perspective, implications can be drawn from this study as follows: To improve neurodivergent inclusion, organizations should implement training programs to improve leadership and help managers adapt communication styles, provide structured feedback, and assess performance based on output rather than social interaction. Recruitment and onboarding processes should be adjusted to reduce barriers for neurodivergent candidates by modifying interview formats and offering structured guidance. Additionally, establishing peer networks, and implementing targeted training on unconscious bias and implementing anti-discrimination policies are key to fostering psychological safety and long-term inclusion, ultimately enhancing both employee well-being and business performance.

## **2 Literature Review**

## 2.1 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Organizations

The principles of diversity, equity and inclusion are an increasingly important aspect for organizations trying to establish a platform of equal opportunities in the workplace (Hellerstedt et al., 2023). Therefore, diversity is one of the most widely used terms that can be characterized as the variation in groups, e.g race, gender, generation, sexual orientation as well as cognitive differences (Ng & Sears, 2020). In case of the workplace, diversity is a key driver in a wide range of scientific processes that imply various abilities, different ideas as well as demographics of employees at that specific organization (Bezrukova et al., 2016).

Diversity and equity differ in several respects. Whereas diversity focuses on rational numbers, equality stands for the social, economic and cultural rights of all individuals and the resulting opportunities to achieve them. (Ng & Sears, 2020).

In practice, this often entails putting into place measures that can help to equality and anticipate oppression. On the other hand, inclusion goes beyond integration. It means that every person is accepted, valued, and allowed to fully participate in an organization (Dobusch, 2021). Which also means that every worker should be empowered to participate without barriers and with a sense of ownership, irrespective of their identity (Volpone et al., 2022).

### 2.1.1 The Importance of Fostering Inclusive Workplaces

Having inclusive and comprehensive workplaces is important not only ethically but also for the best interests of the organization point of view. From a moral perspective, fostering inclusive workplaces aligns with the principles of social justice and human dignity ensuring that every employee be treated with respect and fairness (Schlag & Melé, 2020). Practically, research shows that diverse and inclusive teams perform better, demonstrating increased creativity, improved decision-making, and higher employee engagement and retention (Ali et al., 2024). One particularly valuable aspect of diversity in the workplace is the integration of neurodiverse talents (Krzeminska et al., 2019). People with autism are often characterized by exceptional attention to detail, high levels of concentration and strong factual knowledge, making them especially suited to tasks that require precision and analytical depth (Doyle, 2020). Individuals with ADHD, on the other hand, have a strong creative mindset, an innovative spirit and the ability to immerse themselves in exciting tasks (Lerner et al., 2019). Dyslectic people frequently have a holistic way of thinking that enables them to grasp complex relationships quickly and develop innovative solutions. These qualities complement each other and show that

neurodivergent employees can add considerable value to companies (Le Fevre-Levy et al., 2023).

Of course, neurodivergence also comes with challenges, for example in organization or in certain communication situations. However, these can often be significantly improved with targeted training and structural adjustments (Ali et al., 2024). Moreover, similar difficulties are by no means limited to neurodivergent people neurotypical employees can also have problems with time management, concentration or social interaction. It is therefore more important to create a working environment that not only promotes neurodiverse talents but also takes into account different ways of working and thinking (Coplan et al., 2021).

Companies that specifically integrate neurodiversity benefit from increased innovative strength, productivity and problem-solving skills (Austin & Pisano, 2017). However, diversity should not only be seen as an economic advantage, but rather as an essential step towards creating a fair and equal-opportunity work culture. A purely economic perspective runs the risk of reinforcing existing prejudices instead of eliminating structural inequalities (Bezrukova et al., 2016). A truly inclusive corporate culture should therefore not only be characterized by targeted support measures and flexible working models but should also recognize neurodiverse employees as an asset.

### 2.1.2 The Role of Training Programs in Promoting Inclusion

Training programs are critical in the promotion of inclusion since they educate employees, make them think and provide them with the necessary tools to exhibit inclusive behaviors (Kossek et al., 2024). Diversity training is one of the most common practices employed in organizations to manage unconscious bias and increase understanding of diversity among employees (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Good training programs enable the participants to appreciate the concept of diversity, recognize their own biases and learn how to overcome them to ensure that everyone is treated with respect (Wadhwa & Aggarwal, 2023). However, their significance extends far beyond inclusion. They are essential for improving communication, strengthening teamwork, fostering leadership skills, increasing productivity, and adapting to an ever-evolving work landscape (Hutson & Hutson, 2023).

A fundamental benefit of training programs is their ability to bridge communication gaps by acting as cognitive translators, helping neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals better understand different ways of processing information and communicating (Drury, 2025). Miscommunication, for example, is a common challenge. Autistic employees may

communicate in a direct and literal way that some might misinterpret as blunt, while employees with ADHD often contribute fast-paced, creative ideas that do not always align with conventional workplace structures (LeFever-Levy, 2023). Without awareness of these differences, misunderstandings can hinder collaboration and limit the full participation of neurodivergent employees (Hall et al., 2024).

Neurodiversity training programs can for example educate employees on the needs and abilities of neurodiverse coworkers which can reduce prejudice and foster acceptance in the workplace (Kalinowski et al., 2013). Sometimes, these programs entail simulations or group activities where participants can apply the lessons they have learned in real-life scenarios (Chang et al., 2019). Beyond improving communication, training programs also unlock hidden potential.

Many neurodivergent individuals have exceptional skills, such as enhanced pattern recognition, deep analytical thinking, or innovative problem-solving, which are often neglected in conventional workplaces (Austin & Pisano, 2017). Training programs help identify and nurture these talents, integrating them into workplaces that leverage diverse cognitive abilities for increased productivity and creativity.

However, efficiency of the training programs depends on their design and the way they are delivered (Hall et al., 2024). The Literature also shows that one-off training programs are less productive than continuous and applied training programs that are part of the company's overall plans (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Furthermore, training programs must be backed up by leadership and corporate policies to support real cultural change (Ng and Sears, 2020).

Therefore, it is important to embrace diversity, inclusion, and equality in the workplace and implement proper training programs that combat prejudice and encourage people's involvement. Thus, the principles mentioned above should be considered and addressed by organizations in order to develop workplaces where every employee, including neurodiverse individuals, is accepted and encouraged to give their best in the organization.

## 2.2 Neurodiversity in the Workplace

### 2.2.1 Definition of Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in human cognitive functioning, encompassing conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and other neurological differences (Doyle, 2020). The concept challenges the traditional deficit model, framing these conditions not as disorders but as differences that contribute to the richness of human diversity. Neurodivergence, a term often used interchangeably with neurodiversity, describes individuals

whose cognitive functioning diverges from what is considered "typical" or neurotypical (Austin & Pisano, 2017). The neurodiversity movement advocates for the recognition and inclusion of neurodivergent individuals in all aspects of society, including education, employment, and community life (Doyle, 2020). In the workplace, this means creating environments where neurodivergent employees can thrive, leveraging their unique abilities while addressing the barriers they may face.

### 2.2.2 Benefits of Neurodiversity for Organizations

Companies like SAP and Microsoft have pioneered neurodiversity recruitment programs, demonstrating the immense value that neurodiverse employees bring to organizations. These initiatives improved productivity and innovation by simultaneously foster a diverse and inclusive working environment (Hartman et al., 2023). Neurodiverse employees possess various strengths that can add immense value to any organization. Research has revealed that neurodiverse individuals have solid points in pattern recognition, focus, creative problem solving and attention to detail (Krzeminska et al., 2019). For instance, people with autism can have a high sensitivity to patterns or anomalies in data which makes them valuable in areas like cybersecurity, data analysis and software testing (Hartman et al., 2023). In the same way, employees with ADHD are known to be creative and adaptable and do well in dynamic and fast-paced environments (Lerner et al., 2019). It is crucial that organizations that embrace neurodiversity gain from increased innovation and decision making. It is important that diverse teams, including those with neurodiverse employees, come up with novel ideas and solutions by considering different views and cognitive styles (Krzeminska et al., 2019).

### 2.2.3 Challenges Faced by Neurodivergent Employees

Although there are many advantages of neurodiversity in the workplace, neurodivergent workers are likely to face numerous barriers in their organizations (Khan et al., 2023). One of the most common problems is bias and its tolerance, which can take different guises, from explicit bias to more subtle forms of prejudice such as microaggressions (Buckley et al., 2021). Neurodiverse people can be stereotyped as less intelligent and socially gifted, which can result in being left out of team activities, having fewer opportunities for promotion or even discrimination during the hiring process (Davies et al., 2023). A second major difficulty is the

disalignment between the work environments and the needs of the neurodiverse population (Sumner & Brown, 2015). Many workplaces are designed for neurotypical workers, with features like open plan offices, fluorescent lighting, and fast pace social interactions that can be overwhelming to the neurodiverse (Hutson & Hutson, 2023). Thus, sensory overloads, problems with social interaction, and the need for structure are not considered, which leads to stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction with work (Tomczak et al., 2021). Further, disclosure and accommodation can also be difficult for neurodivergent employees. This is because, most individuals have phobia of being stigmatized or discriminated against, making them not to reveal their neurodiverse conditions or demand for reasonable accommodations such as flexible working hours or assistive technology (Buckley et al., 2021). However, this may be because even when accommodations are made, they may not be adequate or may not be well executed, which then adds more difficulties to the neurodiverse employees.

## 2.3 Bias and Stigmatization Toward Neurodivergent Employees

### 2.3.1 Understanding Bias and Stigmatization

Bias and stigma are part of the problems that neurodiverse employees face in the workplace. Bias means the assumptions or generalizations made about people on the basis of their neurodiverse conditions like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia (Doyle & McDowall, 2022). Stigmatization, however, has to do with the process of labeling and rejecting neurodiverse individuals by society due to the biases mentioned above (Boring & Delfgaauw, 2024). Despite having unique skills such as concentration, innovation, and decision-making, neurodivergent individuals are often subject to stigma, which manifests through negative stereotypes that portray them as unintelligent, socially inept, and difficult to get along with (Russo et al., 2017). These stereotypes can result in discriminatory practices for instance, not being considered for a promotion or being teased at work (Loiacono & Ren, 2018). Bias and stigma are evident in the workplace and affect neurodiverse employees in several ways. One of the most typical manifestations can be observed during the hiring process when neurodiverse candidates can become the objects of prejudice of the recruiters or hiring managers (Khan et al., 2023). For instance, conventional interview techniques that are dependent on the use of language can be a challenge to neurodiverse individuals who may have problems with communication (Mellifont, 2020). This can result in eligible individuals being excluded from employment opportunities because they cannot easily express themselves in the manner that is expected by society.

In the workplace, the biases and stigmatization can also be expressed in the form of exclusionary behaviors such as not being included in a group, not being called for important meetings, or being made fun of on account of one's neurodiversity (Morris et al., 2015). Such behaviors may cause neurodiverse employees to feel unwanted and isolated in the workplace. Furthermore, supervisors and other employees may have lower expectations for neurodivergent employees, which can mean they are offered fewer opportunities for training or progression within the company (Mellifont, 2020).

### 2.3.2 Impact of Bias and Stigmatization

The impact of bias and stigma on the neurodivergent employees are extensive and can be seen in different areas of the workplace. Neurodivergent employees who experience stigma and bias in the workplace are likely to be less satisfied with their jobs, more stressed, and less integrated into the workplace (Tomczak et al., 2021). Such experiences can lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, which further adds to the challenges they face in the workplace (Taghikilanidamavandi, 2024). For example, neurodiverse individuals in the workplace may feel the pressure to conceal their neurodiversity in order to conform to the neurotypical workplace culture, which can be exhausting on a personal level (Wen et al. 2024). This masking also has a negative effect on their well-being and also limits them from performing to the best of their abilities. In addition, the fear of being stigmatized or discriminated against may discourage neurodiverse employees from disclosing their conditions or requesting for reasonable accommodations that can help them perform their work duties to the best of their abilities (Tomczak et al., 2021). The effects of bias and stigmatization are not limited to the person and can have important implications for organizations. When neurodivergent people are exposed to bias and stigma, it can reduce performance, increase attrition, and result in the loss of good employees (Khan et al., 2023). For example, neurodiverse employees who are made to feel unwanted or excluded are more likely to disconnect at their work or leave the company altogether, meaning that organizations must spend more on recruiting and training new staff (Honeybourne, 2019). In addition, it means that the organization has a culture of bias and stigmatization that can damage the organization in other ways, such as damaging its image and deterring potential employees and customers who are interested in diversity and inclusion (Volpone et al., 2022). Organizations that do not address these problems may also have legal and ethical problems, especially in countries with strict anti-discrimination laws. However, it

is a benefit that organizations can adapt to the drawbacks of bias and stigmatization to gain new and different strengths and perspectives from neurodiverse employees, which can improve innovation, creativity, and organizational effectiveness (Khan et al., 2023). In general, prejudice and stigma are not only bad for neurodiverse employees but also have several consequences for organizations. These problems cannot be solved unless organizations focus on the need to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace so that every employee, irrespective of their neurodivergence, can be their best at the workplace and contribute to the success of the organization (Ng & sears, 2020).

## 2.4 Training Programs as a Tool for Inclusion

### 2.4.1 Overview of Diversity Training Programs

This concept aims to enhance employees' general understanding of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the workplace. Several key approaches are currently being adopted to address the main goal of diversity training. This can be categorized into eliminating bias, developing compassion as well as encouraging appropriate behavior of employees (Chang et al., 2019). Training Programs are meant to raise awareness and foster a harmonious working environment for everyone by, among other things, helping people overcome their biases, break stereotypes and value everyone's opinions (Bezrukova et al., 2016). For instance, it has been noted that diversity training usually focuses on achieving certain cognitive outcomes such as the acquisition of knowledge on the various forms of diversity for such as gender, race, and affective outcomes that seek to alter the participants' attitudes towards underrepresented groups (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Furthermore, some training programs focus on skill-based training where employees are provided with techniques that can help them work in a diverse team and manage conflict in a inclusive manner (Chang et al., 2019). The efficacy of the diversity training in reducing bias and enhancing inclusion has been well documented. Nonetheless, diversity training can be useful in enhancing the knowledge and understanding of diversity issues while its influence on attitudes and behavior is rather modest, especially in the long run (Kalinowski et al., 2013). A more comprehensive description can be found in research pertaining to reveal that one-off training programs can in some degrees enhance the levels of knowledge among the participants on diversity. However, without extensive follow up, the gains remain limited. (Hellerstedt et al., 2023)

In addition, the efficacy of the diversity training can differ based on the type of program being implemented. Training that uses practical and theoretical group activities such as role play and case studies is more likely to be successful in achieving change in attitude and behavior than training that relies on lectures (Kalinowski et al., 2013). Although results appear consistent with prior research, it is worth noting, that even training programs, considered effective, may have substantial limitations when dealing with existing prejudices as well as trying to change the corporate culture that is hostile to diversity and inclusion (Hellerstedt et al., 2023).

#### 2.4.2 Training Programs for Neurodivergent Employees

Recent developments in the field of (DEI), have heightened the growing need for training programs for neurodivergent employees. Evidence suggests that there is a growing body of several organizations that recognize the importance of their own training programs for managers as well as employees, with extensive guidelines to work with neurodivergent colleagues. This exemplified in the work undertaken by SAP's Autism at Work program. Another well-known example for training programs, is the Neurodiversity Hiring Program by Microsoft, which stands out as the standard in neurodiversity hiring and support efforts at the workplace (Bolourian et al., 2024; Remington, Anna; Pellicano, 2019).

Skill-based testing, assessment as well as internships are rapidly becoming key instruments for demonstrating and assisting the unique skillsets of neurodiverse candidates, whereas the standardized interview by contrast, has shown to be less favorable. Further research of initiatives that are specifically designed to teach neurotypical employees about neurodiversity are well documented. It is also well acknowledged that these initiatives emphasize the need of decreasing bias and support the idea of the desired inclusive workplace. Overall, these trainings can demonstrate the strengths of neurodiverse conditions, the skill of successful conversation with neurodiverse individuals as well as how to facilitate interaction with them at the workplace (Bolourian et al., 2024).

The generalizability of much published research on the enhancement of neurodiversity training is quite challenging, as it often fails to distinguish between the quantity of several disorders and the subtle differences among neurodiverse individuals. For instance, much of the instability in training programs is driven by the lack of knowledge among neurotypical employees concerning neurodiversity. This on the other hand can lead to negative implications on overall training effectiveness. (Markel & Elia, 2016). There are certain problems and concerns

associated with ensuring that neurodiverse participants will be able to engage in opposed training sessions without much difficulty. This is exemplified in the case when training involves a notable amount of group work and presentations. In this scenario, individuals with autism or ADHD, will not be able to participate and interact as easily as they normally would, as their preferred method would normally include individual directions (Markel & Elia, 2016). Despite this, the described problems can be avoided by simply focusing on more flexible as well as all-encompassing training programs, using various methods and materials to teach participants.

### 2.4.3 Key Components of Effective Training Programs

The effectiveness of training programs can be categorised in several key components. A classic example of this is the need of a distinct grounded, strengths-based perspective, emphasising the unique skills and contributions of employees, rather than focusing solely on their challenges. (Dwyer et al., 2023). This approach helps to counteract negative stereotypes and promote a more positive view of neurodiversity.

Second, training programs should be interactive and experiential, incorporating activities such as role-playing, simulations, and scenario-based exercises to engage participants and reinforce learning (Seitz & Smith, 2016).

Third, training programs should be tailored to the specific needs and context of the organization. For example, programs designed for large corporations may need to address different challenges than those designed for small businesses or educational institutions (Dwyer et al., 2023). Additionally, training should be integrated into broader DEI initiatives to ensure that it is aligned with organizational goals and values.

Furthermore, Interactive and skill-building approaches are critical for the success of diversity training programs. Research has shown that training that encourages active participation and practical application of skills is more likely to lead to lasting behavioral change than passive, lecture-based approaches (Paluch et al., 2017). For example, training programs that include opportunities for participants to practice inclusive communication strategies or resolve conflicts in diverse teams are more effective in promoting inclusive behaviors (Van Dijk et al., 2017).

Moreover, long-term training initiatives are essential for sustaining the impact of diversity training. One-off training sessions may raise awareness, but they are unlikely to lead to meaningful cultural change without ongoing reinforcement (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Organizations should consider implementing follow-up sessions, coaching, and mentoring

programs to reinforce the skills and knowledge gained during training and ensure that they are applied in the workplace.

#### 2.4.4 Measuring the Impact of Training on Inclusion

Evaluating the effectiveness of diversity training programs is essential for understanding their impact on inclusion and identifying areas for improvement. Common methods for assessing training effectiveness include pre- and post-training surveys, behavioral observations, and tracking organizational outcomes such as employee retention and satisfaction (Bezrukova et al., 2016). For example, surveys can measure changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported behaviors, while behavioral observations can provide insights into how training influences workplace interactions (Chang et al., 2019).

Another effective method is to use qualitative data, such as interviews or focus groups, to gather feedback from participants about their experiences with the training program. This can provide valuable insights into the program's strengths and weaknesses, as well as its impact on participants' perceptions of inclusion (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Additionally, organizations can track long-term outcomes, such as the representation of neurodivergent employees in leadership roles or the frequency of accommodations requested, to assess the broader impact of training on workplace culture.

While short-term outcomes of training programs, such as increased awareness or improved attitudes, can be relatively easy to measure, assessing long-term cultural change presents significant challenges. One major challenge is isolating the effects of training from other factors that may influence workplace culture, such as changes in leadership, organizational policies, or external societal trends (Hellerstedt et al., 2023). For example, an organization may implement diversity training alongside other DEI initiatives, making it difficult to determine which intervention is responsible for observed changes.

Another challenge is the risk of socially desirable responses in surveys or interviews, where participants may overstate the impact of training to align with perceived expectations (Wen et al., 2024). This can lead to an overestimation of the program's effectiveness and mask underlying issues, such as persistent biases or resistance to change. To address this, organizations can use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as anonymous feedback mechanisms, to gather more accurate and nuanced data.

Finally, measuring long-term cultural change requires a commitment to ongoing evaluation and adaptation. Organizations must be willing to invest in longitudinal studies and continuous

monitoring to track the sustained impact of training programs (Hellerstedt et al., 2023). This includes regularly revisiting training content, updating it to reflect emerging research and best practices, and addressing new challenges as they arise.

## 2.5 Gaps in Literature

The literature review highlights several key findings regarding the role of training programs in fostering inclusive organizational cultures for neurodivergent employees. Although diversity training programs in the literature show results of improvement regarding awareness and knowledge about neurodiversity, research appear inconsistent about their effectiveness, particularly in the long term (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2019). Previous research on training programs designed specifically for neurodivergent employees, such as SAP's „Autism at Work“ as well as „Microsofts Neurodiversity Hiring Program“, can only be considered a first step towards a more profound understanding by highlighting the potential for tailored initiatives to support inclusion (Bolourian et al., 2024; Remington, Anna; Pellicano, 2019). Studies of successful training programs are not only well documented, it is also well acknowledged that they depend on various key implementations, such as strong leadership commitment, interactive and skill-building approaches to align with broader DEI strategies (Ng & Sears, 2020; Volpone et al., 2022). Despite the wide-ranging influence training programs can have on organisational norms and values, it is unable to adequately measure their long-term impact on cultural change. (Hellerstedt et al., 2023; Wen et al., 2024). A closer look to the existing literature on how training programs can effectively foster inclusion for neurodivergent employees, reveal several shortcomings as several gaps remain. Previous studies on the subject have been mostly restricted by focusing on diversity dimensions such as gender, race, and ethnicity while not paying enough attention to neurodiversity (Doyle, 2020; Krzeminska et al., 2019). Nonetheless, all the previously mentioned drawbacks in literature are particularly concerning, taking in consideration all the unique challenges neurodivergent employees face, such as sensory sensitivities, communication differences, and stigma. Therefore, a more systematic and theoretical analysis is required. This thesis aims to contribute to the academic literature to support Neurodivergent employees. Additionally, it seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how training programs can help foster an inclusive organizational culture.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Qualitative Research Approach**

To examine how training programs can contribute to fostering an inclusive organizational culture for neurodivergent employees, the current study adopts an inductive approach, using a qualitative research design. Qualitative research methods are particularly suited to understanding complex, context-dependent phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, qualitative research is known to be well suited to uncover the underlying nuances and lived experiences that often underpin complication in organizational context. As they serve all employees, training programs can play an important role in building an inclusive organizational culture for neurodiverse employees. Qualitative methods can therefore capture rich, subjective and multidimensional aspects of social interactions and are therefore well suited to the study of inclusion and neurodiversity in organizations (Bansal & Corley, 2011). This study employs the Gioia technique to attain rigor and structure within the qualitative paradigm (Gioia et al., 2013). Since it stresses the methodical and iterative development of hypotheses from the evidence, this approach is particularly well-suited for an inductive theory-building process. The authors emphasize that this technique is suitable for discovering new ideas and concepts and is therefore particularly useful in areas where there is a lack of literature (Gioia et al., 2013). This is particularly important with regards to neurodiversity, a relatively new area of academic research, as previously mentioned in the literature review (Clouder et al., 2020). Although the Gioia method is widely used for semi-structured interviews, in this study it was applied to both semi-structured interviews and secondary data sources in a theoretical and interpretive rigorous fashion. This dual approach provides researchers with a powerful tool for discovering and analyzing trends and developing categories and theoretical perspectives. In addition, it is emphasized that the Gioia method should be a flexible framework for qualitative work, rather than a rigid approach. Treating it as a fixed template may restrict creativity and limit its primary aim of rigorously linking data to theory (Gioia et al., 2013). The inclusion of semi-structured interviews alongside secondary data strengthens the depth and validity of the findings by allowing a better understanding of the lived experiences of neurodivergent employees. Combining these data sources also enables a richer exploration of how training programs contribute to cultivate an inclusive organizational culture. Focusing on neurodiverse workers, organizational culture and the way they interact is a truly complex and multi-layered area of research where process is much better than simple measurement (Hartman, 2024).

Gioia's methodology presents a manual and theoretical process for the inductive coding of data and construction of themes so that the research is contained within logical yet flexible boundaries for analysis from a broad perspective, greatly enhancing the rigor of the research. Such qualitative research methods are particularly useful for triangulating different perspectives and tracking the evolution of change in organizations (Jick, 1979).

### 3.2 Data Gathering

Data collection for this study mainly relied on secondary data, supplemented by a small sample of primary data. The complete database can be found in [Appendix A](#). The data gathering process was conducted in four stages, designed to ensure a range of perspectives and rich insights into neurodiversity, workplace inclusion, and the role of training programs in fostering an inclusive organizational culture. This systematic approach ensured the quality and relevance of the data.

The first stage involved online platforms dedicated to neurodiversity, workplace inclusion, etc. Furthermore, they offered foundational insights from experts, advocates, and neurodivergent employees. The forums consulted included: The HG Foundation, Specialisterne, ADHD Foundation, Change the face, One Mind at Work, World Economic Forum and Benefitscanada. The data types collected at this stage included articles like “Expert panel: How employers can support neurodiverse workers through benefits, workplace policies” (Siddall, 2024; Appendix A, Code A4), Benefitscanada, information guides such as “10 Unfortunate and Unfair Reasons Autistic People Have Been Fired” (Heidel, 2023; Appendix A, Code A9), Specialsterne or report like “CHRO Insights Series Report: Neurodiversity” (One Mind at Work, 2022; see Appendix A, Database Code C5). These forums were selected because they explicitly focus on neurodivergence and provide valuable information on best practices, lived experiences, latest research as well as overall trends. Also, firms known for their neurodivergent inclusion initiatives, such as Microsoft, SAP, Deloitte and IBM were researched and selected due to their already established policies, hiring programs and direct voices of Neurodiverse employees and specialized advocates. Data types included company reports such as “Microsoft’s 2024 Global Diversity & Inclusion Report” (see Appendix A, Code C3), employee interviews and stories such as “A Solution Developer by Day and an Aviation Geek by Passion at Neurodiversity@IBM” (see Appendix A, Code N1) or organizational resources like SAP’s “Autism Inclusion: Enablement – Managers” (see

Appendix A, Code O5). This ensured that the data reflected the lived experiences and perspectives of those directly affected by workplace inclusion issues (Derry, 2012).

The second stage included the collection of publicly available data from organizational reports, white papers, and academic articles. Data types collected in this stage included research reports, white papers, and academic articles like the “Thinking Differently: Neurodiversity in the Workplace”(Day-Duro, Brown, & Thompson, n.d.; see Appendix A, Code R1). A focused keyword search was applied using terms such as "Neurodiversity," “Autism”, “ADHD”, “Dyslexia”, "Neurodiversity Hiring Programs," "Neurodiverse Training Programs," "Neurodiversity in the Workplace," "Neurodiverse Hires," "Neurodiverse Workers," and "Neuro-inclusion" to ensure the relevance of the data. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were explicitly defined: data that focused specifically on neurodiverse workers or inclusive training programs were included, while reports addressing general inclusion without referencing neurodiversity, or focusing solely on physical disabilities, were excluded. As such, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were strictly adhered to. Data that did not align with the focus on neurodiverse workers or inclusive training programs were excluded. For example, reports in which inclusion was framed within the scope of physical disabilities were excluded unless neurocognitive dimensions were explicitly described. Furthermore, a snowballing technique was applied by searching articles and reports referenced by the initial 10+ documents, provided they met the clearly defined criteria, which allowed further exploration of interrelated themes.

The third stage involved gathering data from audio and video sources, including YouTube videos and podcasts (see Appendix A, Codes Y1-Y8; J4, J5)) following the same inclusion and exclusion criteria as before. To ensure methodological rigor, a YouTube transcript generator to produce accurate transcripts. This facilitated systematic coding and thematic analysis and allowed for multimedia data to be treated with sound methodological rigor in the same way as textual data. These sources were selected as they offered firsthand experiences and real-world situations involving neurodivergence being provided independent from an organization.

The fourth stage included three semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A, Codes I1-I3) conducted in German which were transcribed and translated using transcription software. The interviewees were carefully selected because they were directly involved, are neurodivergent themselves or have experience in developing and implementing workplace inclusion programs.

The Interviews lasted approximately fifteen minutes and followed a structured script (See [Appendix B](#), Interview Script).

The final dataset includes 51 sources, according to the following:

In total 9 Articles (A), 6 Company Reports (C), 13 Organisational Resources (O), 1 Practical Guide (P), 1 Research Report & 2 White Paper (R), 3 Secondary (J) & 3 Primary Interviews (I), 3 IBM Resources (N), 2 Podcasts (J), 8 YouTube Videos (Y) have been transcribed approximately 8 hours of transcribed content.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

#### 3.3.1 Open Coding

The first step of the analysis consists inductive open coding, a process in which the data were broken into discrete units of meaning and assigned conceptual labels. This approach followed the principle of grounded theory, ensuring that codes were derived directly from the data rather than preconceived categories. During this phase 32 codes were generated. These codes capture observations, participant experiences, and contextual nuances obtained from YouTube interviews. This method adhered to the principle of grounding codes in the participants' language, ensuring authenticity and alignment with their lived experiences. [Appendix C](#) provides a detailed overview of the data structure, including all first-order codes and the corresponding quotes from which they were derived.

#### 3.3.2 Moving from first order codes to second order themes

The second phase of the analysis groups related first-order codes into broader themes to create a more study concentrated conceptual framework. The aim of this step in the thematic analysis was to identify general trends in the data while aligning them with existing literature.

For example, first order codes like “Addressing systematic challenges for Neurodivergence”, “Barriers to successful inclusion”, “Policies for better integration in the Workplace”, “High unemployment rates among neurodivergent individuals”, were recognized from Literature and themed to “Removing Structural Barriers to Inclusion”.

### 3.3.3 Moving from Second Order Themes to Aggregate Dimensions

In the last phase of the analysis, the second-order themes were synthesized into aggregate dimensions that reflect the overarching processes arising from the data. This abstraction step provides a holistic understanding of the dynamics at play to contribute to the theoretical understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace. Throughout this process, reflexivity was maintained by regularly revisiting the raw data to ensure that the emerging themes and dimensions remained grounded in participants' experiences. This iterative approach reinforced the validity and reliability of the findings.

## 4 Findings

This chapter presents the main findings and systematically illustrates them, as shown in Figure 1, Data structure according to Gioia (2013).

The results aim to investigate how training programs can contribute to a more inclusive organizational culture for neurodiverse employees.

In this structured overview, it can be seen how a total of 32 first order codes were generated from the 52 data sets and synthesized into 11 second order themes. The qualitative data is summarized into three dimensions: (1) Strengthening organizational infrastructure and leadership, (2) Promoting psychological safety and authenticity, (3) Promoting cultural change through awareness raising and strength-based inclusion. These dimensions provide a comprehensive overview of the outcomes achieved and provide a foundation for promoting neurodiverse inclusion with training programs. The findings of the study also highlight structural and social barriers, such as hiring practices, leadership and environmental stressors. In addition, they point to the positive impact of training programs aimed at raising awareness, increasing management support and developing skills-based inclusion. All statements are underpinned by direct quotes from participants, which emerge as patterns in the data.

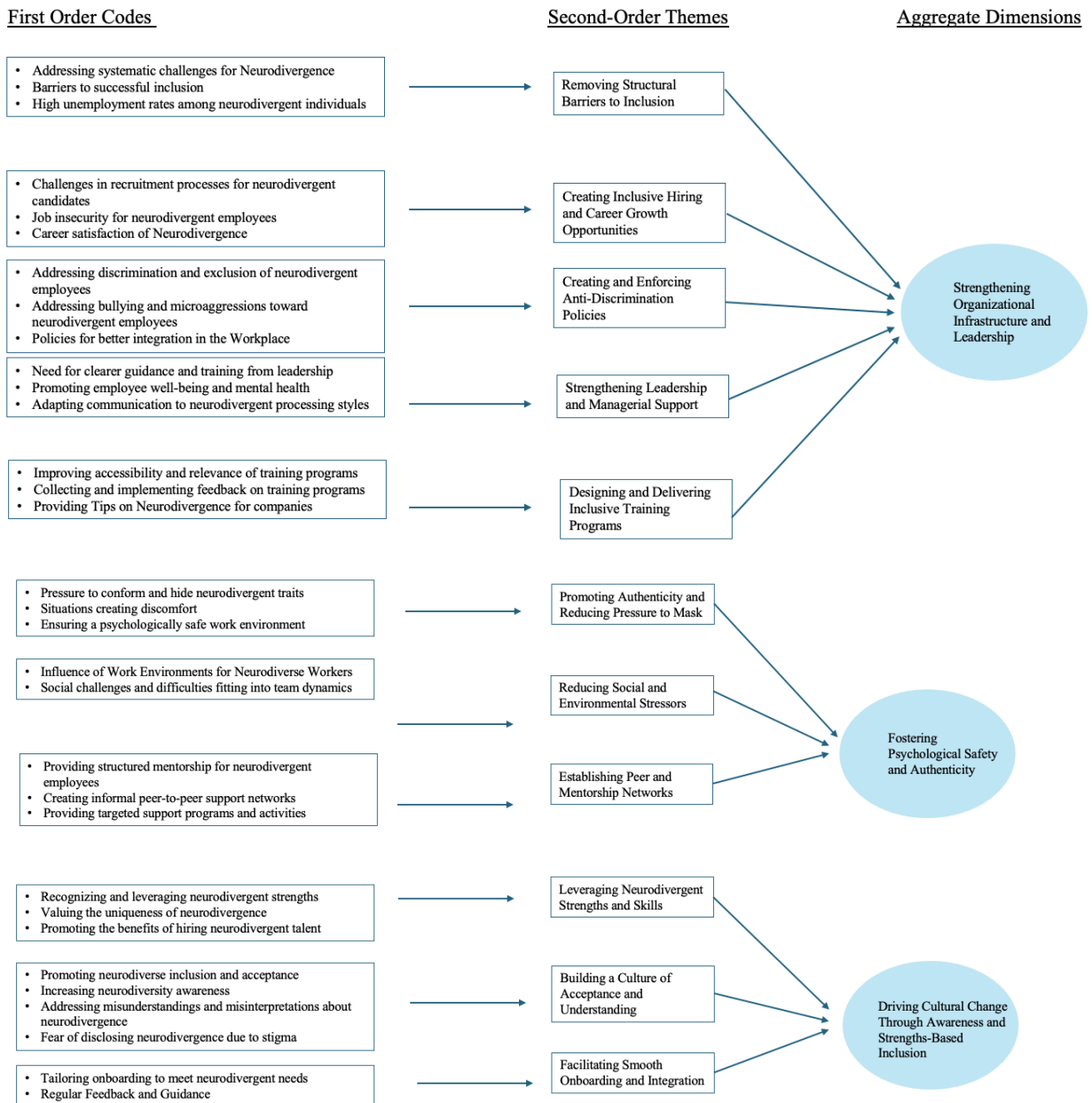


Figure 1 – Gioia Data Structure

#### 4.1 Strengthening Organizational Infrastructure and Leadership

A crucial aspect for fostering an inclusive organizational culture for neurodivergent employees can be reached. by improving the underlying organizational infrastructure and leadership practices. Research has highlighted that organizational inclusion is not only about employee-level behaviors but also about structural, procedural, and managerial adjustments that create an environment where neurodivergent employees can thrive (Austin & Pisano, 2017). It is also

necessary to adapt managerial adjustments, including communication styles and performance evaluation methods, to support neurodivergent employees (Krzeminska et al., 2019). The results reveal that targeted training programs and structural reforms are essential to create an inclusive infrastructure.

#### 4.1.1 Removing Structural Barriers to Inclusion

One pattern that emerged was the identification of structural barriers which prevent neurodivergent employees from fully participating in the workforce. Scholars have argued that organizations are still affected by structural barriers, including systemic challenges, internal policies, and high unemployment rates among neurodivergent individuals, leading to difficulties for them to succeed (Buckley et al., 2021; Doyle, 2020). Research by Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al., (2020) similarly highlights that structural barriers affecting neurodivergent employees are multifaceted including individual, environmental, and societal factors which require holistic, cross-sectoral solutions to address effectively.

The quotes derived from the data underscore similar urgencies regarding the success of Neurodivergent employees in the workplace. Participants described several challenges tied to these structural barriers, including limited access to opportunities and insufficient workplace support:

*J5. "34.1 percent of sticking towards autism right is sort of like that's a high unemployment rate 34.1 percent — you know, it's three times the rate of people with general disability and that's huge for autism alone."*

*A8. "There remains, however, high unemployment rates for neurodivergent people due to discrimination and known and unknown bias."*

These quotes show how neurodivergent consideration remains a marginal issue in broader DEI strategies. Despite broader organizational efforts to implement DEI frameworks, neurodivergent individuals remain underrepresented and underserved within these strategies.

*O1. "Despite most companies' increasing focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) in the workforce, the neurodivergent group is often overlooked in the diversity conversation, and consequently, hiring efforts."*

This reflects broader labor market challenges, where systemic obstacles within recruitment models and workplace structures continue to exclude neurodivergent individuals. In short, removing barriers is about dismantling these structural limitations, guaranteeing that neurodivergent employees have equal access to opportunities and can completely participate in and benefit from the workforce.

#### 4.1.2 Creating Inclusive Hiring and Career Growth Opportunities

Neurodivergent individuals are often prevented from getting jobs because of the interviewing procedures that are based on neurotypical communication and social behaviors (Austin & Pisano, 2017). In their study Loiacono and Ren (2018) established that traditional hiring methods tend to prioritize social and interpersonal skills over technical competencies, which systematically disadvantages neurodivergent individuals. They argue that the lack of tailored recruitment strategies including modified interview techniques and alternative evaluation methods contributes to the exclusion of neurodivergent candidates from the workforce. Furthermore, Baldwin and Costley (2016) highlight that career success of neurodivergent employees is often hindered by social competency requirements rather than job performance, reinforcing the need for more inclusive performance evaluation systems.

Several participants described the challenges they faced in accessing employment and recruitment processes:

*A7. "In every area surveyed, neurodivergent employees found the process of being hired more challenging than neurotypical employees. Nearly four in ten (39%) found salary-related discussions challenging, along with typical recruitment situations like creating a CV*

*R1. "All participants with dyslexia and dyspraxia **spoke of their difficulty completing forms.** One participant who was present today and an application form to complete at interview **walked away on receipt of instruction**".*

Krzeminska et al. (2019) point out that traditional hiring models often define talent too narrowly and overemphasize social competencies, which excludes neurodivergent candidates from accessing equitable opportunities.

These quotes illustrate how hiring processes, like unstructured interviews, ambiguous task instructions, and inaccessible application forms, create barriers to entry for neurodivergent candidates. Traditional hiring processes favor neurotypical traits, such as social interaction and communication styles, which disfavours neurodivergent employees. To address these challenges, training programs need to focus on creating recruitment processes explicitly for neurodivergent candidates, focus on job competencies so that insecurities of neurodiverse people can be reduced, and career satisfaction be strengthened.

#### 4.1.3 Strengthening Leadership and Managerial Support

Leadership and Managerial Support have been identified as a key driver of neurodivergent inclusion. According to Ng & Sears (2020) managerial behaviors including communication style, feedback mechanisms, and emotional intelligence significantly impact the inclusion and performance of neurodivergent employees. Krzeminska et al. (2019) emphasize that managers often rely on communication and performance evaluation styles designed for neurotypical employees, which can unintentionally create barriers for neurodivergent staff. This highlights the need for explicit guidance and training from leadership on how to adapt communication and evaluation methods to align with neurodivergent processing styles. Effective leadership also involves promoting employee well-being and mental health by recognizing and accommodating different cognitive patterns and communication styles to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

Participants frequently reported that managers were not equipped to support neurodivergent employees effectively:

*C6: "Managers should receive training on how to interact, supervise and work with neurodivergent people."*

*C6: "Managers will need to learn about neurodivergent people's ways of thinking and learning and how to assess workers' individual needs."*

These quotes demonstrate the need for clear management training on neurodivergence. Misunderstanding neurodivergent communication styles and processing patterns can lead to miscommunication and workplace stress, as managers may misinterpret different cognitive

styles as performance issues rather than legitimate differences. It was also highlighted that training programs need to promote employee well-being and mental health.

#### 4.1.4 Designing and Delivering Inclusive Training Programs

Designing and Delivering Inclusive Training Emerged as another driver of neurodivergent inclusion. Adopting structured feedback systems, providing targeted career development support, and offering clear promotion pathways can significantly improve career outcomes for neurodivergent employees. Improving the accessibility and relevance of training programs. It is essential to ensure that neurodivergent employees receive the support they need to thrive in the workplace (Loiacono & Ren, 2018).

Participants highlighted that existing training programs often overlook neurodivergent needs:

*A1. Invest in training managers and staff on neurodiversity, dispelling myths, and fostering a better understanding of how to work effectively with neurodivergent colleagues."*

*A5. "There are cost-effective actions that any business can take. Employees with lived experience can lead and inform training and creating a culture of awareness and understanding. Indeed, embracing a mindset of constant improvement is the most important asset for an organization interested in creating an inclusive workspace."*

These quotes underline the need of targeted training programs that specifically address discrimination, exclusion, bullying and microaggressions against neurodivergent employees, while also advocating for better policies of workplace integration. Collecting and implementing feedback on training programs can help organizations refine their approach and ensure that the content is practical and relevant to the needs of neurodivergent employees.

#### 4.1.5 Creating and Enforcing Anti-Discrimination Policies

A key finding from the data highlights the importance of creating and enforcing anti-discrimination policies to protect neurodivergent employees from bias, bullying, and exclusion. Research indicates that neurodivergent employees are more vulnerable to workplace discrimination, including negative stereotypes, microaggressions, and unequal access to career opportunities (Doyle, 2020). Buckley et al. (2021) emphasize that neurodivergent employees

are more likely to experience exclusion and discrimination issues due to a lack of awareness and understanding among colleagues and managers. Effective anti-discrimination policies are essential to addressing these structural inequalities and ensuring equal access to career development and professional opportunities.

The data reveals that neurodivergent employees often encounter workplace bullying, which creates a hostile work environment and negatively impacts their psychological safety and career progression. Participants have shared the following:

*R2. "Bullying of autistic people is also a problem made particularly persistent due to its cyclical nature: autistic people are more likely to be bullied and are also more strongly affected by bullying."*

*Y7. "You are an oddball! That probably shouldn't have mattered very much, but it did. It hurt."*

These quotes underscore the need for targeted training programs that specifically address discrimination, exclusion, bullying and microaggressions of neurodivergent employees and call for better policies of workplace integration. They also show the need for these policies as workplace bullying can impact Neurodivergent people significantly.

## 4.2 Fostering Psychological Safety and Authenticity

Psychological safety and authenticity are required components of an inclusive work environment, in particular for neurodivergent employees. Edmondson (1999) defines psychological safety as a state in which employees feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of negative consequences. For neurodivergent employees, psychological safety includes the ability to work and communicate in ways that align with their cognitive processing styles without being penalized or marginalized (Krzeminska et al., 2019). Scholars such as Volpone et al. (2022) and Ng & Sears (2020) have argued that fostering psychological safety for neurodivergent employees requires both structural adjustments (e.g., workplace modifications) and cultural acceptance (e.g., reducing bias and promoting understanding).

### 4.2.1 Promoting Authenticity and Reducing Pressure to Mask

A significant pattern that raised from the data was the pressure neurodivergent employees face to conform to neurotypical norms. Research shows that "masking" the act of hiding or

suppressing neurodivergent traits to fit in is a common survival mechanism among neurodivergent employees (Hull et al., 2017). However, masking has been linked to increased psychological stress, burnout, and reduced job performance (Miller et al., 2021).

Participants described the psychological toll of masking and the need for a more authentic work environment:

*Y3. "I didn't disclose my ADHD at work actually. Well, first, I didn't really think I had it. I was in denial, and second of all, because I didn't want them to think I was incompetent."*

*A2. "It's alarming that the autistic community continues to feel they can't bring their whole, authentic selves to work or disclose their neurodiversity to employers."*

These quotes reflect the tension between individual authenticity and organizational standards. Studies confirm that masking undermines employee well-being but also decreases long-term productivity and job satisfaction (Krzeminska et al., 2019).

The findings show that the issue requires to help managers and teams understand and accept neurodivergent communication styles. Training programs that emphasize authenticity rather than conformity to neurotypical norms can reduce the pressure to mask and allow neurodivergent employees to work in ways that reflect their natural strengths.

Hull et al. (2017) argue that creating a psychologically safe environment requires encouraging neurodivergent employees to engage in ways that align with their strengths rather than forcing them to adapt to neurotypical standards. Therefore, training programs should promote neurodivergent authenticity as a professional strength rather than a weakness.

#### 4.2.2 Reducing Social and Environmental Stressors

Environmental and social stressors emerged as a major barrier to mental safety for neurodivergent employees. Krzeminska et al. (2019) state that many work environments are designed around neurotypical sensory and social processing norms, which can lead to overstimulation and discomfort for neurodivergent people.

Participants described how environmental factors, such as noise levels and social expectations, increased workplace stress:

*A3. "Many neurodivergent employees can experience a sensory overload from stimuli, such as lighting, noise and temperature, particularly within a large organization. "Solutions can be as simple as providing the employee with noise-cancelling headphones or a private space or cubicle with high walls that prevent distraction."*

*Y5. "Workplace gatherings, as a rule, are mandatory... for an autistic person, it can feel like forced fun, forced socializing, forced activities."*

These quotes align with findings from Austin and Pisano (2017), who contend that workspaces designed around neurotypical social norms can unconsciously exclude neurodivergent employees. The findings suggest that reducing environmental stressors through workspace modifications and alternative communication styles is basic for fostering psychological security.

The data indicates that targeted training for both managers and HR teams can improve environmental inclusivity. For example, providing quiet workspaces, reducing fluorescent lighting, and offering alternative team-building activities could significantly improve workplace comfort for neurodivergent employees.

These findings highlight the importance of recognizing and adjusting environmental factors to reduce social and environmental stressors.

#### 4.2.3 Establishing Peer and Mentorship Networks

Peer and mentorship networks were identified as critical mechanism for building psychological safety and emotional support for neurodivergent employees. Research by Shore et al. (2011) highlights that peer networks allow marginalized employees to share experiences, develop coping strategies, and get emotional validation all of which contribute to psychological safety. Participants shared how peer support and mentoring helped them feel more connected and valued at work:

*O9. "Team Buddy – Provide real time advice and support/guidance with day-to-day activities to remove roadblocks and minimize disruptions. He acts as a peer-to-peer guide to assist their colleague on the autism spectrum through day-to-day activities and act as a go-to for support and guidance."*

*C6. "Neurodivergent workers need strong support from leadership in their workplaces, particularly from their managers, as well as their peers, to thrive."*

These quotes align with research showing that structured peer and mentorship networks can reduce social isolation and improve employee retention (Krzeminska et al., 2019).

### 4.3 Driving Cultural Change Through Awareness and Strengths-Based Inclusion

A core element of fostering an inclusive organizational culture for neurodivergent employees involves shifting organizational norms toward greater acceptance and esteeming of neurodivergence as a professional strength. Research by Shore et al. (2011) and Krzeminska et al. (2019) highlights that organizations have to go beyond structural changes and psychological safety they must embed neurodivergence into the company's cultural identity by recognizing it as a source of competitive advantage.

Cultural change requires addressing implicit biases, increasing awareness of neurodivergent strengths, and empowering organizations to actively leverage cognitive diversity.

#### 4.3.1 Leveraging Neurodivergent Strengths and Skills

A consistent pattern, revealed from the data, is that many organizations view neurodivergence through a deficit-based lens focusing on the challenges it creates rather than the strengths it provides. However, scholars such as Austin and Pisano (2017) have argued that neurodivergent employees often demonstrate unique cognitive and creative skills that can enhance organizational performance including pattern recognition, attention to detail, and creative problem-solving.

Participants described how their strengths were often overlooked or undervalued:

*Y3. "We have to not only have champions at each part of the organization, but we've got to start recognizing people for their difference, for their uniqueness, for the things that make them shine."*

*Y4. "Neurodivergent individuals bring heightened creativity, unique problem-solving capabilities, loyalty, honesty, attention to detail, and resilience to the workplace."*

The data suggests that training programs should focus on shifting from a deficit-based to a strengths-based model by helping managers and teams:

Recognize neurodivergent strengths in organizational performance evaluations.

Develop alternative performance evaluation models that focus on actual work output rather than social engagement.

Create specialized roles that allow neurodivergent employees to work in areas where their strengths (e.g., pattern recognition, creativity) are maximized.

Shore et al. (2011) argue that framing neurodivergence as a strategic strength rather than a liability increases both employee retention and business performance. This shift from a deficit-based to a strengths-based model is essential for long-term cultural change and improved business outcomes.

#### 4.3.2 Building a Culture of Acceptance and Understanding

Beyond recognizing individual qualities, participants emphasized the need for broader cultural acceptance of neurodivergence. Research by Shore et al. (2011) and Ng and Sears (2020) highlights that sustainable incorporation requires addressing implicit biases and stereotypes that shape how neurodivergent employees are seen.

Participants described how bias and misunderstanding contributed to feelings of exclusion and misunderstanding:

*A9. "The problem with this is my efficiency often got me into trouble with my co-workers because they believed I was purposefully trying to outperform them and make them look bad."*

*A7. "Support should be accessible without a formal diagnosis or disclosure, promoting inclusivity and understanding."*

These quotes highlight how bias and misperception shape workplace experiences for neurodivergent employees. Research confirms that exclusion at the cultural level reduces employee engagement and retention (Shore et al., 2011). Bias about competence and social ability is particularly harmful; Cuddy et al. (2011) argues that stereotypes about warmth and competence drive workplace judgments, leading to misperceptions about neurodivergent employees' intentions and capabilities particularly harmful.

The data suggests that promoting cultural acceptance requires: Awareness training to educate employees about neurodivergent communication styles and social behaviors. Encouraging supervisors to model inclusive behavior correcting bias-informed assumptions in real time. Creating internal communications that normalize neurodivergence (e.g., employee stories, panel discussions). Austin and Pisano (2017) argue that cultural acceptance improves not only employee engagement but also business performance as it reduces employee turnover and enhances psychological safety. The findings suggest that training programs should target both managerial behavior and organizational communication to embed neurodivergent inclusion into everyday work culture.

### 4.3.3 Facilitating Smooth Onboarding Integration

A consistent topic that resulted from the data was the importance of tailored onboarding processes for neurodivergent employees. Existing research affirms that the onboarding experience significantly shapes long-term employee success and integration into the workplace (Austin & Pisano, 2017). For neurodivergent employees, onboarding needs to go beyond generic processes and focus on specific accommodations and support mechanisms to ensure a smooth transition into the organizational culture.

Several participants described how structured and individualized onboarding support helped them feel more comfortable and capable in their roles:

*Y1. "Having a manager facilitated introduction to the team members is key when first starting a role."*

*O4. "Are there any workplace accommodations that will help you succeed in this role? This question... had a significant impact on neurodivergent individual David Thomason. David was participating in the onboarding process for Mentra... and the question made him feel seen and heard as he looked for his next role."*

The results indicates that effective onboarding for neurodivergent employees requires a balance between structure and flexibility. Providing consistent guidance while allowing for adjustments based on individual needs can promote a sense of psychological safety and belonging, ultimately supporting long-term retention and performance.

## 5 Discussion

The study's findings indicate that establish a supportive workplace for neurodiverse employees is a complex process and requires attention to multiple levels, including structural, social, and cultural aspects. Using the Gioia methodology, three major aggregate dimensions were identified: (1) Strengthening Organizational Infrastructure and Leadership (2) Fostering Psychological Safety and Authenticity (3) Driving Cultural Change Through Awareness and Strengths-Based Inclusion. This demonstrates that the shift in organizational norms towards valuing neurodivergent strengths is a means of driving cultural change. Unlike the previous

work by Austin and Pisano (2017) and Krzeminska et al. (2019), which focused on structural and leadership barriers, this study shows that supporting neurodiverse employees further demands addressing psychological safety and cultural norms. Therefore, this study supports the need for structural and leadership changes but extends the discussion to include organizational culture and cognitive diversity as two more mechanisms for inclusion.

### 5.1 Strengthening Organizational Infrastructure and Leadership

The findings highlight that structural and leadership barriers remain significant obstacles to neurodivergent inclusion. Past research by Austin and Pisano (2017) established that neurodivergent employees face systemic disadvantages due to rigid hiring and performance evaluation models. This study supports those conclusions and expands them by showing that these structural barriers extend beyond recruitment and onboarding to include promotion criteria and managerial feedback styles. While existing research has focused on the initial stages of employment, the findings from this study demonstrate that career progression and long-term inclusion are equally restricted by systemic structural flaws.

Recruitment practices remain rooted in neurotypical communication norms, creating barriers for neurodivergent candidates. Participants described how job interviews focused mainly on social cues and behavioral questions, which disadvantaged them despite strong technical qualifications. Loiacono and Ren (2018) argue that traditional hiring frameworks tend to prioritize social and interpersonal skills over technical competencies, which systematically disadvantages neurodivergent individuals. Baldwin and Costley (2016) additionally highlight that career success for neurodivergent employees is often hindered by social competency requirements rather than job performance, reinforcing the need for more inclusive performance evaluation systems.

Managerial understanding of neurodivergence emerged as a critical factor in employee success. Ng and Sears (2020) argued that managerial behavior directly influences employee well-being and performance a finding confirmed by this study. However, the data from this study extends existing research by revealing that managerial behavior not only influences well-being but also determines access to career development. When managers fail to adjust their communication styles or evaluate performance based on neurotypical standards, neurodivergent employees are effectively excluded from leadership opportunities.

Furthermore, the data indicates that structural adjustments such as modifying recruitment models and revising promotion criteria require policy-level enforcement. Tomczak et al. (2021)

argued that without formal policy changes, structural barriers would persist even if awareness increased at the managerial level. This study reinforces that claim while expanding on it by demonstrating that neurodivergent employees face systemic obstacles to both entry and advancement within the organizational hierarchy. Therefore, this study expands the literature by showing that structural barriers for neurodivergent employees are not limited to recruitment they extend to feedback mechanisms, career development, and leadership representation.

## 5.2 Fostering Psychological Safety and Authenticity

Psychological safety has emerged as a distinct and essential element in promoting neurodivergent inclusion. Existing studies on psychological safety has focused firstly on race and gender inclusion (Edmondson, 1999; Shore et al., 2011). This study confirms the relevance of psychological safety for neurodivergent employees, while also adding to the literature by demonstrating that psychological safety for neurodivergent employees requires both managerial and peer-level support and environmental modifications to reduce cognitive and sensory stressors.

Findings reveal that many neurodivergent employees face pressure to engage in "masking" the act of suppressing neurodivergent traits to conform to neurotypical norms. Hull et al. (2017) demonstrated that masking increases emotional exhaustion and reduces job satisfaction. This study extends those findings by revealing that masking not only undermines emotional well-being but also reduces workplace performance and career progression. Employees who mask their cognitive processing styles or communication preferences are less likely to secure leadership opportunities and are more prone to burnout and disengagement.

Communication barriers, which have been widely discussed in the DEI literature (Shore et al., 2011), are particularly relevant for neurodivergent employees. However, the findings from this study suggest that communication barriers for neurodivergent employees extend beyond social discomfort they actively inhibit task completion and leadership potential. When employees feel forced to adapt to neurotypical communication styles, their capacity to perform complex tasks and engage with their teams is diminished.

Peer and mentorship networks emerged as a critical protective factor. Previous research by Shore et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of peer support for underrepresented groups. This study builds on that work by showing that for neurodivergent employees, informal peer networks rather than formal mentorship programs are more effective. Informal networks provide greater flexibility and authenticity, allowing neurodivergent employees to connect with

peers who share similar cognitive processing styles and workplace experiences. Therefore, this study advances the psychological safety literature by highlighting how environmental and interpersonal adjustments work together to create sustainable inclusion for neurodivergent employees.

### 5.3 Driving Cultural Change Through Awareness and Strengths-Based Inclusion

The findings also reveal that driving meaningful cultural change requires moving from a deficit-based to a strengths-based model of neurodivergence. While Austin and Pisano (2017) argued that cognitive diversity enhances business performance, this study shows that simply raising awareness about neurodivergence is not sufficient. Organizational culture must actively redefine success metrics to reflect neurodivergent qualities and create inclusive leadership pathways.

Traditional leadership models which emphasize extroversion, social impact, and verbal communication were shown to disadvantage neurodivergent employees. Participants reported that despite demonstrating exceptional technical ability, creative problem-solving, and attention to detail, they were frequently overlooked for promotions due to constrained social interaction and self-advocacy.

This supports findings by Doyle (2020), who argued that cognitive diversity increases innovation. However, this study expands on Doyle's work by showing that organizational recognition of neurodivergent strengths requires:

- Adapt performance evaluation models to reflect analytical and creative contributions instead of social performance.
- Modification to leadership development pathways to cater to neurodivergent communication styles.
- Increased visibility for neurodivergent employees in decision-making roles.

Bias may explain why these changes remain difficult to implement. Research shows that implicit biases about what constitutes leadership and competence often equate success with social fluency, confidence, and extroversion traits that align with neurotypical communication patterns (Cuddy et al., 2011). This cultural bias creates barriers for neurodivergent employees whose strengths may lie in analytical or creative domains rather than social influence. Therefore, even when neurodivergent employees demonstrate high levels of technical ability

and problem-solving capacity, they may remain underrecognized and under-promoted because existing success metrics are shaped by these biased assumptions.

The findings also align with Krzeminska et al. (2019), who argue that increasing awareness and shifting workplace norms toward valuing neurodivergent strengths enhances employee engagement and business outcomes. However, this study builds on that argument by demonstrating that awareness alone is insufficient structural reinforcement through revised evaluation models and leadership pathways is necessary to sustain long-term inclusion. Training programs need to actively confront and reduce these implicit biases to ensure that neurodivergent strengths are not only acknowledged but also embedded into performance evaluation and leadership criteria.

Therefore, this study expands existing literature by showing that driving cultural change requires both increased awareness and active efforts to embed neurodivergent strengths into everyday work culture. Addressing bias is central to this shift without changing how neurodivergence is perceived and valued at the cultural level, neurodivergent employees will continue to confront systemic barriers despite increasing awareness and policy adjustments. Building a culture of acceptance and understanding including more supportive onboarding forms and recognizing cognitive diversity as a strategic asset is essential for sustaining long-term inclusion.

## **6 Contributions and limitations**

### **6.1 Theoretical Implications**

Existing research on neurodivergent inclusion is expanded by this study, demonstrating that structural adjustments alone are insufficient for long-term inclusion. While previous research by Austin & Pisano (2017) and Krzeminska et al. (2019) focus on structural and leadership barriers, this study highlights the importance of psychological safety and cultural acceptance as equally critical factors. The findings present a more comprehensive framework by showing that fostering neurodivergent inclusion requires interventions at three interdependent levels: structural, psychological, and cultural.

In addition, the study challenges deficit-based models of neurodivergence by reframing neurodivergent traits (e.g., analytical thinking, pattern recognition) as strategic assets rather than liabilities. The importance of moving from a deficit-based to a strengths-based model

reflects the need for updated success metrics that value cognitive diversity and non-traditional leadership styles. The findings suggest that increasing awareness without addressing structural and managerial bias is not enough, real inclusion requires changes to both organizational norms and leadership development.

## 6.2 Practical Implications

The findings from this study provide clear and actionable insights for organizations seeking to improve neurodivergent inclusion. First, training programs should focus on equipping managers with the skills to recognize and accommodate different cognitive styles. Managers need to adapt their communication styles, which means learn to give clear and structured feedback, and assess employee performance based on work output rather than social interaction. Training programs should also address how to support neurodivergent workers in navigating career progression and leadership pathways, ensuring that promotion criteria reflect actual job performance rather than social competence.

Second, recruitment and onboarding processes should be redesigned to decrease barriers for neurodivergent candidates. Traditional hiring frameworks often emphasize social and interpersonal skills over technical competencies, which systematically disadvantages neurodivergent individuals. Organizations should modify interview formats to allow for alternative forms of communication and problem-solving. Furthermore, structured onboarding programs that provide clear instructions, sensory-friendly workspaces, and consistent guidance can improve early-stage integration and long-term retention for neurodivergent employees.

Third, peer and mentorship networks should be formalized to create spaces where neurodivergent employees feel supported and valued. Informal peer networks, rather than rigid mentorship programs, were shown to be particularly effective for neurodivergent employees because they provide greater flexibility and authenticity. Establishing structured but adaptable peer support systems can enhance psychological safety and improve overall job satisfaction for neurodivergent employees.

Fourth, training programs should address unconscious bias at both the managerial and organizational level. Cultural biases that equate leadership potential with extroversion and social influence continue to disadvantage neurodivergent employees whose strengths lie in analytical thinking and creative problem-solving. Training should aim to help managers and HR professionals recognize these biases and modify performance evaluation models to reflect cognitive diversity. Organizations should also provide ongoing awareness programs that

educate employees about neurodivergent communication styles and challenge deficit-based assumptions about neurodivergence.

Lastly, creating and enforcing anti-discrimination policies is important for sustaining an inclusive work environment. The study revealed that neurodivergent employees frequently experience bullying, microaggressions, and exclusion due to a lack of awareness and understanding among colleagues and managers. Organizations should implement clear reporting mechanisms and accountability structures to ensure that instances of discrimination are addressed effectively and that neurodivergent employees feel protected and valued.

Organizations can create a more inclusive and productive work environment for neurodivergent employees by addressing structural, psychological, and cultural barriers through targeted training, adjusted recruitment models, and improved managerial support. This approach not only enhances employee well-being and career progression but also improves overall business performance by unlocking the potential of cognitive diversity.

### 6.3 Limitations and Future Research

For this study, data was collected by conducting three interviews as well as from a secondary data set. While this data provided comprehensive insights, it was rather controversial as generalizability was not sufficiently considered due to the limited number of data. A serious drawback of this study is the general difficulty in gaining access to neurodiverse employees. In addition, several common challenges to accessing neurodiverse populations, such as bias and privacy concerns, limited the diversity of perspectives in the analysis. Selection bias and disclosure issues are other potential limitations that need to be carefully considered within this study. Participants who were interviewed may have consciously or unconsciously toned down their responses due to concerns about how their answers might be perceived by others, especially in relation to their professional status. This could lead to serious repercussions in their professional environment if their responses are seen as controversial or inconsistent with standardized norms and expectations. Limited geographical diversity is another serious drawback of this study, as the sample was drawn exclusively from two single regions. This not only leads to a lack of geographic diversity, but also limits the generalizability and transferability of the results. While some important limitations were acknowledged in this study all of the literature reviewed suffers from the fact that it focuses heavily on Western business contexts. Such approaches often entail several well-known limitations, as they may overlook

useful insights from non-Western organizational models, strategies and alternative approaches to inclusion. In this study, there are certain weaknesses and potential measurement errors associated with the participants interviewed in relation to social desirability. It is possible that participants may have directed their responses to conform to organizational norms or to positively evaluate their employer's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. A final criticism of this study worth mentioning is its cross-sectional design, which may compromise this type of research. Consequently, this design only captures a single point in time, which does not account for not only the long-term effects of inclusion efforts, but also the effectiveness of training programs. A larger sample size and greater diversity could provide more definitive evidence in future research. This is especially true for the inclusion of a broader range of different industries, geographic locations and demographic groups. Much more research needs to be done in the context of intersectionality, particularly in relation to how different aspects such as gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status interact with neurodivergence and influence workplace experiences. Furthermore, it is crucial to gain a better understanding of these similar identities to uncover the unique challenges and opportunities faced by neurodiverse people. In addition, comparative studies are needed to explore how strategies for inclusion of neurodiverse people differ across industries, business models and cultural settings. This type of research would provide useful insights that could be applied to different organizational settings and identify the overall effectiveness of different inclusion practices. Further studies should conduct a more systematic and theoretical analysis to track the long-term effects of training programs and inclusion practices on employee retention, career advancement, and job satisfaction. Exploring the ethical and business aspects of inclusion of neurodiverse people is an interesting topic that could be usefully addressed in further research. This could help to gain a better understanding of how organizations balance ethical obligations and business priorities when developing inclusion strategies.

## **7 Conclusion**

This academic study addressed the following research questions: How do training programs contribute to fostering an inclusive organizational culture for neurodivergent employees? The study examined secondary data and conducted three semi-structured interviews to answer this question. Three key dimensions that are important for creating an inclusive work environment were identified. These dimensions are reinforcing organizational infrastructure and leadership,

fostering psychological safety and authenticity, and driving cultural change through strengths-based inclusion. Each of these dimensions is influenced by training programs in different but interconnected ways. In the first dimension, Strengthening Organizational Infrastructure and Leadership Training programs equip leaders and managers with the skills and knowledge to tailor the recruitment, evaluation, and communication styles to better support neurodivergent employees. Effective training helps create structured, bias-free hiring processes and performance assessments that recognize cognitive differences rather than penalize them. The second-dimension highlights Fostering Psychological Safety and Authenticity by increasing awareness of different cognitive styles. Training programs help reduce the social and environmental stressors that neurodivergent employees often face. They promote authenticity by encouraging neurodivergent employees play to their strengths than conform to neurotypical norms, which increases employee well-being and long-term performance. Finally, the Driving Cultural Change through Strengths-Based Inclusion dimension training programs raise awareness of neurodivergent strengths and challenge deficit-based views. By shifting the narrative from 'accommodation' to 'capability', training programs help to embed cognitive diversity into organizational culture, creating an environment where neurodivergent employees are valued for their unique contributions.

## 8 Appendix

### A) DATABASE

#### Articles

Code	Type	Title	Language	Date	Author	Link	Accessed in
A1	Article	How neurodiversity in the workplace can drive business success	English	08.10.24	Dr. Richard JI Heron	<a href="https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/10/neurodiversity-neuroinclusion-workplace-business/">https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/10/neurodiversity-neuroinclusion-workplace-business/</a>	18.11.24
A2	Article	Canadian employers prioritizing DEI, but barriers remain for neurodiverse hires: survey	English	04.04.22	Benefits Canada	<a href="https://www.benefitscanada.com/news/bencan/canadian-employers-prioritizing-dei-but-barriers-remain-for-neurodiverse-hires-survey/">https://www.benefitscanada.com/news/bencan/canadian-employers-prioritizing-dei-but-barriers-remain-for-neurodiverse-hires-survey/</a>	25.11.24
A3	Article	How employers can support neurodiverse employees	English	21.06.24	Brooke Smith	<a href="https://www.benefitscanada.com/archives/benefits-canada-archive/how-employers-can-support-neurodiverse-employees/">https://www.benefitscanada.com/archives/benefits-canada-archive/how-employers-can-support-neurodiverse-employees/</a>	24.11.24
A4	Article	Expert panel: How employers can support neurodiverse workers through benefits, workplace policies	English	12.04.24	Kim Siddall	<a href="https://www.benefitscanada.com/expertpanel/kim-siddall/expert-panel-how-employers-can-support-neurodiverse-workers-through-benefits-workplace-policies/">https://www.benefitscanada.com/expertpanel/kim-siddall/expert-panel-how-employers-can-support-neurodiverse-workers-through-benefits-workplace-policies/</a>	26.11.24
A5	Article	Sounding Board: How employers can foster a neuro-inclusive workplace	English	22.04.24	Tammy Morris, Jane Walsh	<a href="https://www.benefitscanada.com/news/bencan/sounding-board-how-employers-can-foster-a-neuro-inclusive-workplace/">https://www.benefitscanada.com/news/bencan/sounding-board-how-employers-can-foster-a-neuro-inclusive-workplace/</a>	26.11.24

A6	Article	Neurodiversity at Deloitte	English	n.D	Deloitte	<a href="https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/about/people/social-responsibility/neurodiversity-at-deloitte.html">https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/about/people/social-responsibility/neurodiversity-at-deloitte.html</a>	20.11.24
A7	Article	Major study on neurodiversity in tech sector highlights need for more inclusive and accessible workplaces	English	n.D	Change the Face	<a href="https://www.change-the-face.com/neurodiversity-in-tech/">https://www.change-the-face.com/neurodiversity-in-tech/</a>	20.11.24
A8	Article	What Does a Neurodivergent-Inclusive Workplace Look Like?	English	28.07.22	Bernard Grant	<a href="https://www.bestcolleges.com/careers/neurodivergent-inclusive-workplace/">https://www.bestcolleges.com/careers/neurodivergent-inclusive-workplace/</a>	14.02.25
A9	Article	10 unfortunate and unfair reasons autistic people have been fired.	English	07.01.23	Jaime A. Heidel	<a href="https://us.specialisterne.com/10-unfortunate-and-unfair-reasons-autistic-people-have-been-fired/">https://us.specialisterne.com/10-unfortunate-and-unfair-reasons-autistic-people-have-been-fired/</a>	28.10.24

Company Report, Practical Guide, Research Report, White Paper

Code	Type	Title	Language	Date	Author	Link	Accessed in
C1	Company Report	2023 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Transparency Report	English	01.01.24	Deloitte	<a href="https://www.deloitte.com/de/de.html?id=de:2ps:3gl:4always-on-global-search:5:6abt:20240313::&amp;gad_source=1&amp;gclid=CjwKCAiArKW-BhAzEiwAZhWslIh90-LyB4SPtloJoBdMQHYucufYE9CLXENGqb2-">https://www.deloitte.com/de/de.html?id=de:2ps:3gl:4always-on-global-search:5:6abt:20240313::&amp;gad_source=1&amp;gclid=CjwKCAiArKW-BhAzEiwAZhWslIh90-LyB4SPtloJoBdMQHYucufYE9CLXENGqb2-</a>	12.01.24

						5QSPLi86DRobdxoC9qUQAvD_BwE&gclid=aw.ds	
C2	Company Report	Neurodiversity in the Workplace An information guide for employers.	English	2024	ADHD Foundation - The Neurodiversity Charity	<a href="https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Neurodiversity-in-the-workplace-Free-E-Booklet-and-Training-Guide-forBusiness-August-2023.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com">https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Neurodiversity-in-the-workplace-Free-E-Booklet-and-Training-Guide-forBusiness-August-2023.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com</a>	12.01.24
C3	Company Report	2024 Global Diversity & Inclusion Report	English	2024	Microsoft	<a href="https://cdn-dynmedia-1.microsoft.com/is/content/microsoftcorp/microsoft/dni/documents/presentations/microsoftcorp_gdi_report_2024_final.pdf">https://cdn-dynmedia-1.microsoft.com/is/content/microsoftcorp/microsoft/dni/documents/presentations/microsoftcorp_gdi_report_2024_final.pdf</a>	13.01.25
C4	Company Report	Moving Towards Greater Impact SAP 2023 Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Report	English	2023	SAP	<a href="https://www.sap.com/documents/2024/06/985de527-c47e-0010-bca6-c68f7e60039b.html">https://www.sap.com/documents/2024/06/985de527-c47e-0010-bca6-c68f7e60039b.html</a>	10.10.24
C5	Company Report	CHRO Insights Series Report: December, 2022 Neurodiversity	English	20.12.22	One Mind at Work (author unspecified)	<a href="https://onemindatwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2022-CHRO-Insights-Series-Report-Neurodiversity.pdf">https://onemindatwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2022-CHRO-Insights-Series-Report-Neurodiversity.pdf</a>	28.10.24
C6	Company Report	2024 Neurodiversity in Business and Work Academic Research	English	2024	by Neurodiversity in Business (NiB)	<a href="https://neurodiversityinbusiness.org/research/nib-and-university-of-birkbeck-research-report-2024/">https://neurodiversityinbusiness.org/research/nib-and-university-of-birkbeck-research-report-2024/</a>	20.01.25
P1	Practical Guide	Train managers and peers to improve the workplace	English	unknown	EARN	<a href="https://askearn.org/page/management-peer-training-and-mentoring">https://askearn.org/page/management-peer-training-and-mentoring</a>	03.12.24

		experiences of neurodivergent employees.					
R1	Research Report	Thinking Differently: Neurodiversity in the Workplace	English	01.03.20	Dr. Emma Day-Duro, Grace Brown, Julian Thompson	<a href="https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a88ab00f43b552a84c3b7c9/t/5ef7af662801f1255ced9ee0/1593290657559/Neurodiversity+Workplace_REPORT.pdf">https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a88ab00f43b552a84c3b7c9/t/5ef7af662801f1255ced9ee0/1593290657559/Neurodiversity Workplace_REPORT.pdf</a>	01.02.25
R2	WhitePaper	Workplace bullying of autistic people: a Vicious cycle	English	24.04.23	Ludmilla Praslova	<a href="https://us.specialisterne.com/workplace-bullying-of-autistic-people-a-vicious-cycle/">https://us.specialisterne.com/workplace-bullying-of-autistic-people-a-vicious-cycle/</a>	24.11.24
R3	WhitePaper	Neurodiversity and Creativity: What we do Well, and what Organizations can do Better	English	05.06.24	Ludmilla Praslova	<a href="https://us.specialisterne.com/neurodiversity-and-creativity-what-we-do-well-and-what-organizations-can-do-better/">https://us.specialisterne.com/neurodiversity-and-creativity-what-we-do-well-and-what-organizations-can-do-better/</a>	28.10.24

YouTube Videos, Podcast

Code	Type	Title	Language	Date	Author	Link	Accessed in
Y1	YouTube - Lived Experience	Building Neurodiverse Workplaces	English	27.06.24	Specialstern e	<a href="https://us.specialisterne.com/video-building-neurodiverse-workplaces/">https://us.specialisterne.com/video-building-neurodiverse-workplaces/</a>	28.10.24
Y2	YouTube - Lived Experience	Celebrating Neurodiversity at Dstl: AJ's Story	English	25.03.22	Defense Science and Technology Laboratory	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_6rUY452iw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_6rUY452iw</a>	28.10.24

Y3	YouTube - Lived Experience	Great Minds Don't Think Alike   Lived Experience of Neurodiversity at Work	English	11.11.23	Unmind	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zobbemXiU5M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zobbemXiU5M</a>	28.10.24
Y4	YouTube - Lived Experience	Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Myths, Advantages, and Simple Accommodations	English	12.05.23	Mom on the Spectrum	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2D2cN3cZg0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2D2cN3cZg0</a>	28.10.24
Y5	YouTube - Lived Experience	How To Improve The Workplace For AUTISTIC People	English	04.09.20	Orion Kelly	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wClX78sb8I">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wClX78sb8I</a>	20.01.24
Y6	YouTube - Lived Experience	Fired For Being Autistic - Workplace Adjustments For Autistic Employees	English	09.11.22	Orion Kelly	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o1CqZoUU_U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o1CqZoUU_U</a>	
Y7	YouTube- Lived Experience	Autism: Neurodiversity at Work Works Best   Layne Kertamus   TEDxRexburg	English	25.02.19	TEDxTalks	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikiolpTcBbl">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikiolpTcBbl</a>	28.10.24
Y8	YouTube- Lived Experience	DLA Wired Differently: Embracing Neurodiversity in the Workplace	English	Aug 20, 2021	Diversity Leadership Alliance	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt08vzVT-GQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt08vzVT-GQ</a>	28.10.24
J4	Podcast- YouTube	Why An Autistic Developer Is Your Next Great Hire with UW Medicine	English	30.01.22	Dev. Interrupted	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQqJlOFOLTc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQqJlOFOLTc</a>	03.12.24
J5	Podcast-YouTube	What Is Neurodiversity and Neurodiverse Media with Rachel Worsley	English	09.08.21	The Lived Experiences Podcast	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3BV067USsg&amp;t=9s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3BV067USsg&amp;t=9s</a>	03.12.24

Primary Interviews, YouTube Interviews, IBM Interviews

Code	Type	Title	Language	Date	Author	Link	Accessed in
J1	Interview - IBM	IBM's Journey in Fostering Neurodiversity and Inclusion	English	13.12.23	Dana Oancea	<a href="https://cartadiversitatii.ro/interviuri/476-ibm-s-journey-in-fostering-neurodiversity-and-inclusion">https://cartadiversitatii.ro/interviuri/476-ibm-s-journey-in-fostering-neurodiversity-and-inclusion</a>	23.11.24
J2	Interview - YouTube	Working with Neurodiverse Talent	English	26.11.24	Autistic Voices	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcBy2N5-FB8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcBy2N5-FB8</a>	15.11.24
J3	Interview- Youtube	A Guide to Workplace Inclusion for Autistic Employees (Autism at Work)	English	09.01.23	Orion Kelly	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9n_4nX3zWBo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9n_4nX3zWBo</a>	03.12.24
N1	Neurodiversity @ IBM Resource	Neurodiversity at IBM (8 ND Employees)	English	unknown	Dyllan Rafail, Natalia Lyckowski, Joshua Maddison, Aline-Bravo, Victoria Brunner, Autumn VanKirk, Rodolpho Agizzio, Alexandre Hoerbe Engelmann	<a href="https://newsroom.ibm.com/Neurodiversity-IBM">https://newsroom.ibm.com/Neurodiversity-IBM</a>	23.11.24

N2	Neurodiversity @ IBM Resource	What is it like to BeNeurodivergent@IBM?	English	15.10.20	Andrew Williams		23.11.24
N3	Neurodiversity @ IBM Resource	Neurodiversity @ IBM - Nothing about us, without us.	English	08.11.20	Andrew Williams	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2noTI6ThDRg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2noTI6ThDRg</a>	23.11.24
I1	Interview	Exploring Neurodivergence: Interview with CEO of a German Firm, employing Neurodivergent and People with disability	English	08.03.25	Master Student - Yara Alves Trindade	Skript in the Appendix	07.03.24
I2	Interview	Exploring Neurodivergence: Interviews with Neurodivergent Experts	English	09.03.25	Master Student - Yara Alves Trindade	Skript in the Appendix	07.03.24
I3	Interview	Exploring Neurodivergence: Interviews with ADHS Employee	English	10.03.25	Master Student - Yara Alves Trindade	Skript in the Appendix	07.03.24

### Organizational Resources

Code	Type	Title	Language	Date	Author	Link	Accessed in
O1	Organisational Resource	A rising tide lifts all boats	English	18.01.22	Monika Mahato, Susan K. Hogan, Brenna Sniderman	<a href="https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace.html">https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace.html</a>	20.11.24

O2	Organisational Resource	Neurodiversity Inclusion Training	English	/	Inclusive Employers	<a href="https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/learning-and-development/neurodiversity-training/">https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/learning-and-development/neurodiversity-training/</a>	20.01.25
O3	Organisational Resource	Microsoft Neurodiversity Hiring Program & FAQ	English	/	Microsoft	<a href="https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/inside-microsoft/cross-disability/neurodiversityhiring?oneroute=true">https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/inside-microsoft/cross-disability/neurodiversityhiring?oneroute=true</a>	13.01.25
O4	Organisational Resource	The future of work is neurodiverse	English	2024	Microsoft	<a href="https://unlocked.microsoft.com/mentra-neuroinclusion/?ocid=AIDN%2FA_LI_NKEDIN_oo_spl100004834729367">https://unlocked.microsoft.com/mentra-neuroinclusion/?ocid=AIDN%2FA_LI_NKEDIN_oo_spl100004834729367</a>	15.01.25
O5	Organisational Resource	Autism Inclusion: Enablement - Managers	English	/	SAP	<a href="https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=481c123a-727d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff&amp;page=1">https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=481c123a-727d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff&amp;page=1</a>	
O6	Organisational Resource	We Are All Neurodiverse in Some Way: Australia Expands Workplace Neurodiversity	English	09.08.21	Susan Galer	<a href="https://news.sap.com/2021/08/australia-expands-workplace-neurodiversity/">https://news.sap.com/2021/08/australia-expands-workplace-neurodiversity/</a>	10.10.24
O7	Organisational Resource	Let's Meet in the Middle: Autism Acceptance Month	English	03.04.23	Alexa MacDonald	<a href="https://news.sap.com/2023/04/autism-acceptance-month-sascha-dietsch/">https://news.sap.com/2023/04/autism-acceptance-month-sascha-dietsch/</a>	10.10.24
O8	Organisational Resource	Stories that made us	English	/	SAP Employees	<a href="https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/stories-that-made-us.html">https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/stories-that-made-us.html</a>	10.10.24
O9	Organisational Resource	Creating a Support System for People on the Autism Spectrum	English	/	SAP	<a href="https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=aa7f6337-727d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff&amp;page=1">https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=aa7f6337-727d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff&amp;page=1</a>	10.10.24
O10	Organisational Resource	Autism Inclusion: Building the Program Team	English	/	SAP	<a href="https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=80c88839-">https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=80c88839-</a>	10.10.24

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O11	Organisational Resource	Defining Success - Autism Inclusion Programm	English	/	SAP	<a href="https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=84ec7722-727d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff&amp;page=1">https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=84ec7722-727d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff&amp;page=1</a>	10.10.24
O12	Organisational Resource	Structuring a Program for the Future	English	/	SAP	<a href="https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=564c7822-727d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff&amp;page=1">https://www.sap.com/discover/autism-inclusion/knowledge-center.html?pdf-asset=564c7822-727d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff&amp;page=1</a>	10.10.24
O13	Organisational Resource	How to successfully onboard your new autistic employee	English	/	Ashlea McKay	<a href="https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/resources-for-employers">https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/resources-for-employers</a>	10.10.24

## **B) Interview Skript**

### Section 1:

- Greetings / Icebreaker (Connect, Engage)
- Introduction to the research + background/ confidentiality /request for permission to record

Introduction: Can you briefly describe your role in your organization / What are your responsibilities in relation to diversity and inclusion?

### **Main interview - Employer, HR Manager, Neurodiversity Specialist**

#### Section 2: Perception of inclusion in the workplace

1. How would you describe your organizational commitment to DEI with a focus on neurodivergent employees?
2. How long has your program/policy, etc. been in place?
3. What needs has it been designed to address?
4. Can you tell me about the process of developing this program? What key people were involved? What profiles/resources/how much time, etc.? Percentage of budget allocated? Testing?
5. Were there any changes after the first draft? What changes?

#### Section 3: Training Program Exposure & Impact

6. What are the three main objectives of the Neurod training program?
7. How do you select participants (voluntary/commissioned etc.)
8. How long is the program and what are the activities?
9. How do you define whether it is successful or not?
10. Are there any major criticisms of your program that have arisen?
11. Has the training changed your perception of neurodivergence? If so, in what way?
12. Have you noticed any changes in workplace interactions, culture or policy following the training?
13. What aspects of the training were most useful? What could be improved?
14. Has your organization measured the impact of the neurodivergence training? If so, what results did you observe?
15. Were there any specific changes in policies, hiring, or teamwork after the training

#### Section 4: Perspectives from untrained environments (asked if there were no training programs/policies in place)

16. To your knowledge, has your organization provided training on neurodiversity?" (If no, continue).
17. Do you think such a training program would be beneficial? Why or why not?
18. What would you like to learn or see in a neurodiversity-focused training program?
19. Are there any barriers to implementing neurodiversity training in your organization?
20. If your organization were to implement training, what format or focus do you think would be most effective?
21. Do you think neurodiversity training would have a positive impact on your workplace culture? Why or why not?

### Section 5: Final comments and farewell

22. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience of neurodiversity in the workplace or anything else you would like to share with us?
23. Thank you very much for your contribution and your time

### **Main interview – Employees with Neurodivergency**

#### Section 2: Perception of inclusion in the workplace

1. If you feel comfortable, can you tell me about your experience when you found out about your neurodivergence? How did this affect your life? How did it affect your work experience initially?
2. What were the biggest challenges you faced before the diagnosis (if any)?
3. Have these changed after diagnosis?
4. How would you describe your experience as a neurodiverse employee at work in the past?
5. Are there any differences to your current workplace?
6. Do you feel that your workplace, employer understands and accommodates neurodivergence? Why or why not?
7. Have you faced challenges or stigma at work related to your neurodivergence? If so, can you give an example and explain how it made you feel?"

#### Section 3: Training programs and impact

8. Have you ever participated in or been confronted with training or awareness programs on neurodivergence in your workplace?
9. If yes, can you describe its structure and objectives? (If no, continue with section 4.)
10. What was covered in the training and what did you notice in particular?
11. Has the training changed your perception of neurodivergence? If yes, in what way?
12. Did the training affect workplace culture, team dynamics or policies? If so, in what way? What aspects of the training were most useful? What could be improved?
13. Have you noticed a difference in the way your colleagues or managers treat you since the training?
14. Do you feel more supported in your workplace now? If so, how?
15. What kind of support, policies or initiatives would help improve your experience in the workplace?

#### Section 4: Perspectives from Untrained Environments (For interviewees who have no experience with corporate training programs)

16. You mentioned that, to your knowledge, your company does not provide training on neurodiversity? Why do you think this is the case?
17. Do you think such a training program would be beneficial? Why or why not?
18. What would you like to learn or see in a neurodiversity-focused training program?
19. What kind of support or training do you think would help improve your experience in the workplace?
20. How do you think the culture in your workplace would change if training was provided?
21. Do you feel that your colleagues and managers understand neurodivergence? Why or why not?

22. Have you encountered any challenges or misunderstandings in your workplace due to a lack of awareness of neurodivergence? Can you give examples of this?

Section 5: Final comments and farewell

23. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience of neurodiversity in the workplace or anything else you would like to share with us?

24. Thank you very much for your contribution and your time

**C) DATA STRUCTURE**

First -Order Code	Quote
<p>Addressing discrimination and Exclusion Neurodiverse people *</p>	<p>R1. "In the absence of real knowledge or understanding, my employer <b>had seen a label</b>, gone away and done a bit of research and put me in that bracket, not really seeing me as an individual".</p> <p>R2."Most decision-makers are allistic and are thus more likely to side with other allistics rather than with autistics."</p> <p>J1. "More than 40 percent of autistic adults are unemployed and the gaps begin to form early. When neurodiverse children struggle in the school setting, too often they grow into adults who struggle to find their way in a world that doesn't understand their challenges or their potential."</p> <p>J3."If I said to an organization, could I see your HR policy for neurodivergent employees or autistic employees, they'd kind of laugh at me... they don't exist."</p> <p>J4. "It's important to recognize and address ableism in the workplace and promote a culture of inclusion and understanding."</p> <p>Y8. "The people I speak to are on the spectrum have had very difficult experiences where they do feel discriminated against, where they do feel it's not safe to mention these challenges. The feeling of suffering and injustice is so incredibly demoralizing, and many of us deal with that repeatedly after situations."</p> <p>A8. "Disclosure can be challenging because disclosing neurodivergence and disabilities often results in discrimination."</p> <p>R2. "While workplace bullying is highly problematic for all employees, it has particularly severe consequences for autistic individuals."</p> <p>R1. "For many participants sharing their neurodiversity was a source of anxiety, with many feeling the consequences of making their love or disappear."</p> <p>R2. "Because ridicule and mockery are some of the most typical ways in which the world treats autistic people, high levels of gelotophobia are reported to occur at much higher rates in autistic (87.4%) vs. non-autistic populations (22.6%)."</p>

<p>Policies for better integration in the Workplace</p>	<p>A4. "Review rules and policies about how employees should treat colleagues. Workers need to know that their employer values diversity and has protections in place to ensure that all employees feel safe."</p> <p>A5. "Neuro-inclusion means creating an inclusive employee life cycle for neurodivergent professionals by employing technology, processes and support systems that accommodate their unique needs and enhance the experience of securing and advancing a career for these workers."</p> <p>A6. "Deloitte's global neurodiversity strategy focuses on enablers of neurodivergent professionals' success in the workplace across their entire career life cycle."</p> <p>C3. "Our product creators follow the guidance of Microsoft's inclusive design principles, which outline how they should learn from people with lived experiences different than their own, apply insights into product creation, and extend benefits across a broad range of people."</p> <p>O12. "Implement inclusive standards with check points/quality gates and mechanisms to ensure that all practices and processes across the organization are autism inclusive. Bring in experts from all relevant groups, internally and externally, to review and validate the approach."</p> <p>I2. "I would like to focus more on the individual needs of non-autistic neurodiverse people, as this group often receives less attention."</p> <p>C1. "We are continuing to tackle potential challenges to inform system and process changes that support equitable recruitment, advancement, retention, engagement, and other experiences for our people."</p> <p>C1. "Within our organization, transparency goes hand in hand with trust, and in that spirit, we are tracking our progress against our established aspirations and continuing to share our data publicly."</p> <p>C1. "Our US Office of Business Diversity oversees strategies to elevate spend and investments with diverse entities, focusing on the growth of systemically disadvantaged communities."</p> <p>C1. "We have updated our procurement processes to increase the inclusion and participation of diverse suppliers."</p> <p>C1. "Goals are aspirations and not quotas. The policy of each Deloitte US firm is to recruit, employ, train, compensate, and promote without regard to race, color, religion, creed, citizenship, national origin, age, sex, gender, pregnancy, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, disability (including neurodivergence), sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other legally protected basis."</p>

<p>Barriers to successful inclusion)</p>	<p>O1. "Despite most companies' increasing focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&amp;I) in the workforce, the neurodivergent group is often overlooked in the diversity conversation, and consequently, hiring efforts."</p> <p>Y5. "Hot desking, where employees regularly move desks, or move areas within the workplace... it's gonna cause heightened levels of stress and anxiety."</p> <p>Y5. "Forcing autistic employees into attending workplace gatherings and social interactions is forcing them into situations they are not always able to handle, interpret, or process."</p> <p>A1. "Too often, organizations overlook neurodiversity when building more diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces."</p> <p>A2. "While Canadian employers have made significant strides toward improving diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace, employment barriers remain for the neurodiverse talent pool."</p> <p>A5. "Barriers to an accessible work environment for neurodivergent people can include wayfinding, sound, lighting and smells in the office. All of these can interfere with an employee's ability to perform their best work."</p> <p>O4. "These barriers include a lack of understanding among recruiters and a reluctance among applicants to reveal their true selves, fearing discrimination and missed opportunities."</p>
<p>Fear of disclosing neurodivergence due to stigma and bias *</p>	<p>Y2. "I think there are lots of stereotypes around all kinds of neurodiversity. People think of dyslexics as people who can't read or autism and Asperger's as, you know, people that have no social skills at all and can't cope in the real world."</p> <p>R2. "Other 'strikes' against autistic performers include blunt communication perceived as <b>lack of agreeableness, and simply being different.</b>"</p> <p>R2. "Autistic individuals are seen as more deceptive and of lesser character than neurotypical individuals when telling the truth."</p> <p>R3. "While negative stereotypes can limit individuals' opportunities, positive stereotypes can create stress and unrealistic expectations."</p> <p>J4. "Myths include the idea that neurodivergent individuals can't handle the same workload as their peers, can't communicate well, or are anti-social. The truth is that neurodivergent individuals often have unique strengths and perspectives."</p> <p>Y4. "Myths include the idea that neurodivergent individuals can't handle the same workload as their peers, can't communicate well, or are anti-social. The truth is that neurodivergent individuals often have unique strengths and perspectives."</p> <p>A2. "More than half (55 per cent) of respondents indicated they feel there's a stigma associated with autism. Another 56 per cent said they're treated differently once people learn of their autism."</p>

	<p>A3. "While many neurodivergent employees need support in the workplace to do their jobs effectively and productively, that's simply one component. Managers and colleagues must also be aware of their own biases."</p> <p>A7. "More than half of those surveyed who self-reported as neurodivergent and had not disclosed their condition(s) had not done so because they did not have a formal diagnosis (55%) or did not see the value of disclosing it (53%). Around a quarter of respondents cited a fear of stigma (27%) or of reduced career opportunities (24%)."</p>
<p>Addressing systematic challenges for Neurodivergence *</p>	<p>C2. "Try employing tasks and activities, use of video calls and group tasks, metrics such as cognitive profiling and providing the interview questions in advance."</p> <p>C2. "Performance management frameworks should be adapted to fit a diverse workforce."</p> <p>C5. "Many companies have found ways of adjusting their hiring processes to open their jobs up to neurodiverse individuals for whom the traditional interview process is a barrier to employment."</p> <p>C5. "Workplace adjustments enable colleagues in our workplaces to work successfully and add value to the organization."</p> <p>J2. "The most important thing is that the job is absolutely clear to them and that the borders of what they have to do are also clear."</p> <p>N1. "We helped launch neurodivergent targeted hiring programs in eight countries and enablement (acceptance) training in over 30 countries."</p> <p>N3. "At IBM, we decided to rewrite the rulebooks, break down traditional employment barriers, and hire neurodivergents globally, like me, and to support and accept the neurodivergents that are already here at IBM, like me. IBM puts smart to work with neurodivergent professionals."</p> <p>N3. "To create new job opportunities within IBM, for anyone who has autism, attention deficit hyperactivity, dyslexia, dyspraxia, tourette syndrome and many other neurological differences."</p> <p>O7. "With a hiring format designed to set him up for success -- no open questions, no group tasks, no relying on eye contact, for example -- Dietsch secured an internship at SAP before applying to his current permanent position."</p> <p>Y4. "There's a medical model and a social model of disability. The medical model supports the idea that one is disabled by their differences, while the social model supports the idea that one is disabled by their environment."</p> <p>A7. "For neurodivergent people, company culture, workplace environment, and systems can exacerbate their impairments in both recruitment and everyday working life."</p>

<p>Challenges in recruitment process for neurodivergent candidates</p>	<p>O7. "Unfortunately, these differences can sometimes make it difficult for autistic individuals to shine in conventional job interviews, contributing to the higher rates of unemployment or under-employment in this group."</p> <p>Y6. "Diagnosed or undiagnosed, autistic people and neurodivergent people, for that matter more broadly, absolutely, and statistically struggle to not only find, but really perform, maintain, and keep meaningful employment."</p> <p>A1. Redesigning hiring practices to focus on skills rather than traits ensures that neurodivergent individuals are evaluated based on their strengths."</p> <p>A2. "In an incredibly competitive hiring environment, it is critical for Canadian employers, across all industries, to do more to learn about autism and neurodiversity generally and launch sincere, thoughtful efforts to tap into this wellspring of talent."</p> <p>A3. "We'll sometimes see job postings with vague language or they may include skills that are not core competencies and requirements for a job. That leads to neurodivergent folks to self-select out of applying."</p> <p>A4. "It's important for employers to identify tasks or streams of work that exist in the organization and consider neurodiversity in their talent attraction and retention efforts."</p> <p>A6. "A number of Deloitte firms have collaborated with specialized organizations to support the recruitment of neurodiverse people."</p> <p>A7. "In every area surveyed, neurodivergent employees found the process of being hired more challenging than neurotypical employees. Nearly four in ten (39%) found salary-related discussions challenging, along with typical recruitment situations like creating a CV (24%), searching for a job (21%) and attending face-to-face interviews (21%)."</p> <p>R1. "All participants with dyslexia and dyspraxia <b>spoke of their difficulty completing forms</b>. One participant who was present today and an application form to complete at interview <b>walked away on receipt of instruction</b>".</p> <p>O1. "AI hiring systems coded using mostly neurotypical candidates' data could be biased against applicants with autism due to atypical facial or speech expressions; this could result in a higher probability of neurodivergent individuals being eliminated if the algorithm is given disproportionate weightage in the hiring process."</p> <p>O3. "The Neurodiversity Hiring program seeks to attract talented neurodivergent candidates and provide the training and support needed for career growth and success."</p> <p>I1. "We work a lot with the specialist integration services that look after the special schools here in the area. They also look after the graduating classes and can then sound out a bit whether the people fit into the company and if so, where."</p> <p>C2. "Many neurodiverse candidates are put off applying for jobs based upon the information that is available pre-interview, or by the organisation of the interview process."</p>
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	<p>C3. "The Neurodiversity Hiring Program developed to bring in and support neurodiverse talent, helping them thrive within Microsoft."</p>
<p>Job insecurity for neurodivergent candidates</p>	<p>Y6. "Hmm, I think we've reached the end of our relationship, and it's probably time to go our separate ways. It's really just 'cause you're autistic, Unfortunately, times have changed, and we're gonna make your position redundant, effective immediately."</p> <p>A9. "Autistic people have been fired for taking instructions literally and performing exactly as instructed."</p> <p>A9. "The next thing we know, we're accused of being sarcastic and insubordinate while being ushered out the door, box of belongings in hand, wondering what could have possibly gone wrong!"</p> <p>A2. "The respondents also cited lack of structural support systems, including flexible work policies, as barriers that impact employee retention."</p> <p>J3. "Keeping it is so hard... we're reliant on knowledge and understanding of other employees... if my keeping the job is reliant on knowledge and understanding of managers and co-workers, how is that going to work?"</p> <p>C6. "Adjustments make a difference to intention to stay: 50% of participants who have tailored adjustments say that they would stay in their organisations, whereas 33% of participants who had no adjustments would definitely leave."</p>
<p>High unemployment rates among neurodivergent individuals</p>	<p>Y7. "Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability in America, and no matter what the reported diagnosis rate is, the actual rate is much higher."</p> <p>J5. "34.1 percent of sticking towards autism right is sort of like that's a high unemployment rate 34.1 percent — you know, it's three times the rate of people with general disability and that's huge for autism alone."</p> <p>Y4. "This diagnosis changed everything for me. I was a successful student, but I never considered autism for myself because everything I knew about it said that couldn't be me."</p> <p>A8. "42% of young adults on the autism spectrum never had paid employment in their early 20s."</p> <p>A8. "There remains, however, high unemployment rates for neurodivergent people due to discrimination and known and unknown bias."</p>
<p>Promoting the benefits of hiring neurodivergent talent</p>	<p>Y7. "I am saying, 'Hire the best person, but be open-minded to the idea that that person could be a neurodiverse individual.'"</p>

	<p>Y7. "Chase Bank reports that their autistic employees are 40% or more productive than a comparable non-autistic employee group."</p> <p>Y4. "Neurodivergent individuals bring heightened creativity, unique problem-solving capabilities, loyalty, honesty, attention to detail, and resilience to the workplace."</p> <p>A9. "Neurodivergent employees process information and engage with the world atypically. This means that they will see problems and issues from a unique perspective which can influence the development of creative and holistic solutions."</p> <p>A1. "Forward-thinking companies that embrace neuro-inclusion will not only improve the working lives of neurodivergent individuals but also enhance overall organizational performance."</p> <p>A6. "Neurodiversity embraces and welcomes these differences and recognizes that people who think in different ways bring strengths and advantages."</p> <p>A3. "With a significant portion of employees identifying as neurodiverse, organizations that aren't tapping into this talent pool could struggle to remain competitive."</p> <p>A3. "According to an internal survey, 89 per cent of the firm's neurodivergent employees have been performing as well, or better than, their peers, and 97 per cent reported their employment at KPMG has improved their lives significantly."</p> <p>A8. "Neurodivergent people are loyal to people who treat them well."</p> <p>O6. "Globally, Forrester researchers found that diverse organizations were more profitable and innovative, and did a better job of retaining top talent."</p> <p>Y7. "Neurodiverse individuals in the workplace think, learn, and process information differently and are a vital and valuable contribution to any team's overall success."</p> <p>O1. "One big benefit of an inclusive work culture is that it fosters diversity of thought, different approaches to work, innovation, and creativity."</p> <p>O1. "Given the benefits these professionals bring in relation to innovation and productivity, organizations that do not move in this direction risk losing out to other organizations that provide professionals a safe and progressive work environment."</p> <p>A1. "A diverse range of perspectives fosters innovation, strengthens teamwork, and improves retention rates."</p> <p>Interviews ??</p>
<p>Acknowledge misunderstandings and Misinterpretations About neurodivergence</p>	<p>A9. "The problem with this is my efficiency often got me into trouble with my co-workers because they believed I was purposefully trying to outperform them and make them look bad."</p> <p>A9. "Your autistic employees are not asking questions to challenge your authority, to argue with you, or to question your intelligence."</p> <p>N2. "to be told that you are too sensitive, too honest, too literal, to be misunderstood."</p>

	<p>Y7. "I felt undervalued that day. I thought maybe I over-delivered on the wrong thing."</p>
<p>Collecting and implementing feedback on training programs</p>	<p>O2. "Thank you for an uplifting and powerful session. This training was delivered exceptionally well and resonated with many of our employees. It was engaging and inspiring, focusing on key messages.</p> <p>O2. "As a neurodivergent person, I have struggled in previous jobs to explain to my employer how my brain works. This training helps raise awareness and make workplaces more inclusive for people like me."</p> <p>O2. "The message behind the training was so powerful and resonated with many of our employees."</p> <p>O2. "As a neurodivergent person, I have struggled in previous jobs to explain to my employer how my brain works. This training helps raise awareness and make workplaces more inclusive for people like me."</p> <p>O11. "Request feedback periodically from people involved with the program - employees on the autism spectrum and other team members. Insights into cultural health and program impact can be gained."</p>
<p>Improving accessibility and relevance of training programs</p>	<p>C2. "This module will explore awareness raising for leaders and managers about the impact of neurodiversity in the workplace and will include inclusive practice, different management approaches, processes, and strategies."</p> <p>C3. "Their commitment to providing learning and development resources tailored to diverse backgrounds and experiences ensures that empathy and human understanding are at the core of their training programs, thereby amplifying the positive impact on minority communities and fostering an inclusive and dynamic working environment."</p> <p>C3. "We've harnessed cutting-edge technology to launch immersive simulations, allowing employees to practice crucial D&amp;I skills such as recognizing and addressing bias, responding to microaggressions, and demonstrating effective allyship."</p> <p>C5. "Leadership from the top of organizations is critical in creating environments for neurodiverse individuals to succeed. Experts recommend engaging in a 'nested' model of training for neurodiversity."</p> <p>C5. "Leaders and managers should be equipped with knowledge on neurodiversity and strategies for supporting neurodivergent colleagues."</p> <p>C6. "Generalist wellbeing training may not appreciate the demands of cognitive differences and sensory overwhelm."</p> <p>C6. "To achieve good practice in managing relationships between neurodivergent and neurotypical co-workers, employers will need to consider how to adapt mediation and conflict handling at work."</p>

	<p>P1."This training should optimally include engagement with and input from neurodivergent workers and allies."</p> <p>P1. "Organizations should offer a broader level of training on neurodiversity to all their workers, regardless of their duties and job functions."</p> <p>P1. "This training should include both professional knowledge and input from neurodivergent people."</p> <p>C4."Launched in 2023, the Intentional Inclusion Workshops have trained over 1,000 SAP managers, representing 10% of our global managerial pool."</p> <p>C4. "We deeply value and practice a culture of lifelong learning by providing employees with opportunities to broaden their perspectives and explore new D&amp;I areas."</p> <p>J2. "Training staff on how to communicate with autistic employees would be very beneficial. We had a conversation with the staff to raise awareness about the new employee being on the autistic spectrum."</p> <p>I1."Everyone has to take part in the training courses, so it's not voluntary. And as mentioned above, the program takes about 1 hour."</p> <p>I2. "One of the main objectives is of course to create awareness and understanding of neurodiversity. To overcome prejudices as best we can. We also provide managers and employees with concrete tools to actively support neurodiverse colleagues. Thirdly, we help companies to adapt their processes and structures so that neurodiverse talents can develop their strengths."</p> <p>O2. "As a neurodivergent person, I have struggled in previous jobs to explain to my employer how my brain works. This training helps raise awareness and make workplaces more inclusive for people like me."</p> <p>Y1. "I don't think a manager needs any experience in coaching mentoring employing a neurodiverse a neurodivergent employee."</p> <p>J5. "Employers should train staff to understand neurodivergent communication and interaction styles."</p> <p>A6. "Deloitte firms have launched a number of awareness-building, coaching and education programs to help enable neurodivergent professionals reach their full career potential, as well as to support skills development and career progression."</p> <p>A7. "Neurotypical employees also recognised the need for more awareness training (78%), better knowledge of available accommodations for their neurodivergent colleagues (53%) and more senior leadership role-modelling of inclusive behaviours (44%)."</p>
	<p>P1."Mentoring programs may help many neurodivergent people adjust to and thrive in modern workplaces."</p> <p>P1. "Peer mentors can help many neurodivergent workers adjust to the workplace and</p>

<p>Providing structured mentorship for neurodivergent employees</p>	<p>find key resources, and they may especially value mentors who are neurodivergent too."</p> <p>O1. "Mentors provide much-needed support to all workers' careers, but they are perhaps even more important for the development of the neurodivergent workforce."</p> <p>O9. "Job/Life Skills Coach – Connect the personal side of an employee’s life with the support provided by the workplace support circle. Provide on-going coaching throughout the employment lifecycle of the individual on the autism spectrum."</p> <p>Y1. "Having a manager or coworker who can fit the role of unbiased mentor can certainly help an employee to feel comfortable."</p> <p>A4. "Build a mentoring program that supports neurodivergent employees. This doesn't need to be labelled as such, but where possible, employers can make this part of how they match new and/or young employees with more experienced mentors."</p>
<p>Creating informal peer-to-peer support networks</p>	<p>C2. "Setting up a neurodiverse employee’s network, establishing Neurodiversity Champions or Peer to Peer support structures and coaching."</p> <p>O9. "Team Buddy – Provide real time advice and support/guidance with day-to-day activities to remove roadblocks and minimize disruptions. He acts as a peer-to-peer guide to assist their colleague on the autism spectrum through day-to-day activities and act as a go-to for support and guidance."</p> <p>C6. "Neurodivergent workers need strong support from leadership in their workplaces, particularly from their managers, as well as their peers, to thrive."</p> <p>C4. "Inclusive experiences for candidates in collaboration with the ENGs by connecting them with SAP team members who share similar identities or life experiences."</p> <p>Y8. "I'd like to see more use of allies and advocates in the workplace as well... having someone in the department who is able to say to you, 'By the way, there was something that was a little bit off at that meeting.'"</p> <p>A6. "Several Deloitte firms have employee resource groups dedicated to neurodiversity and disability inclusion to help foster community and allyship, including raising awareness of neurodiversity across their respective firms."</p> <p>J1. "IBM also maintains private channels, on the Slack messaging system, for neurodivergent and autistic IBMers, providing safe spaces to share experiences and resources, and to ensure their voices are heard."</p> <p>N1. "One of my favorite initiatives was to develop a virtual safe space community, where neurodivergent IBMers can network with each other for support."</p>
	<p>J5. "It's actually scientifically proven that storytelling is the best way to sort of change people's minds and also showing those different representations that directly challenge a stereotype is also very effective."</p>

<p>Promote Neurodiverse Inclusion and Acceptance</p>	<p>J5. "The moment you understand that's how your brain works and there's actually nothing wrong with it, you just learn how to optimize your life to focus on things you enjoy and then make sure you get support and help from other people or put in strategies to manage things that you're not good at." "For someone like me, it was very hard to pay attention to things that do not interest me — it's kind of based on the idea that the ADHD brain is interest-based, but one thing with ADHD is extreme — it's like either you're super interested in one thing or you're just not."</p> <p>J5. "You already have neurodivergent people in your organization — you just don't know about it, so it is in your interest to learn about this because you might actually improve in productivity."</p> <p>Y4. "Greater self-compassion allows neurodivergent individuals to show up more fully as themselves and do their best work."</p> <p>A1. "By creating psychologically safe environments and offering tailored support, organizations can unlock the potential of all employees, ensuring a more inclusive, innovative, and productive future."</p> <p>A4. "Celebrate neurodiversity. Just as it's important to celebrate other forms of diversity, workers will welcome messaging about a commitment to neurodiversity in the workplace."</p> <p>A5. "An inclusive work culture must incorporate safe, open and honest discussions, with regular feedback factored into the organization's people and operations plan."</p> <p>A5. "Creating a truly inclusive work culture requires collaboration at all levels of an organization."</p> <p>A6. "At Deloitte, we recognize that everyone has personal strengths and things they struggle with, but for some people the variation between those strengths and challenges is more pronounced."</p> <p>A8. Employers can support neurodivergent employees by framing neurodiversity as a natural biological fact that includes all humans."</p> <p>O12. "If inclusion-focused offerings are completely disconnected from the organization's standard practices instead of being incorporating or strongly aligned, some employees may feel excluded as if they are not supposed to access the same company offerings as the rest of the workforce."</p> <p>N3. "Move beyond awareness into acceptance and not only of autistics but dyslexics, ADHDers, and beyond... To respect neurological differences as any other human variation."</p> <p>C1. "At Deloitte, we firmly believe that increasing diversity within all organizations, fostering equitable access to opportunities and resources, and promoting inclusion and understanding are critical to our future."</p> <p>C1. "Understanding that each person's allyship journey is unique, we provide a portfolio of resources and experiences to enable continuous learning, unlearning, and practice."</p>
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	<p>C1. "Celebrate identity, such as internal summits and organization-wide history and heritage month events."</p> <p>N1. "Throw away all assumptions about what your employees need. Instead, foster an environment where they can bring their whole selves to work so you can listen and learn how to best support them."</p> <p>C4. "To celebrate and inspire companies that are on the journey of autism inclusion, we also co-created the Autism Inclusion Company of the Year Award together with Disability:IN."</p> <p>C4."2023 marked the tenth anniversary of our industry-leading SAP Autism at Work program which started off as a grassroots movement in India and has resulted in supporting over 244 autistic colleagues at SAP."</p> <p>N1."Neurodiversity Acceptance Month... is a time to celebrate the outstanding contributions neurodivergent individuals have brought to society, an opportunity for neurodivergents to share their own stories of acceptance, as well as the challenges they have faced and a reminder that neurodivergent individuals exist, we deserve respect, and we are a diverse community with a wide spectrum of thoughts and ideas."</p> <p>O7. "At an Autism at Work event in 2018, Dietsch met someone on the autism spectrum working in cybersecurity at SAP. Seeing this positive role model made him believe in himself and that he, too, could work in cybersecurity."</p> <p>O8."I have become a positive voice in the autism community for those who need to be heard."</p> <p>A8. "Talking openly about neurodivergence reduces stigma, promotes trust in healthy environments, and helps people find and create healthy environments."</p> <p>N1. "My advice would be to shift the conversation from passive awareness to actionable acceptance... Organizations should play an active role in ensuring the neurodivergent community is not only included in the conversation but given key stakeholder and leadership roles."</p> <p>O11."Sharing success stories is another great way to measure achievements. These spotlights can feature employees, managers, mentors, buddies, or teams."</p> <p>I1."Our company is already well known in the area for employing people with disabilities of all kinds. We employ people with physical and cognitive disabilities, down syndromes, autistic and dyslexic people, etc."</p>
<p>Influence of work environments for neurodiverse workers</p>	<p>R3."Positive organizational environments support creativity. The sense of constructive challenge that can lead to flow, creative freedom, support, and recognition of creative contributions all facilitate creativity on the organizational level."</p>

	<p>R3."These negative environmental influences might be felt by neurodivergent employees particularly strongly."</p> <p>R3."Individual-level assessment of unique patterns of ability, rather than group-level data, should guide job matching and career development of every person."</p> <p>R3."Workplace research indicates that unhealthy organizational politics, harsh criticism of new ideas (the lack of psychological safety), excessive time pressure, and organizational inertia can block creativity."</p> <p>J1."By taking simple steps to ensure that everyone is comfortable at work, you can boost productivity and retention throughout your organization. Another advantage of a neurodiversity-inclusive environment is that you can create a culture that values all employees for who they are and let them bring their whole selves to work."</p>
<p>Reasonable accommodations for communication and sensory needs</p>	<p>Y1. "Minimizing social and environmental distractions in the workplace help keep me on task."</p> <p>J4. "Creating a culture where it's safe to ask for help, providing regular check-ins, offering alternative communication methods, and reducing sensory overwhelm are key accommodations."</p> <p>Y.3 "Being able to offer that work from home as an option where you can create your own safe and space that's environmentally friendly for you is really really important."</p> <p>O8. "Our Czech colleagues on the autism spectrum played a crucial role in selecting features during the design process, ensuring everyone benefits from this unique space."</p> <p>J4. "Allowing work from home and flexible hours, as well as setting clearly defined and measurable goals, can support neurodivergent employees."</p> <p>Y5. "Providing separate, or specific working areas, away from the open plan work pit type scenario... areas that aren't noisy, areas that aren't in the hustle and bustle of the workplace... They can dim lights, or they could turn the lights off in the roof, in their area, and use a lamp... they're able to adjust the curtain, and it's not gonna affect the entire workplace."</p> <p>Y5. "Consider a space removed for autistic employees to work at, where their desk is theirs permanently... such great routine, and such great consistency, that productivity can only thrive."</p> <p>J5. "For someone like me, it was very hard to pay attention to things that do not interest me — it's kind of based on the idea that the ADHD brain is interest-based, but one thing with ADHD is extreme — it's like either you're super interested in one thing or you're just not."</p>

	<p>Y4. "Creating a culture where it's safe to ask for help, providing regular check-ins, offering alternative communication methods, and reducing sensory overwhelm are key accommodations."</p> <p>A1. "Simple workplace adjustments can significantly enhance the productivity and retention of neurodivergent employees."</p> <p>A3. "Many neurodivergent employees can experience a sensory overload from stimuli, such as lighting, noise and temperature, particularly within a large organization. "Solutions can be as simple as providing the employee with noise-cancelling headphones or a private space or cubicle with high walls that prevent distraction."</p> <p>A4. "Employers can provide access to different modalities and practitioners and test their plan coverage's adequacy to ensure it doesn't create obstacles to supports for neurodivergent colleagues."</p> <p>A5. "Just in time' rooms offer an escape hatch for people who face challenges with sensory or social overstimulation, those who prefer a smaller enclosed space to a large open space and those who need to adjust lighting or block distractions."</p> <p>A5. "It's also helpful for employers to share approximate timing of fire alarm testing, so that employees with sound sensitivity can feel prepared."</p> <p>A7. "Around half of neurodivergent employees felt overwhelmed by distractions in the office (49%) compared to 14% for neurotypical employees."</p> <p>A7. "Support should be accessible without a formal diagnosis or disclosure, promoting inclusivity and understanding."</p> <p>A7. "Physical and neurological diversity should be championed in the workplace and employers need to support this by providing the right tools and technology to allow colleagues with disabilities to thrive and contribute on a level playing field."</p> <p>O13. "Sensory differences are a big part of being autistic and workplace environments aren't always the most forgiving in that regard. By allowing the autistic employee to bring sensory objects from home, to adorn their workspace or carry with them during stressful times, may greatly improve their focus and productivity."</p> <p>C3. "Outlook designers harnessed the power of generative AI to develop Copilot in Outlook, helping users cope with work tasks, prevent overload, and alleviate stress."</p> <p>C2. "Infographics and charts can make reporting more accessible."</p> <p>C2. "Employers are legally required to put in place 'workplace adjustments' to ensure that they can be as effective in their job role as everybody else."</p> <p>C2. "Workplace adjustments enable colleagues in our workplaces to work successfully and add value to the organisation."</p> <p>C5. "Creating in-office accommodations that are universally accessible so that everyone feels comfortable."</p>
	<p>C1. "Expand and evolve our mental health programs and resources to support the needs of our workforce."</p>

<p>Promoting employee well-being and mental health</p>	<p>C1. "Understanding that each person's allyship journey is unique, we provide a portfolio of resources and experiences to enable continuous learning, unlearning, and practice."</p> <p>C2. "A Civil Engineering company in the Midlands created a low arousal space within an open-plan office to support emotional and attentional regulation."</p> <p>C2. "Creating a psychologically safe space, where all employees feel empowered to speak up when things are not designed for them."</p> <p>J4. "Greater self-compassion allows neurodivergent individuals to show up more fully as themselves and do their best work."</p> <p>Y5. "Sensory overload can occur on a daily basis... resulting sensory overload... manifest as stress, anxiety, migraines."</p> <p>Y4. "I was diagnosed with autism at the age of 31. This diagnosis gave me vocabulary to describe my experiences and led to feelings of validation, relief, and inner peace."</p> <p>A7. "46% of neurodivergent employees felt impacted by their conditions on most days or every day in the workplace, with only 6% never feeling impacted by it."</p> <p>A7. "Additionally, the survey found that on average, neurodivergent employees rated their mental health worse than neurotypical colleagues, with 15% of neurodivergent individuals rating their mental health as poor or very poor, compared to 2% for neurotypical colleagues."</p> <p>A8. "Employment helps us thrive and improves our self-esteem. This can help reduce neurodivergent suicide rates, which are higher than neurotypical suicide rates."</p>
<p>Adapting communication to neurodivergent processing styles</p>	<p>Y3. "I think that just the workplace just has to create a kind of an ethos that promotes communication. It's not a one fix for all situation."</p> <p>Y6. "My experiences were, 'You are rude, or you are brutal, or you are too honest, or raw, or upfront, or in your face, or you are not a team player, or you can't play well with others. People not understanding how autistic people communicate, interact, and the challenges we face with social communication and interaction.'"</p> <p>Y8. "One thing that I found is very important is just setting out the expectation that as a neurodivergent employee there may be miscommunications between us."</p> <p>Y8. "Managers become more elliptical in their speaking style and they feel like they've given a very clear message but we're are much less likely to come away with that clear message."</p> <p>Y1. "I think it's really important to have consistent one-on-ones with the employee. It's just make sure that both the employer and the employee are both aligned on the goals and that these are upheld to a um routine schedule."</p> <p>A9. "Autistic people, by and large, are literal thinkers and communicators. We say what we mean, and we mean what we say with no hidden agenda, and we thrive in environments where people communicate the same way with us."</p>

	<p>A9. "An irritated facial expression, a pointed clearing of the throat, a raised eyebrow, a change in vocal tone — these things either won't register at all because our brains can't read them, or we'll feel something is amiss but we won't know what."</p> <p>A4. "Communicate clearly. Whether it's instructions on a specific task or more broadly focused employee messages, plain-language best practices will go a long way toward making all workers more comfortable and productive."</p> <p>O13. "It might be helpful for both you and them to give written instructions that they can refer back to at any point and have a reference point of things they can ask about if they don't understand."</p> <p>Y1. "If an employee does come to you with an issue, do your best to listen and try to help mitigate it as it's likely something that they've been holding on to for a while."</p>
<p>Need for clearer guidance and training from leadership</p>	<p>C6. "Managers should receive training on how to interact, supervise and work with neurodivergent people."</p> <p>C6. "Managers will need to learn about neurodivergent people's ways of thinking and learning and how to assess workers' individual needs."</p> <p>Y3. "My manager has had a positive impact on my life. She's very validating, and she helps me realize that's okay. We all have difficult days sometimes, and sometimes we have different needs, different challenges, and it's just very reassuring."</p> <p>A1. "When leaders model inclusive behaviors, they set the tone for an organizational culture where diversity of thought is valued."</p> <p>A1. "CHOs can advocate for tailored workplace accommodations that meet the specific needs of neurodivergent employees."</p> <p>A1. Senior leaders should champion neurodiversity and create a culture where all employees feel psychologically safe."</p> <p>A4. "While the impact on the Canadian workplace is at a relatively early stage, it's important that employers are equipped to provide coaching and direction to leaders of neurodiverse team members to ensure they're facilitating inclusion and awareness."</p>
<p>Pressure to conform and hide neurodivergent traits</p>	<p>Y3. "I didn't disclose my ADHD at work actually. Well, first, I didn't really think I had it. I was in denial, and second of all, because I didn't want them to think I was incompetent."</p> <p>Y3. "I really seriously considered not disclosing, but then I thought well if I opened that conversation up and open those channels straight away and be honest and say do you know what I'm new to this role, I'm new to this neurodivergence, so let's work together to see how we can support each other going forward."</p> <p>Y6. "Disclosure is a personal choice, okay? Just the same as how you identify yourself... You might not wanna disclose until you've physically gained employment, and that makes sense."</p>

	<p>A9. "Many of your autistic employees use all of the mental energy and emotional bandwidth they have available to mask their autistic traits, monitor their facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, and cope with sensory overload all day at work to have anything left over for socializing."</p> <p>A2. "It's alarming that the autistic community continues to feel they can't bring their whole, authentic selves to work or disclose their neurodiversity to employers."</p> <p>A6. "I felt like I was always having to play a part. To be someone else — just to fit in."</p>
Situations creating discomfort	<p>Lying / Social events...</p> <p>R3. "Workplace research indicates that unhealthy organizational politics, harsh criticism of new ideas (the lack of psychological safety), excessive time pressure, and organizational inertia can block creativity."</p> <p>Y5. "Strict dress codes can cause discomfort for autistic employees due to sensory issues with certain fabrics and clothing."</p> <p>A9. "We are literal, we are direct, we are honest, and many of us are uncomfortable with lying or even 'fudging' the truth."</p>
Social Challenges and difficulties fitting into team dynamics	<p>Y5. "Workplace gatherings, as a rule, are mandatory... for an autistic person, it can feel like forced fun, forced socializing, forced activities."</p> <p>Y5. "Interacting on a social level, with the people I work with every day, is hard enough... the idea that I have to do that with people I've never met, and do not know, and are clients, or whatever of the company, is really, really scary."</p> <p>A9. "I've been reprimanded for not greeting co-workers when entering the office, not saying 'goodbye' to them at the end of the day, or not personally greeting each customer as they walk in the door."</p> <p>A7. "46% of respondents said they wanted to have 'unwritten rules' in the office explained to them, and 44% wished that their colleagues would recognise when to leave them alone."</p>
Tailored onboarding to meet special needs	<p>Y1. "Having a manager facilitated introduction to the team members is key when first starting a role."</p> <p>O4. "Are there any workplace accommodations that will help you succeed in this role? This question... had a significant impact on neurodivergent individual David Thomason. David was participating in the onboarding process for Mentra... and the question made him feel seen and heard as he looked for his next role."</p> <p>A3. "When asked about the most challenging aspect of their career, 35% of all respondents cited settling into a new organization, while 31% cited the recruitment process."</p> <p>A3. "Although we emphasize creating a structured onboarding plan, being flexible and adaptable with that plan for neurodivergent folks can make all the difference."</p>

	<p>A4. "Support an inclusive onboarding process. Employers can encourage new hires who are neurodivergent to feel comfortable identifying as such by using nonjudgmental, inclusive messaging."</p> <p>O13. Autistic people offer a new form of talent, and while they have different onboarding needs to those who are not autistic or neurodiverse, with some minor adjustments delivering an engaging experience is easy."</p>
<p>Addressing bullying and microaggressions toward neurodivergent employees</p>	<p>R2. "Bullying of high performers is likely to be covert. Typical tactics include withholding of information and resources, gossip, making false complaints to supervisors, sabotage, and backstabbing."</p> <p>R2. "Bullying of low performers is more likely to be overt and to involve yelling, threats, and other forms of direct hostility."</p> <p>R2. "Bullying of autistic people is also a problem made particularly persistent due to its cyclical nature: autistic people are more likely to be bullied and are also more strongly affected by bullying."</p> <p>R2. "Therefore, it is unlikely to be broken without significant structural intervention."</p> <p>Y7. "You are an oddball! That probably shouldn't have mattered very much, but it did. It hurt."</p> <p>R2. "Compared to other employees, autistic individuals are <b>more likely to be targeted by bullies.</b>"</p> <p>R2. "High performance and the resulting coworker envy are likely to contribute to <b>bullying of autistic performers.</b>"</p> <p>R2. "Bullying of autistic people in the workplace is a problem that cost many their jobs and is likely contributing to the extremely high rates of unemployment."</p> <p>R2. "The history of bullying trauma typical of autistic individuals results in another vulnerability factor -- gelotophobia, the conditioned fear of being laughed at and ridiculed."</p>

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### **Declaration of AI Assistance**

I, Yara Sophia Alves Trindade, hereby declare that I have utilized artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT, Grammarly, and DeepL, during the preparation of this dissertation. These tools were used to clarify qualitative research concepts, refine the interpretation of thematic analysis, and validate the coherence of analytical arguments. Additionally, they were employed to enhance grammatical accuracy, improve the clarity and conciseness of language, and ensure stylistic consistency. DeepL was specifically used for translating sections between English and Portuguese to maintain linguistic precision and meet academic standards.

While these tools provided assistance in language refinement, thematic explanation, and translation, all intellectual and analytical contributions, including the research design, data analysis, and interpretation, are entirely my own. The AI tools mentioned served solely as supplementary resources to support the presentation and articulation of the dissertation. Responsibility for all content, conclusions, and interpretations remains solely mine.

Yara Alves Trindade,

March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025