



# Being Inclusive With Neurodiverse Workforce And Technology in Training

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**Abstract.** An emerging area of research examines the experiences and contributions of neurodiverse individuals, particularly those with autism spectrum conditions, in educational and workplace environments. This study synthesizes findings across studies to elucidate key aspects of including Neurodiversity in organizations. Diversity and inclusion set the top agenda of all global organizations of today. It is said that the neurodiverse population is over 5% of the employable population (Deloitte 2022). An inclusive workforce cannot be built if this segment is not hired, not trained, and included in the mainstream jobs. Several studies showcase the benefits of workplace accommodations for neurodiverse employees. Adjustments such as quiet workspaces, written job instructions, and noise-canceling headphones allow individuals to minimize sensory overload. Reviews emphasize that customized supports boost job satisfaction, performance, and retention. This review creates a foundation for future inquiry by surfacing cross-cutting challenges and opportunities in current empirical work. It demonstrates the need for ongoing research and translating findings into practice to drive meaningful progress in neurodiversity inclusion. With appropriately supportive conditions, organizations can tap into the innovations neurodiverse perspectives bring. The study presents a few best practices that industries across the globe can adopt. Technology-based training is proposed to be the pathway to neurodiverse inclusive workplaces.

**Keywords:** Training, Technology, Neurodiverse, Workforce, AI, Metaverse, Inclusion, workplace, Diversity.

## 1 Introduction

Neurodiversity encompasses natural variations in human cognition and neurology, including autism spectrum disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and other brain-based conditions. Historically, these differences were viewed through a deficit lens, focusing on challenges. However, the neurodiversity paradigm

recognizes these variations' inherent strengths and contributions to communities and workplaces (Woods and Estes, 2023; IBCCES, 2019).

Mainstream learning and work environments often create barriers to participation for those with atypical neurological wiring. Capacity building through specialized training can equip neurodiverse individuals with skills to navigate challenges and optimize strengths. Well-designed initiatives based on neuroscience insights and direct input from the community allow for meaningful inclusion and delivery of untapped talents (Hand, 2023; Mousa, Ayoubi, and Puhakka, 2024)).

Current literature on training programs for neurodiverse individuals spans multiple fields but lacks synthesis. This review promotes future direction from psychology, neuroscience, vocational rehabilitation, and education to identify best practices. This study leads to the emergence of key elements of effective programs, including neurodiverse.

Several critical questions guide this study: What core competencies do training initiatives target for common neurotypes like autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)? How are programs tailored to address everyday barriers faced? What changes catalyze a more inclusive workplace? What is the role of technology in training a neurodiverse workforce? The chapter presents a review based on the existing sources.

## **1.1 About The Study**

This study explores emerging areas of research, the learning experiences, and management of people with Neurodiversity, such as those with autism spectrum and learning disability conditions, at workplaces. Various studies reveal a complex interplay of challenges and benefits to integrating Neurodiversity in corporate environments like a few seminal past studies. This review attempts to aggregate peer-reviewed research from psychology, organizational behavior, vocational rehabilitation, disability studies, and white papers in this area. The comparative dimension of the review compares findings across industries and cultural settings.

The chapter presents best practice while revealing critical blind spots. It seeks to catalyze progressive paradigms for cultivating talent across the neurological spectrum, driving innovation. The authors aim that such a study will empower neurodivergent individuals and guide organizations towards more accessible, equitable, and strengths-based workplace ecosystems.

## **2. Literature Review**

In many countries, diagnosis of such diverse mental backgrounds is difficult. The provision of working with neurodiverse individuals begins with an earlier diagnosis at the preschool level. Therefore, at schools, provisions have to be made for these children's inclusion, learning, and progression to higher grades. Once the schooling is done, challenges of learning and inclusion are at the higher education stage, which is considered to be making people employable. It is further ridiculous to see the struggle of neurodiverse individuals with jobs and at job places.

In the past, many studies were focused on developing presentation and communication skills among autistic students at university levels to improve employability. This study concluded that personal support should be based on individual strengths and areas to be worked upon rather than diagnostics only. A point of view is also expressed to improve the attitude of non-autistic individuals to work and study with autistic individuals.

A Few other studies proposing Conceptual models for cultivating Neurodiversity in the workplace propose multi-step strategies, including reforming hiring practices, fostering inclusive workplace cultures, addressing concerns about reverse discrimination, and leveraging the talents of neurodiverse employees through supportive supervision and management (Khan, Grabarski, Ali, & Buckmaster 2023). At the same time, less is mentioned about training initiatives. Other Qualitative investigations revealed that while neurodiverse individuals offer advantages in pattern recognition, sustained focus, and innovation, they face obstacles including sensory sensitivity, rigid thinking, and social communication difficulties. Workplace accommodations and adaptations to management techniques can help realize the benefits of Neurodiversity. Pryke-Hobbes et al (2023) concluded that employers must foster an accepting working environment, engage in comprehensive and continuous training on Neurodiversity, and provide mental health support to all its employees if needed occupational therapy.

Critiques also suggested more research on managing neurodiverse individuals & teams and mitigating integration challenges. This suggests multidisciplinary approaches grounded in principles of universal design that focus on adapting systems to meet the needs of neurodiverse employees. It is often reiterated that there is promising potential for workplace neurodiversity while exposing gaps in inclusion practices, management strategies, and accessibility barriers. Scholars advocate for significant organizational and cultural shifts to realize the promise of Neurodiversity fully, thus requiring developing sustainable strategies for unlocking the talents of neurodiverse professionals.

## **2.1 Neurodiverse in workforce**

People with Neurological conditions such as autism spectrum disorder and dyslexia are also known as they possess exceptional qualities and have amazing strength over particular skills like mathematical calculations, pattern recognition, and sound memory. According to consultancy and auditing firm Deloitte, 10 to 12 percent of the world's

population is neurodivergent (Deloitte 2023). The latest figures provided by the World Health Organization show one in a hundred children have autism, but for many people, it's only diagnosed later in life (WHO 2023). Figures are shocking for developed countries like the US. These countries have better provisions and facilities to diagnose such neurological conditions. According to the country's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2023), one out of every forty-four children have autism spectrum disorder. These figures are shocking. Plight for people having such a disorder is not easy. Day-to-day tasks from school to social aspects are challenging. Regarding employment, they stand a much lesser chance of seeking one than their counterparts worldwide. It is said in the US alone, the majority of people with autism, nearly 85%, are unemployed. This is compared to 4.2 % unemployment for the overall population. In developing countries, the scenario is even worse. Many countries across the world do have no record of neurodiverse populations. They are found good for several jobs involving mathematics and calculations like cybersecurity, quality testing, and assurance, data analytics, teamwork, customer services, User experience design, innovation, spatial design, and many more emerging complex jobs. They offer organizations business propositions and social benefits through better inclusion and employment. (Krzeminska et al., 2019). One major highlights the specialized abilities that often accompany autism and other neurocognitive conditions. Studies indicate strengths in pattern recognition, sustained focus, and visual-spatial processing among neurodiverse individuals. Researchers link these aptitudes to enhanced creativity and innovation potential, particularly in detail-oriented and systematic work roles. However, findings also reveal significant barriers to inclusion. Social and communication challenges associated with autism can impede relationship-building and collaboration. They show empathy and flexibility (Lorenz & Heinitz 2014). Sensory sensitivity may heighten reactions to overwhelming stimuli. Common challenges include inflexible routines, the need for structure, and emotional regulation difficulties. Including a neurodiverse workforce should start from higher education to having trained entrants ready for workplaces. The hiring market is open to such a population due to their unique skill sets (Mousa, Ayoubi, and Puhakka 2024). Recognizing and embracing the perspectives and abilities of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is crucial in employment settings. Various studies have shown that a neurodiverse workforce holds the potential for innovation and excellence. However, there are still barriers and misconceptions that hinder its realization. The challenge lies in training such a diverse workforce for the job in the least time. Integrating metaverse in various HR processes can go a long way in including a diverse workforce, particularly neurodiverse individuals.

The review identified issues that shed light on the challenges of integrating talent into mainstream work environments. These include the importance of communication strategies adjusting to the physical workplace and understanding how Neurodiversity contributes to occupational burnout (Tomczak & Kulikowski, 2023). These themes highlight individuals' obstacles from navigating social interactions to managing sensory sensitivities. Consequently, workplaces must prioritize fostering a culture of

understanding and support (Tomczak et al.,2021). Neurodiverse individuals offer benefits to organizations as supported by both evidence and theoretical analysis. Their distinct strengths, such as memory, enhanced concentration, and creative problem-solving skills, are valuable assets. When utilized effectively, these strengths can drive innovation and dedication to work ( LeFevre-Levy et al., 2023), improve attrition, and Enhance performance. However, to fully harness these advantages, it is crucial to eliminate the societal barriers currently impeding their participation and inclusion. Including neurodiverse at the workplace may require a customized program in hiring and training.

The research and analysis of existing literature emphasize the importance of taking an inclusive stance towards Neurodiversity. It urges educators, employers, and policymakers to work to establish environments that are supportive, flexible, and accommodating ( Cope & Remington 2022). This collaboration is crucial in breaking down the obstacles individuals with neurodiverse traits encounter. Following the few initiatives can improve their integration into the workforce and Ensure their active participation. Lorenz & Heinitz's (2014) study once again proposed that individuals with Asperger's (a kind of autism spectrum) are suited for natural sciences, IT, and computers. Their job interest test demonstrates prominence in manual, investigative, and organizing jobs.

**Neurodiversity as an Asset** A predominant theme across studies is the view of Neurodiversity as an asset, with neurodivergent individuals possessing distinct strengths valuable in the workplace. These include heightened focus, pattern recognition, innovative thinking, and attention to detail. Research contends that organizations stand to gain by embracing Neurodiversity and capitalizing on these cognitive variations.

**Employment Challenges.** While Neurodiversity offers advantages, studies consistently reveal workplace obstacles neurodivergent individuals face. It takes a long-term perspective to build a workplace and learning facility that includes the neurodiverse. Common workplace challenges could range from fundamental social communication to stimulating sensory sensitivity like bright lights or loud sounds. This calls for restructuring and rescheduling. Emotional aspects also needed attention that did not find their place in the primary agenda. These barriers can impede full participation and integration into the workplace if proper accommodations and support are not provided. Research highlights the need to implement customized strategies that aid neurodivergent employees in overcoming these inclusion challenges. The Challenge :

- Neurodiverse talent ( ignored/untapped)
- Lack of support mechanism
- Unavailability of tools with employers
- Understanding & acceptability in the workplace

**Workplace Adjustments.** A prevalent theme in the literature revolves around implementing workplace adjustments and accommodations to support neurodivergent employees better. Recommended changes range from modifying physical office

environments to provide quiet spaces and reduce sensory stimulation to adopting more inclusive hiring practices, such as structured interviews focusing on skills rather than social abilities. Studies also advocate for communication strategies like providing written job instructions, expectations, and verbal explanations to aid neurodivergent workers. Supporting the previous point, having a tailored adjustment will go a long way in enabling neurodivergent individuals to manage challenges that allow them to contribute their strengths and talents fully.

**Training and Development:** To enable the talent of neurodiverse training is the pathway. A common theme in existing studies emphasizes the critical role of training programs for neurodivergent employees and their neurotypical co-workers in cultivating genuinely inclusive workplaces. Job-related skills, self-advocacy, and social communication abilities are recommended for professional development. Training for neurotypical peers and HR folks to better understand Neurodiversity, their skill sets, reducing bias, diagnosing them for suitability to offer jobs and collaboration with neurodivergent co-workers while on the job. Research contends that a two-pronged approach of destigmatizing Neurodiversity while empowering neurodivergent employees enables workplaces to fully leverage the innovative potential of a neurologically diverse workforce (IBCCES 2019)

**Impact of Technology:** Digitalisation and technology have spread their wings in our lives. A notable theme indicated the opportunities digital transformation and technology offer to empower and employ neurodivergent individuals. Research suggests that digital platforms and tools can enable remote work, provide training tailored to different learning needs, and open up technology-focused roles well-suited to the talents of many neurodivergent people. As work and learning become more technology-enabled, studies suggest new possibilities arise for building the capacities and inclusion of neurodiverse individuals in the workforce. However, research also cautions that access to training and technology should be equitable to realize the full benefits.

While illuminating key aspects, the literature exposes critical gaps. Few longitudinal studies track the career trajectories of autistic students and employees. Research on Asian, African, or Latin American contexts is scarce, indicating a Western-focused bias. Integrative frameworks for organizational neurodiversity initiatives are underdeveloped. The literature provides a strong foundation for understanding the importance of Neurodiversity in the workplace and the challenges it presents. However, more thorough empirical research is needed to fully understand the best inclusion strategies and evaluate their effects on individual and organizational performance (Khan et al.,2023)

**Examples:**

Wells Fargo's Neurodiversity Program is an exemplary case study of a successful corporate initiative promoting Neurodiversity in the workplace. Launched in April 2020 and spearheaded by senior executive Stephen DeStefano, the program seeks to provide

meaningful employment opportunities for a disproportionately unemployed community of neurodivergent individuals. Understanding that traditional interview expectations and communication norms often disadvantage neurodivergent talent, Wells Fargo revamped its Hiring process to prioritize skills over social performance metrics like eye contact or verbal communication abilities. The program underscores the importance of recognizing differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits, collectively called Neurodiversity, which encompasses conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), ADHD, and dyslexia. With an estimated 15-20% of the US population being neurodivergent, a significant proportion of this group encounters substantial barriers to employment. Wells Fargo's approach to inclusive hiring involved the creation of an alternative, skills-based hiring process designed to mitigate potential biases. Additionally, the company committed to educating its workforce, enrolling over 10000 employees in neurodiversity training in collaboration with the University of Connecticut's Center for Neurodiversity and Employment Innovation. This initiative aims to foster a more inclusive workplace and provides a comprehensive understanding that can be shared with other companies by expanding opportunities for neurodivergent individuals across various sectors.

The outcomes of these endeavors have been remarkable. The program has achieved a 98% retention rate, hiring over 250 full-time employees for diverse roles across seven core lines of business within Wells Fargo in the US and India. Moreover, it has successfully promoted the advancement of women and individuals from minority backgrounds, with 37% of hires being women and 45% identifying as black, Hispanic, or multiracial. Wells Fargo's Neurodiversity Program exemplifies how companies can harness the skills and perspectives of neurodivergent individuals. By prioritizing skill development and providing support for this overlooked talent pool, Wells Fargo not only enhances the diversity of its workforce but also sets an example for other organizations to create a more inclusive and fairer corporate environment.

## **2.2 Metaverse for Training Neurodiverse**

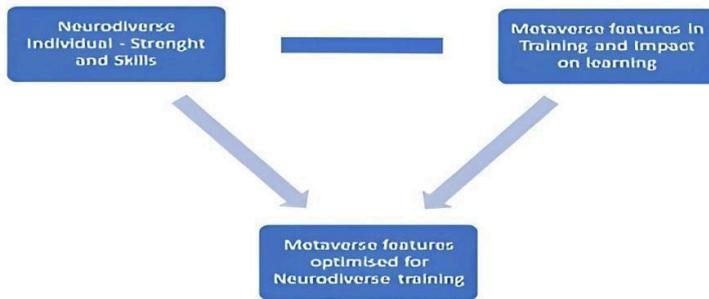
Metaverse uses immersive technology with the aid of computers and programming. This is integrating physical and virtual places. It is an emerging technology in several areas of business. Metaverse, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence are rapidly transforming workplaces and how people work. They are significant factors, especially in the area of learning and development. However, there is potential to utilize them in various functions to be inclusive. There has been discussion on and off about replacing some of these with other updated technology. Sometimes, it is a buzzword. In the field of education, learning, and development, they are long-term investments and have a more significant impact. Many simpler technologies are set to automate routine tasks and provide valuable data-driven insights for decision-making; more complex technologies deliver immersive experiences and connect workforces spread across different locations (Pandey et al., 2024). Technology outlines the capabilities mainly focused on improving HR processes

and training: the Metaverse-based 3D visual model, augmented reality-based training, virtual reality-based experience, and wearables to provide biological measurements; it is endless. The metaverse, known for its immersive virtual environment facilitated by virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence, is a growing arena with transformative potential for employee training, collaboration, and engagement. Metaverse technologies are utilized for virtual employee skill development, integration of digital workplace tools, and application of deep learning computer vision algorithms to enhance immersive training simulations. (“Virtual Workplaces in the Metaverse: Immersive Remote Collaboration Tools, Behavioral Predictive Analytics, and Extended Reality Technologies,” 2022)

The metaverse is a hypothetical iteration of the Internet as a single, universal, and immersive virtual world facilitated by virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) headsets. In 2021, metaverse-related companies reportedly raised upward of \$10 billion, more than twice as much as they did in the previous year. (Kunthara,2021).

The metaverse enables people to have virtual identities, presence, and “agency,” including peer-to-peer interactions, transactions, user-generated content, and “world-building.” The metaverse is sizable but less talked about enterprise applications and opportunities include virtual employee training and team collaboration with avatars, virtual prototyping in manufacturing and construction, and virtual showroom displays for products such as cars. Walkowiak (2023) and other researchers studied the use of digitization and virtual reality at workplaces and reported the positive impact of technology on training and workplaces to be neuro-inclusive. Wearables and VR technology have a positive effect on the learning and physical and mental health of employees. Remarkable work has been done by a few researchers earlier measuring learning for neurodiverse, particularly individuals with autism. They performed and learned better with table games, gamification, digital games, and game videos (Cerezo, González-González, & Bonillo, 2023; Castro-Muñoz et al., 2018; Cadieux & Keenan, 2020). These methods were found effective in training people with Neurodiversity in several areas like thinking, communication, behavior, and a few others. Oram's (2018) study reminded us of drama as a better, more engaging, and effective way of learning. Metaverse is widely used in games and several forms of training in the industry. Olszewska's (2021) experiments with music in training worked wonders for results. Several such studies have demonstrated good responses from neurodiverse individuals about using different tools in training. Porayska-Pomsta et al. (2018) used AI-assisted training with autistic students and recorded better learning in several areas, making the premise stronger for metaverse to make way for neurodiverse training. Looking at the potential of incorporating a few innovators, they have proposed patents and the use of such devices, including Ruttenberg (2021).

The pictorial presentation below explains the metaverse in training for neurodiverse employees.



**Fig. 1.** Metaverse-based Training for Neurodiverse

This research strongly advocates for the inclusion and support of individuals in the workplace. Through examination, it is uncovered that the organizational dynamics and performance of neurodiverse make a compelling argument for their integration into the workplace and society. Practical training using metaverse features can optimize learning for the neurodiverse in various areas.

The metaverse can foster neurodiverse inclusion at the workplace by creating stimulating spaces that cater to different work patterns, minimize social distance, and encourage accessibility. The metaverse can offer a safe and flexible space for neurodivergent individuals, including those on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These environments allow such people to communicate using avatars that can be altered, hence lessening the effects of social interaction and sensory issues, which are often the main hindrances to working in offices. Studies find that such spaces can also be participatory as per environmental communication in providing other means of communication and concentrating attention through the environment itself (Hutson, 2022). Furthermore, the metaverse opens up different possibilities for developing new skills. An app like Floreo VR, designed to help individuals training on the autism spectrum deal with social situations, shows promise for developing occupational skills in the neurodiverse population. Also, the metaverse can allow practicing a presentation to an audience or conducting a group activity without the pressure of actual stakeholders, enabling neurodivergent workers to build self-assurance

and be able to perform and achieve results in the real world (Hutson, 2022; Altinay et al., 2024).

### 3. Recommendations for Industry

Several recommendations for industries seeking to leverage the metaverse to support neurodiverse inclusion:

**User-Centered Design and Collaboration** Designing metaverse systems with neurodiverse users helps promote virtual space utilization. The literature stresses the need for user-driven design and the involvement of the community to adapt virtual environments to neurodivergent individuals' requirements (Oxford e-Research Centre, 2023).

**Customization for Sensory Preferences** Offering sensory customization features, such as controlling sound, visuals, or social interaction levels, can reduce anxiety for neurodivergent employees. Enabling such adaptations ensures that employees can work in environments that match their comfort levels and focus needs (Altinay et al., 2024)

**Virtual Training and Social Skill Development** Industries should develop virtual tools and applications, like Floreo VR, to support neurodivergent individuals in acquiring social, communication, and behavioral skills. Training simulations can also empower them to perform confidently in professional settings through low-pressure virtual rehearsals (Hutson, 2022)

**Promote Hybrid Work Models Using Virtual Spaces** Virtual workplaces can complement physical workspaces by offering hybrid models that reduce the need for commuting or overwhelming face-to-face meetings. This flexibility can benefit neurodivergent individuals, who often thrive in control.

**Establish Accessibility Standards and Financial Commitments** Industry leaders must develop interoperability and accessibility frameworks to ensure seamless platform transitions and prevent exclusion. Clear financial commitments toward assistive technologies and inclusivity efforts are essential to building sustainable and accessible metaverse ecosystems (Oxford e-Research Centre, 2023)

These steps will help industries move beyond token accessibility, ensuring the meaningful inclusion of neurodivergent employees in both virtual and real-world work environments.

## 4 Conclusion

Many organizations are including neurodiverse in their workforce. Through various customized programs, hire and train or intern train and hire, tie up with organizations specializing in training neurodiverse, Schools, NGOs, etc. A few companies that have come forward to be inclusive with neurodiverse employees include Lemon Tree Hotels, Nike, Publicis Sapient, SAP, EY, Accenture, IBM, DXC, Deutsche Bank, and many others.

An argument is proposed for the importance of Neurodiversity in enriching the workforce and improving performance. It suggests that we change our perspective on Neurodiversity in employment settings, moving away from focusing on deficits and instead embracing a strengths-based approach that acknowledges and harnesses the contributions of neurodiverse individuals. By doing so, we can unlock the potential of a diverse workforce fostering innovation, creativity, and resilience in today's complex global economy. The journey toward inclusivity and understanding is ongoing. This research adds to the growing knowledge that guides us toward a future that embraces Neurodiversity and equality for all.

These achievements underscore the potential and advantages of neurodiverse employment, aligning with literature suggesting that assistive technology can assist individuals with intellectual disabilities to overcome limitations and improve work-related skills. Research indicates that digital tools such as video modeling and prompting effectively support individuals with autism in completing complex tasks, suggesting that digitalization can enhance the employability and entrepreneurial potential of the neurodiverse workforce. Metaverse-based training will make the future for inclusive neurodiverse at the workplace.

Research also highlights training needs for educators and managers. Studies call for professional development focused on inclusive instructional strategies, individualized mentoring, and designing adaptable environments. Fostering a culture of awareness and acceptance is critical for realizing the advantages of a neurodiverse workforce.

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