

Chapter 7

Neurodivergent Talent in the Workforce: The 'New Frontier' to Equitable Economic Growth

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ABSTRACT

As global society adopts inclusivity, underscoring that no individual should be excluded and ensuring equitable chances, the acceptance of neurodivergent individuals is imperative. Despite the existence of legal protections, neurodivergent individuals encounter several challenges in securing employment. Approximately 90% of the neurodivergent population is either unemployed or underemployed. Neurodivergent individuals have numerous issues in the workplace including barriers to effective social interaction, difficulty in conveying emotions, reduced career progression, low workplace well-being, and encountering negative attitudes and discrimination. This work aims to understand the conceptual framework of neurodivergence, provide an overview of the existing situations and challenges faced by them and offer pragmatic

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recommendations for their integration into the mainstream workforce. We have also provided examples of companies that have successfully implemented neuro-inclusive human resource practices in their organisations.

INTRODUCTION

Neurodiversity refers to the natural differences in the operation of the human brain. It includes inherent variations in neurological functions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, Tourette syndrome, and Asperger syndrome, which can occur in the same individual (Singer, 1999). As much as 15% to 20% of the global population is projected to have neurodiverse conditions (Doyle, 2020). As global society embraces inclusivity by providing equitable access to opportunities and emphasizing that no one should be marginalized, acceptance and recognition of neurodivergent individuals is essential. Inclusivity in its true spirit seeks to correct the historical inequalities and injustices by fostering environments where every individual is valued, respected, and embraced (Tzirides et al., 2023). Inclusivity and sustainability initiatives are closely linked to the process of prioritizing people and removing inequalities. Inclusivity is a fundamental concept in the domain of social sustainability by ensuring that all participants are regarded equitably, without any form of marginalization and discrimination (Carnemolla et al., 2021). The neurodiversity movement, led by activists, advocates for the recognition and valuation of neurological variations as an essential component of human diversity (Dwyer, 2022). It intends to modify perceptions and promote acceptance and inclusion of individuals whose cognitive abilities deviate from societal norms. A neurodivergent individual may experience challenges with learning, social interaction, communication, motor skills, and coordination. Lack of awareness, Discrimination, and inadequate infrastructure may pose challenges for neurodivergent individuals in communities and workplaces.

Neuro inclusivity, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) are interconnected. CSR activities that promote diversity and equality promote an inclusive culture in which marginalized voices are heard and every contribution is valued and appreciated. Neuro-inclusive human resource practices are a critical strategy and a progressive step in the broad spectrum of corporate social responsibility intended to promote inclusivity in order to align with social movements (Vohra et al., 2015). Diversity and inclusion are essential pillars of the UN SDGs, which represent a set of global objectives aimed at addressing a range of social, economic, and environmental challenges in a collaborative manner (Relx Group, n.d.). Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

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