

THESIS

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**Workplaces That Work for Everyone:
The Broader Impact of Autism-Friendly
Neuro-Inclusive Design**

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Abstract

This thesis explores how neuro-inclusive workplaces designed to accommodate autistic individuals can benefit neurotypical employees and contribute to broader organisational success. By flipping the narrative, this research demonstrates that inclusive adjustments are not favours, but elements of a competitive strategy. The study uses qualitative methodology, and findings are thematically analysed. Data is gathered from two focus groups, one with neurodiversity experts and one with students and young professionals, and a one-on-one interview with an autistic individual. A brief comparative analysis examines international neurodiversity employment programs to contextualise primary research findings internationally.

In the thematic analysis, seven major areas of impact were identified: clear communication and workflow, psychological safety, leadership and structural support, physical and sensory environment, neurodivergent contributions, organisational success factors, and barriers. The findings demonstrate that neuro-inclusive practices designed to support autistic employees improve well-being and productivity for everyone. Although the advantages are clear, widespread adoption is limited due to cultural and systemic barriers. The thesis concludes that inclusive design is foundational to a great, future-proof workplace, and diverse thinking leads to sustained competitive advantage and innovation.

Recommended TDK sections: 1. Research with social impact, 2. Entrepreneurship development, 3. HR and organisational development, (4. Inequalities)

1. Introduction

Diversity, equity and inclusion are much more than moral obligations or extra efforts companies make to help marginalised communities. The framework is slowly getting recognized as a valuable strategy for businesses to get ahead in today's competitive corporate landscape. Race, gender and ethnicity are the first things that come to mind when exploring the topic. It makes sense since these differences are apparent the moment we lay eyes on others. However, some forms of diversity are not so on-the-nose. The inclusion of autistic or neurodivergent individuals, therefore, often remains an undervalued dimension. Despite its potential, this group suffers from high unemployment (Patton, 2019). Fortunately, a growing body of research focuses on the positive impact that employing autistic people can have on businesses. The term "neurodiversity" is gaining traction to describe the natural variation in how people's brains work. I believe this concept is foundational to the future of work and what an inclusive workplace should look and feel like. In this thesis, the term "neuro-inclusive workplace" will be used to describe corporate and office-based work environments typical for multinational companies that accommodate cognitive diversity by design, with a focus on the inclusion of autistic individuals. This thesis uses a mix of person-first and identity-first language to respect the variety of preferences within the autism community.

Much progress has been made in understanding the challenges autistic people face at work and how to accommodate them. In my - perhaps pessimistic - opinion, approaching the issue from the autistic perspective alone will not be enough to convince society at large to take meaningful action. Neurotypical stakeholders must recognise that inclusive practices benefit them on both the personal and organisational levels. On that account, this thesis takes a non-traditional approach. Instead of focusing on the autistic experience at work, it investigates the wider, sometimes unintended effects and advantages that inclusion can bring, even to neurotypicals. This research seeks to contribute to the argument that environments created by well-executed inclusive design work better for everyone.

Why this Topic?

My interest in neurodiversity probably began before I knew what it was. As a child, my favourite book series was Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympians. The story is a modern take on Greek mythology, and the heroes are demigods (children of a Greek god and a

human). All the heroes in the books have ADHD or dyslexia, but this is not seen as a deficit. The traits associated with these neurodevelopmental conditions are positively framed, hyperactivity corresponds with battle reflexes, and dyslexia is just the brain being wired for ancient Greek. This story played a crucial role in shaping my mindset around differences and inclusion.

Years later, as I encountered the concept of neurodiversity in academic and professional contexts, the same message stood out to me: diversity of thought is an asset. My interest in psychology and human behaviour further motivated me to explore this topic. While researching organisational dynamics around inclusion, I became especially curious about how accommodations made for those who need them affect the broader workforce. I found discourse around “invisible disabilities” like autism the most compelling. The notion that inclusion can be designed in a way that benefits everyone is something I deeply align with.

Aim & Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to build on existing research around autism and employment but explore the topic from a flipped perspective. The ripple effects of inclusive, autism-friendly workplace practices on neurotypical colleagues have not yet been widely studied.

The central question guiding my research is:

How do neuro-inclusive workplaces designed to accommodate autistic individuals benefit neurotypical employees and contribute to broader organisational success?

To fully understand and provide answers to this complex question, the thesis also looks to address the following sub-questions:

- How can autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive workplaces be characterised?
- What elements of neuro-inclusive workplace design are perceived as beneficial by neurotypical employees?
- How do inclusive environments influence organisational culture, team dynamics and the work experience of neurotypical employees?
- Can the implementation of autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive policies contribute to broader organisational outcomes?

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters, together offering a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Following this introduction, the theoretical foundation is provided by exploring key concepts and connections related to autism and neurodiversity in a workplace context. Then, the core problem is defined, outlining the current gap in research on the benefits that the inclusion of autism provides to neurotypicals. Chapter 4 presents the methodology used in this study, including focus group discussions and a one-on-one interview. An in-depth analysis of the empirical findings is conducted in Chapter 5. A conclusion follows, where key takeaways are formulated and recommendations for future research are added. A reference list and relevant appendices are provided at the end.

2. Theoretical chapter

2.1 Autism in the Workplace

2.1.1 What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is classified by the American Psychiatric Association (2013) as a neurodevelopmental disorder. The core diagnostic criteria are differences in social communication and interaction, and restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour and interests (RRBIs). Social communication deficits can manifest as a failure to hold back-and-forth conversation or an inability to read social cues. Meanwhile, RRBIs can show up as repetitive motor movements, fidgeting with objects (also called stimming), extreme inflexibility regarding routines, and an intense fixation on interests. Heightened sensitivity and reactivity to sensory aspects of the environment are also common.

The spectrum element of the condition comes from the fact that autism encompasses a wide range of traits and support needs. Some individuals may face significant cognitive and verbal challenges, while those “on the other end of the spectrum” are highly articulate and academically gifted. Even within the same cognitive profiles, traits such as sensory sensitivities, social motivation, or flexibility in routine can vary widely.

Cleverly put by autistic author Dr. Stephen Shore, “If you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.”. This quote highlights the importance of understanding

the differences among autistic people to provide individualised support that meets their unique needs.

ASD affects a significant part of the population. According to Shaw et al (2025), 1 in 31 children in the United States were identified to be on the spectrum of autism. While it is important to note that changes in diagnostic criteria, increased awareness, and better social infrastructure are all contributing factors, it is undeniable that more and more people are diagnosed yearly (Leonard et al, 2010). Yet, this growing segment continues to experience high unemployment and underemployment rates. (Patton, 2019)

2.1.2. Challenges in the Workplace

To begin solving the issues of unemployment (not having a job) and underemployment (working jobs below their skill level) among adults with autism spectrum disorder, we must understand the obstacles they face in getting and keeping a job.

Firstly, people with ASD are expected to function in an environment that was not designed for them. The modern workplace is sometimes illogical in nature, full of complexities, office politics and unwritten rules, aspects that can be highly confusing for someone with autism. Furthermore, the collective idea of a good employee - adaptable, a good communicator and networker, a team player with emotional intelligence- clashes with common autistic behaviours (Patton, 2019).

Communication and social challenges make up the primary hindering factor to job performance. People on the spectrum often experience difficulties interpreting tone and body language, understanding sarcasm or “reading between the lines” (Hendricks, 2010). In interviews conducted by Hayward et al (2019), many participants reported that clear communication, explanation and documentation of expectations are important to them, while others stated their preference for keeping interactions to a minimum.

Another set of challenges is associated with executive functioning. Switching between tasks, managing time and picking up new routines are all examples of what is “business as usual” for a neurotypical, but do not come so easily to someone with autism (Hendricks, 2010).

Sensory sensitivities cause a significant amount of stress to autistic employees. They will likely struggle in busy and noisy environments (Baldwin, 2014). Open-plan offices with sounds

coming from all directions and bright, fluorescent lights can be a nightmare for people on the spectrum.

Secondly, systemic barriers stem from ignorance on society's behalf. Humans generally fear the unknown, and this fear leads to stigma. People on the spectrum of autism are often perceived as awkward, weird, cold, unsociable, incompetent and even aggressive. While in the broader sense, disadvantaged individuals can actively engage against the stereotypes and discrimination they face, due to the very nature of their condition, some autistic individuals lack the skills to do so (Patton, 2019). On the other hand, those with high-functioning autism often choose not to disclose their condition to avoid prejudice and discrimination from coworkers and superiors. However, it is reported that non-disclosure is associated with fewer accommodations and less support, leading to lower success in workplace integration (Waisman-Nitzan et al., 2021).

2.1.3. Masking and Burnout

The non-disclosure mentioned above is closely related to the concept of autistic masking. An emerging body of research explores the idea, also called camouflaging. Pearson and Rose (2021) define masking as the conscious or unconscious suppression of autistic traits to fit neurotypical expectations.

It is important to note here that females are much less likely to receive a diagnosis compared to males with the same level of autistic traits (Dworzynski, 2012). As masking is especially common among women on the spectrum, it has been proposed as an explanation for missed or late diagnosis of ASD in females.

A study by Hull et al. (2017) suggests that the number one motivation for masking is to blend in with “normal” people. Participants reported this was connected to their desire to obtain jobs and qualifications. This shows that work is where autistic people feel the most pressure to conceal their true identities.

While masking may help navigate social norms, constantly playing a role is exhausting. Raymaker et al. (2019) found that masking was one of the leading causes of autistic burnout. “Having All of Your Internal Resources Exhausted Beyond Measure and Being Left with No Clean-Up Crew” is not only the title of this study but a pretty accurate description of what it feels like to go through the phenomenon. Participants reported chronic exhaustion, loss of skills,

and reduced tolerance to stimuli. Furthermore, autistic burnout reduced their capacity for independent living, sustaining employment and relationships, and overall quality of life.

Fortunately, the solutions to autistic burnout are simple: being understood and accepted by others, having the space to relax, and staying true to oneself.

2.1.4. Strength in Neurodiversity

So, what happens when autistic people are supported at their workplace and their needs are met? Their strengths emerge.

Autistic employees perceive their intense focus stemming from restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour and interests as an asset in employment. They can perform repetitive or tedious tasks better than their neurotypical counterparts. (Waisman-Nitzan et al., 2021)

Baron-Cohen (2006) suggests that autistic minds have made remarkable contributions to human history, due to their abilities for increased systemising. While this hyper-systemising can be disabling from a social aspect due to rejecting unlawful systems (anything with lots of change and variance), it can be a superpower for highly systematisable areas. This explains why people on the spectrum of autism reach high levels in domains such as mathematics, physics, or computer science. Autistic workers are also considered hardworking, detail-oriented, loyal, honest, perseverant and reliable. They can also demonstrate extraordinary memory and highly specialised skills.

A shift in our understanding of autism is required to properly recognise the strengths and potential of people on the spectrum. Baron-Cohen (2017) sees the Neurodiversity framework as the next step in our way of thinking about autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions: difference rather than disorder. This revolutionary concept removes stigmas and preaches that there is not one single way for a brain to be normal. Everyone, whether they are neurotypical or neurodivergent, should be treated equally. A neurotypical person's brain functions and processes information as society expects. However, around 1 in 7 people are neurodivergent, meaning their brains are wired differently. There is a natural variance in human cognition and brain function. Still, some individuals' neurodivergent traits meet the diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia and Tourette's Syndrome (Everymind at work, 2025).

The benefits of diversity in terms of gender, culture and background are widely accepted now. It is time to recognise the value and potential generated by brains that work differently, working together (Austin and Pisano, 2017).

However, the opportunities presented by neurodiversity cannot be obtained unless accommodations and environmental support are available to those who need them (Waisman-Nitzan et al., 2021).

2.2. What Makes a Workplace Work for Everyone

2.2.1. What Is a Neuroinclusive Workplace?

Neurodiversity inclusion, or neuro-inclusion, means the conscious and active effort to include all types of information processing, learning and communication styles (CIPD, 2024). A neuro-inclusive workplace is an intentionally designed environment that embraces and supports all thinkers, especially employees with autism, ADHD and other neurodevelopmental differences.

Great news: as no two brains are the same, all teams are already neurodiverse. That is not to say that all teams include a neurodivergent person, and many workplaces are not yet equipped for that either.

Two influential frameworks help us understand what a neuro-inclusive workplace looks like in practice. The first one was developed by Deloitte Insights.

Revisit the hiring process	Create a conducive work environment	Provide tailored career journeys
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cast a wider net• Evaluate screening criteria and process• Reinvent the interview• Expand the roles available	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect individual differences• Provide a mentor (and a buddy)• Create a culture that offers, encourages, and accepts both flexibility and inflexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frame organizational policies to support neurodiversity• Do not predefine what success/growth should look like• Offer opportunities to mentor and coach

Table 1: Enablers of neurodivergent professionals’ success in the workplace, Source: (Mahto et al., 2022)

As Table 1 shows, Deloitte identified three pillars for creating an environment where neurodivergent employees can succeed.

Firstly, a new approach is needed to how people are recruited into an organisation, as a traditional hiring process can be unintentionally biased against neurodivergent people. Secondly, corporate culture and work environment play a huge part in retaining and fostering the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce. A neuroinclusive workplace is mindful of individual preferences regarding communication, collaboration and focus. It provides mentoring, sets clear expectations and supports flexible and inflexible working methods. And finally, the model emphasises that success looks different for everyone, and policies must allow for personalised growth.

To complement the previous approach, the DARE Adjustments Framework (Heasman et al., 2020) helps organisations identify and implement sustainable and employee-centred workplace adjustments. See Figure 1.

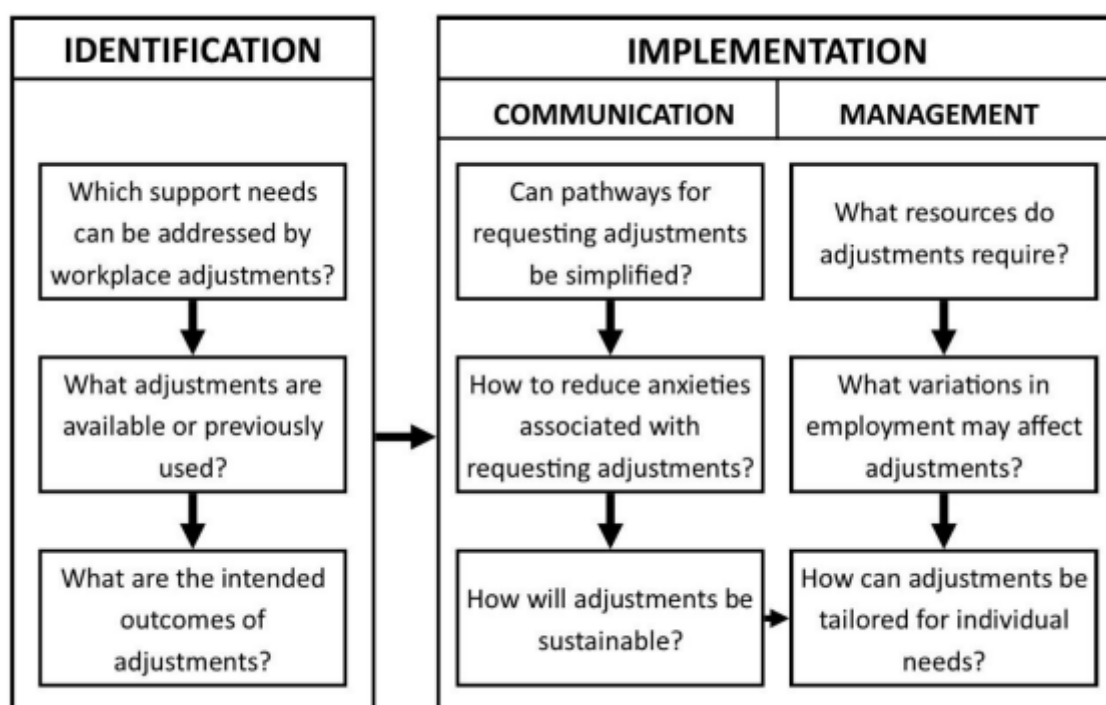


Figure 1: DARE Adjustments Framework, Source: (Heasman et al., 2020)

The model's first stage is identifying what adjustments are possible, which support needs they address, and the intended results of the changes. This is crucial for creating personalised support systems and helps ensure employers' efforts are meaningful. The second stage, implementation, consists of two areas: communication and management. The communication side breaks down

how people can ask for support and disclose their needs without anxiety. The management side focuses on understanding what resources are needed and what factors influence the way adjustments are made in different roles. Through this framework, adjustments can be tailored so that each neurodivergent professional can flourish in the workplace.

These two models are valuable tools for creating a workplace culture where everyone's needs are met, regardless of neurotype. However, they are especially relevant for autistic employees, as certain accommodations can determine their employment success.

2.2.2. Core Components of an Autism-Friendly Workplace

An Autism-friendly workplace is a neuro-inclusive workplace intentionally designed to meet the needs of the autistic mind. The necessary accommodations can be grouped into four areas: sensory accessibility, communication, structure and social attitudes.

Physical & Sensory Accessibility

Sensory sensitivities are one of the most common challenges for autistic people. Participants in the Waizman-Nizan et al. (2021) study expressed their preference for a well-designed physical environment that minimises sensory overload. Noise reduction was the primary alteration to the physical environment favoured by people on the spectrum. Employers can use various noise-reduction strategies, such as acoustic panels or noise-cancelling headphones. A designated quiet room they could escape to was also recommended. Customisable lighting and heating settings help accommodate diverse sensory needs as well.

Communication & Workflow

Communication is a source of many difficulties, so adjustments must be made in this domain. Ambiguity and sarcasm are sometimes indecipherable for autistic people, and unspoken social norms often disadvantage them (Hendricks, 2010). Therefore, communication should be clear, direct and consistent. Organisations should use tools like written agendas, visual trackers and flowcharts clearly depicting processes. Not only do these make expectations transparent, but they also reduce anxiety and streamline operations.

Structure, Routine & Predictability

Every autistic employee may have different preferences regarding structure and working arrangements. For some, predictable schedules and highly structured tasks reduce cognitive overload, fostering confidence. As select autistic individuals demonstrate an inflexible adherence to routines, unexpected changes can lead to stress that completely disables them from working. Feeling stuck is a common experience (Waizman-Nizan et al., 2021). A solution is announcing changes well in advance and paired with context to reduce discomfort. Others find more flexible arrangements beneficial. Working from home and adjustable hours allow employees to create both a routine and an environment that fits their needs. (Muncy, 2024) As stated before, the key is tailoring adjustments for individual needs.

Social and Managerial Attitudes

It is echoed by autistic voices that managers play a central role in fostering psychological safety. Formal and informal managerial support enables effective participation in the labour market. Higher-ups can act as mentors and help talent grow by communicating expectations clearly and providing consistent, constructive feedback. Leaders are also responsible for fostering a culture of acceptance within their teams and helping resolve potential conflicts. Socially inclusive attitudes of colleagues are a huge factor in how long employees actually stay in their jobs (Hayward et al., 2019). Training programs and workshops focused on neurodiversity can help reduce stigma and build empathy among neurotypical team members. These can cover topics like the effects of masking, burnout, and non-disclosure of autistic individuals.

2.2.3. Inclusive Employment Models

Inclusive employment exists along a spectrum, and while this thesis mainly focuses on competitive corporate environments, it is important to understand how autistic people with differing support needs engage with employment. Almalky (2020) explores different employment models for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) that offer varying levels of integration and autonomy. Although Autism should not be considered an IDD, the described environments are lived experiences of many individuals with ASD.

Sheltered employment often means safe workshop environments segregated from the general workforce. Autonomy and integration are limited. Some are transitional programs that prepare employees for entering the broader workforce. A great local example of this in Hungary was the Kockacsoki Nonprofit Kft. Supported employment offers a more integrated setting, but support and assistance are always accessible. Through promoting autonomy, this model

positively impacts the chance of securing competitive employment. In customised employment, roles are tailored to individual strengths and needs. Finally, competitive employment means full inclusion with accommodations where needed.

2.2.4. Barriers to Implementation

Despite the increasing awareness around neurodiversity, many employers still hold outdated views about accommodations and the performance of autistic employees. Waizman-Nizan et al. (2021) report that due to stereotypes, many people with ASD are still being assigned simple jobs that do not utilise their abilities. There is also often a lack of proactivity from the employer's side. The burden is usually on neurodivergent employees to disclose their condition and actively seek support (Heasman et al., 2020). A common misconception is that implementing accommodations is expensive, but as described previously, we mainly talk about nonphysical adjustments that do not have monetary consequences. Accessibility involves others' awareness, knowledge and social sensitivity. Unfortunately, these are often the hardest to change due to people's resistance. Filling knowledge gaps and breaking down misconceptions requires continued commitment from organisations. However, when correctly implemented, low-cost, high-impact accommodations foster a truly neuro-inclusive workplace that benefits not only autistic and neurodivergent employees but also their neurotypical colleagues.

2.3. The benefits of Inclusion - for Everyone

2.3.1. Neurotypical Employees in Inclusive Workplaces

This chapter examines how the inclusive practices that support neurodivergent and autistic people offer benefits beyond the intended audience.

The Universal Design Advantage

The autism-friendly elements listed in the previous chapter, like clear communication and access to quiet spaces, reduce cognitive overload for all employees. Predictable routines, transparent expectations and processes create a focused work environment by eliminating ambiguity. Completed by supportive, understanding management, these components contribute to a fair and consistent culture at work that boosts productivity.

An autism-friendly workplace is by far not the only example where accommodations made for a specific group end up improving the welfare of everyone. In fact, this phenomenon is so common that there is even a name for it: The Curb-Cut Effect. Glover Blackwell (2017) was inspired by these ramp-like features where the sidewalk meets the road when coining the term. Curb cuts were initially made for wheelchair users, but now they are ubiquitous and welcomed by people with strollers or heavy luggage. Another example is the widespread use of closed captions, even among hearing people, while watching TV.

Perceptions and the Double Empathy Problem

Whereas the adjustments mentioned above benefit everyone, if their purposes are not clearly communicated, perceptions of unfairness can arise from neurotypical employees. As ASD is often invisible, some may doubt the legitimacy of the condition. However, disclosure of the diagnosis can also be a double-edged sword. (Patton, 2019)

Furthermore, the accommodations do not solve the issue of misunderstandings that naturally occur between neurotypical and autistic individuals. Sasson et al. (2017) studied first impressions between the two groups. They found that neurotypicals rated those with ASD less favourably and showed reduced intentions to engage with them socially. The research also indicated that the non-verbal cues and social presentation styles of autistic individuals drove negative impression formation, as opposed to the content of their speech. Oosterhof (2024) further explored interactions between autistic employees and their neurotypical colleagues, corroborating that autistic people were often perceived as blunt or disinterested by colleagues. Neurotypical study participants described different instances they experienced difficulties working with people on the spectrum. It was mentioned that strict adherence to rules created intra-team conflicts when deviating from practice was necessary to achieve a goal. On the other hand, respondents emphasised that autistic employees are highly reliable due to this characteristic. Other difficulties stemmed from autistic counterparts becoming overwhelmed, needing additional explanation and struggling with generalising information or interpreting emotion and intention. Additionally, casual social communication was much more challenging than task-related exchanges. Looking on the bright side, neurotypical coworkers believe these gaps could be bridged by broadening their knowledge and developing specific tools for working with autistic people.

Milton (2012) shifts the blame from autistic people when it comes to these interactional difficulties. The “double empathy problem” rejects that autism is a deficit and re-frames these issues as a question of reciprocity and mutuality, as autistic and non-autistic people alike struggle to understand each other’s perspectives. Recognising this dynamic encourages shared responsibility and promotes a more reciprocal approach to workplace inclusion.

2.3.2. Why Inclusive Workplaces Make Business Sense

Inclusion is not just an ethics issue. It actually offers a competitive advantage. Let us look at how environments designed to support diverse cognitive styles help businesses unlock the full potential of their workforce.

Innovation and problem-solving potential

As explained in the first chapter, autistic professionals often bring special skills to fields like tech, data analytics or even design. This is due to their above-average pattern recognition, memory or systemising skills. (Baron-Cohen, 2006) Some people on the spectrum also possess the ability to hyperfocus, often on highly specific tasks, making them possibly the most efficient workers in a department. Moving from the individual to the team level, the new perspectives offered by “differently wired” brains have the potential to generate alternative solutions and more creative, out-of-the-box ideas. This drives innovation, which is crucial for success in today's business landscape. (Austin & Pisano, 2017).

Increased productivity and retention

Working in an inclusive team also increases employee engagement among neurotypicals involved, as they rate their work more meaningful. Feelings of fulfilment and acceptance boost morale, causing such teams to be more productive and to experience lower turnover. Improved retention reduces hiring costs and the inefficiencies related to frequently training new employees. (Austin & Pisano, 2017)

Employer brand and talent attraction

Inclusivity has a positive impact on reputation and brand image. Gen Z, as the most educated and diverse generation entering the workforce over the last couple of years, demands inclusion in the workplace. Members of this generation find it essential that the values of the company they work for align with their own. They are drawn to companies with a culture of authenticity (World Economic Forum, 2025). With rising social awareness, candidates are likely to favour

organisations with substantial diversity, equity and inclusion programs, even if they are not personally affected. Furthermore, companies that have a reputation for neuro-inclusivity attract neurodivergent talent.

Meeting skill shortages in key fields

The ageing population presents labour market challenges that are only getting harder. With high unemployment rates, the neurodivergent population is a largely untapped talent pool that can help address shortages. Autistic individuals often have the exact skills needed to fill talent gaps in fields such as software development or cybersecurity (Austin & Pisano, 2017).

Compliance with legal frameworks and public policy

Equal access to employment and reasonable accommodations are supported by international frameworks such as the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with disabilities 2021-2030. (European Commission, 2021) In Hungary, the Equal Treatment Act (2003. évi CXXV. törvény) opposes discrimination based on disability and mandates the implementation of appropriate workplace accommodations. Hungarian companies with more than 25 employees are incentivised through subsidies to hire disabled people. If a certain quota is not met, rehabilitation contributions must be paid. In terms of these laws, autistic people are considered disabled, so employing them helps meet these regulations, while also demonstrating commitment to corporate social responsibility goals. CSR strengthens an organisation's reputation with stakeholders, policymakers, and the public.

2.3.3. The Bigger Picture: Societal and Economic Value

Reducing unemployment and increasing economic participation

Reducing unemployment among neurodivergent individuals brings positive outcomes on the individual, business and societal levels. Employment improves the quality of life for a person with ASD, provides solutions to skill shortages and removes societal burden (Hendricks, 2010). Gomez and Sheikh (2023) theorised what would happen if the employment of autistic people doubled in the UK. The research found that the economic benefit to society could be as much as 900 million to 1,5 billion GBP. If more autistic people had steady incomes, their families would be better off financially due to the increase in household income. Reduced reliance on government welfare systems would mean less public spending on benefits. Most importantly,

employed autistic adults would gain independence and could meaningfully participate in the economy by contributing taxes and stimulating economic growth through consumption.

Shifting cultural norms around difference

Inclusive workplaces have an effect on cultural acceptance that goes beyond the office. When autism and other neurodevelopmental differences become normalised in professional settings, coworkers see how capable and valuable these people are. Successful collaboration between neurotypes shows that autism is a difference, not necessarily a disability. Similarly to recognising the importance of biodiversity in nature, we learn to embrace diversity in cognition. This promotes a more compassionate, respectful way of thinking (Baron-Cohen, 2017). Neuro-inclusion is also a civil and human rights issue, as it strives to achieve equal opportunities for all by redefining diversity and equality in the 21st-century workplace.

Figure 2 below shows the logical flow of this chapter.

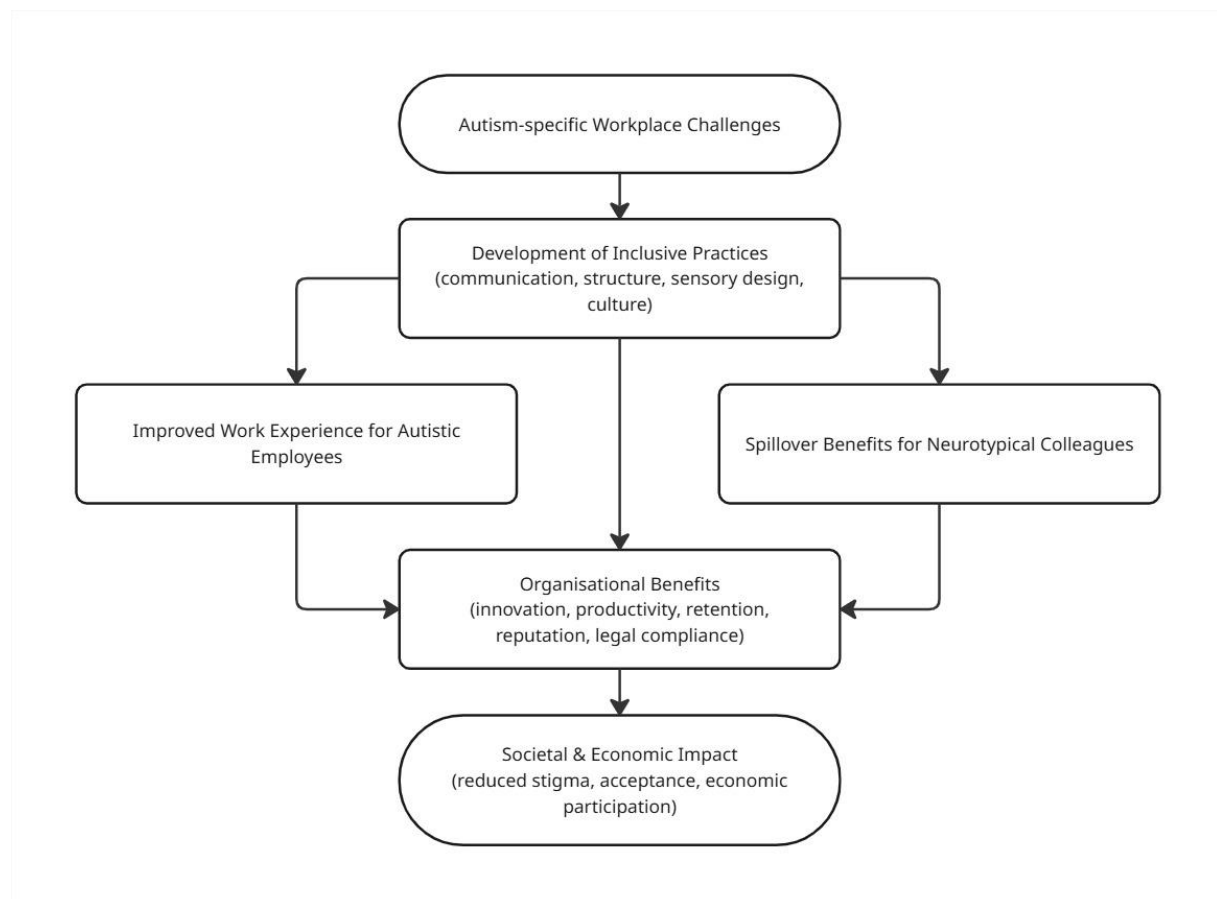


Figure 2: Visual Summary of Theoretical Chapter, source: (Author's own compilation)

3. Problem definition

3.1. Context and Background

The term “neurodiversity” is gaining traction in the world of business as pioneers of the movement have started to report related organisational benefits. Employment of people on the autism spectrum provides solutions to various problems that companies face in the modern landscape. Not only are neurodivergent people able to fill skill gaps, but their out-of-the-box thinking can lead to innovation and competitive advantage. Additionally, the company’s reputation is elevated, making it more appealing to younger people entering the workforce (Austin & Pisano, 2017).

Still, as previously mentioned, unemployment is extremely common amongst the neurodivergent, and especially the autistic population, placing a burden on affected families and the whole of society. Good neurodiversity and autism employment programs are still the exception, not the rule.

I hope that recognising that the effects of inclusive practices go way beyond the intended target and improve job performance, reduce turnover, and contribute to efficiency even among neurotypical workers, inspires change.

3.2. The Problem and Actors Involved

Despite rising awareness and proven benefits, initiatives to employ neurodivergent and autistic individuals are quite rare, especially in Hungary. Companies often lack the knowledge on how to accommodate these people and view them through a deficit-based lens. Employers, therefore, see inclusion as “doing a favour” and overlook the positive effects these practices bring to the whole organisational ecosystem.

Key actors in the problem:

- Autistic and neurodivergent people, who remain excluded from work environments and face significant barriers when it comes to employment.
- Neurotypical employees, who miss out on the benefits that neuro-inclusive practices could offer them too.

- Organisational decision-makers who influence company policies and workplace culture and have the power to achieve positive business outcomes through inclusion.
- Governments, policymakers and advocacy organisations that shape the legal framework and social perceptions around workplace inclusion.

The environment surrounding the problem:

- Competitive international business settings, where companies get ahead by innovation that can be hindered by challenges in HR.
- Growing demand for diversity, equity and inclusion from the workforce.
- Increased awareness around mental health and the impact of the work environment on employee well-being.
- More and more people are being diagnosed with neurodevelopmental differences.

3.3. Research Questions

The central question guiding my research is:

How do neuro-inclusive workplaces designed to accommodate autistic individuals benefit neurotypical employees and contribute to broader organisational success?

The thesis also addresses the following sub-questions:

- How can autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive workplaces be characterised?
- What elements of neuro-inclusive workplace design are perceived as beneficial by neurotypical employees?
- How do inclusive environments influence organisational culture, team dynamics and the work experience of neurotypical employees?
- Can the implementation of autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive policies contribute to broader organisational outcomes?

3.4. Link to International Business

Due to globalisation, workplaces are becoming more diverse, for example, in terms of nationalities, communication styles, and work habits. Neuro-inclusive practices, such as predictable routines and clear communication, are universally valuable and lead to better understanding within international teams. For instance, avoiding idiomatic speech not only

helps an autistic person but can prevent misunderstandings among team members who do not share a native language. My research integrates an international dimension, as the focus group conducted with students and young professionals comprised mostly foreign participants who could provide cross-cultural insights. They reflected on how the perceptions of inclusive practices depend on a cultural context. Further, this thesis explores existing frameworks around neuro-inclusion that are implemented in multinational corporations.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This research takes a qualitative approach to investigating how neuro-inclusive workplaces, specifically designed for people with autism, can benefit neurotypical coworkers too. The study is exploratory in nature as it aims to gain a nuanced understanding of this complex phenomenon through the personal experiences and perceptions of various stakeholders. This area has not been widely researched yet, so this approach is appropriate to deepen understanding, generate ideas and recognise patterns. This lays the way for more specific research into the effects of neuro-inclusion on neurotypicals.

4.2. Data Collection Methods

To meet the research objective and answer the research question while taking into account different stakeholders' perspectives, this study combined multiple qualitative data collection methods. Two semi-structured focus groups and an individual interview were conducted. The first focus group brought together neurodiversity and autism experts with different backgrounds. The second focus group was conducted with university students and young professionals with work experience in corporate office settings to reflect the scope of the research. The autistic individual interviewed also has experience in such workplaces involving neurotypical colleagues.

In addition to primary data collection, a brief comparative analysis of neuro-inclusive initiatives by select multinational organisations is included in my research. This is to validate and contrast my findings with existing practices. The frameworks were examined using publicly available company documents.

4.3 Rationale for chosen methods

It was clear to me from the beginning that I would have to explore different perspectives to be able to answer my research question fully. Regarding the expert point of view, focus groups came to mind as the most suitable method. Compared to multiple individual interviews, a focus group allows for interactions between participants. I considered this acutely important since public discourse is limited around the topic, especially in Hungary, and there is much to be gained from interdisciplinary exchange. Bringing together directors of autism foundations, psychologists, organisational development, and mental health consultants provided nuanced insight into the topic. I wanted to complement and validate the conclusions from this discussion by listening to the voices of young professionals and university students. They represent the future workforce potentially impacted by the implementation of these inclusive practices. I thought about gauging their opinions through a survey, but then decided on conducting a second focus group due to the complexity of the topic. Interviewing an individual with ASD was an important puzzle piece, bringing an inside perspective on inclusion. They provided a first-person account of how the presence of a neurodivergent colleague influences workplace dynamics. The comparative analysis of international frameworks around neurodiversity employment helped contextualize my findings on a wider level.

4.4. Participant Selection

My goal was to select participants with relevant insights regarding the research question, so purposive sampling was used. The professional group comprised five experts with extensive knowledge of the employment of individuals with autism and ADHD and inclusive workplaces. The participants included:

- Eszter Daniss Bodó: autism researcher and UX designer specialising in cognitive accessibility.
- Alexandra Dobos: neurodiversity-focused organisational development consultant
- Dalma Galló: ADHD coach and trauma-informed breathwork therapist
- Rita Matolcsi: psychologist specialised in autism
- Zsuzsanna Szilvássy: director of the Hungarian autism-focused Mars Foundation

The second focus group included nine university students and young professionals from different cultures. They all came from business or social science backgrounds and had corporate

work experience. The interview subject, Viktor Fekete Gy., is an autism activist and expert by experience, who has also worked in professional environments.

4.5. Data Collection Process

Both focus group discussions were held in person and lasted for 90 minutes. I facilitated the expert focus group with the help of my thesis consultant and the other one with a Corvinus Science Shop student colleague. We followed a semi-structured guide in both cases. The expert group were asked to define an autism-focused neuro-inclusive workplace by identifying and categorising its key characteristics. The ideas were visually clustered on a flipchart. Then a discussion on the personal and organisational impacts of these elements followed. During the second focus group, the young professionals shared their experiences and attitudes regarding workplace inclusion, first unaware and then aware of the neuro-inclusive framing. Participants also reflected on the ideas of the experts, with the prepared flipchart as a visual aid. The interview was also conducted in person, and open-ended questions were asked about the autistic perspective on inclusion and workplace interactions. All sessions were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

4.6 Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed thematically, allowing me to find connections across the focus groups and the interview to identify where opinions aligned and differed. I facilitated a clear and structured discussion by moderating both focus groups and following my carefully designed guide. This clarity and my ability to actively listen and take notes during the conversations aided my analysis. Some recurring themes and concepts that aligned with what I discussed in my theoretical chapter already stood out during the focus groups and the interview. It was also very helpful that the created flipcharts visually captured the most important points. Given these factors, the relatively small number of sessions and time limitations, I decided against creating full verbatim transcripts. I used the transcribe function of Microsoft Word to create rough drafts of the conversations that I was able to follow along with while re-listening to the voice recordings. I could also apply some coding using different coloured highlights in the drafts that helped me identify key themes. For quotes, I relied on the voice recordings to ensure accuracy.

The comparative analysis was conducted to explore similarities and differences between the findings of this study and existing international frameworks. Company websites and public communication materials were used to gather information.

4.7. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

All participants voluntarily participated in the research and were informed of its aims. They all consented to voice recording and using all obtained data for this thesis. The focus groups and the interview were conducted in a respectful environment, allowing for open discussion. Special care was taken to use the preferred language.

The small sample size and qualitative nature of this research lead to several limitations. The interpretation of the findings is shaped by the bias of the participants and me. The research is not representative of all autistic or neurodivergent experiences, as it mainly focuses on high-functioning autism in corporate, office-based work settings. The spectrum nature of autism and the differences between each autistic individual further limit the generalizability of the research findings.

5. Problem analysis

This chapter will present the research findings through a thematic analysis of primary data and a comparative analysis of international neurodiversity and autism employment initiatives. The thematic analysis aims to answer my central research question and its sub-questions, while the comparative analysis contextualises my findings on a global level.

5.1 Thematic analysis

This analysis uncovers recurring themes in the two focus group discussions and the one-on-one interview. The focus group guides and the list of interview questions can be found in the appendix. How do neuro-inclusive workplaces designed to accommodate autistic individuals benefit neurotypical employees and contribute to broader organisational success? The two focus groups approached this central question from different angles. The experts were asked to describe an autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive workplace, while the other group collected what characteristics made a workplace great in their eyes.

Both groups took part in an exercise where they had to write these features on post-its and organise them into different categories I outlined on a flipchart. The categories were distinguished based on the literature I reviewed. Afterwards, the group, made up of students and young professionals, was asked to reflect on the elements the experts listed and indicate which ones they would also appreciate. Table 2 presents the participants' ideas, with the numbers in brackets showing how many students endorsed each item.

Category	Experts	Students and Young Professionals
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit communication (3) • Multimodal: written, visual (2) • Concrete, clear feedback (5) • Outward communication in Job Postings (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening • Clear goals • Constructive, bottom-up feedback • Looking beyond own team • Knowing WHO to contact for specific help
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid Model (6) • Home Office (3) • Clear Rules (4) • Well-defined, transparent processes (3) • Flexibility (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizontal hierarchy • Defined Responsibilities • Well-thought-out processes • Home Office • Flexible working hours • Time zones
Physical Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional Spaces (5) • Attention to sensory sensitivities (5) • Adaptive Environment (4) • Use of office spaces (4) • Silent Room (3) • Well-structured, transparent (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plants and natural light • Meetings ONLY in meeting rooms • Well-equipped work station and office • Standing desks • Home Office
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive (3) • Self-reflective (5) • Managerial, organisational awareness (2) • Individual Support (4) • Clear scope of activities and tasks (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork • Clear opportunities for growth • Leadership • Defined goals • Weekly 1 on 1s
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength-based approach (2) • Value-centered (2) • Inclusive attitude toward all diversity (4) • Neuro-consciousness (4) • Diversity is value (5) • Organisational trust (4) • Living/leaving in peace (2) • Organisational flexibility (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team-building • Lunch without work talk • Opportunities to connect with colleagues outside of work • Inclusion and Diversity • Non-competitive environments
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body-doubling (dopamine management) (2) • Burnout management (5) • Reasonable Accommodations Checklist (1) • Supporting nervous system regulation (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book sharing • Paid holidays • Cafeteria with good food

Table 2: Comparison of Expert vs. Student and Young Professional Focus Group Inputs on Workplace Features, source: (Own Compilation based on Focus Group Data)

The flipchart data captured the immediate associations of the two groups, and the categories in the table served as a springboard for debate. However, the rich discussions that followed the flipchart exercises and my one-on-one conversation with the interview subject provided deeper insights. Additional dimensions and alignment between autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive design and neurotypical benefits were revealed. Therefore, the themes below will reflect a deeper interpretation of the collected data and profoundly explore how autism-friendly design and the presence of autistic individuals together support neurotypical well-being and business success. I identified seven main themes: Inclusive Communication and Workflow, A Culture of Psychological Safety, Leadership and Structural Support, Neurodivergent Contributions and Team Impact, Organisational Success Factors, Barriers and Challenges. It is important to note that the themes are highly interconnected and constantly influence each other.

Clear Communication & Workflow

Clarity and transparency regarding communication and workflows emerged both as cornerstones of neuro-inclusive design and tools supporting efficiency for neurotypicals. This aspect was one of the first things mentioned across all three data sources. “Communication is the foundation of everything,” stated Galló. “Communication is key”, said a student participant. Fekete Gy. explained that “Assertive communication positively impacts team dynamics”

The experts highlighted the need for explicit communication to reduce ambiguity. They suggested that written and visual tools can support clarity and always be a reference point. Fekete Gy. mentioned that pictograms and labels are very helpful, especially when using common areas. These eliminate the need to ask how something works, which can feel uncomfortable and redundant. Szilvásy said that clear communication should already be present in job postings, otherwise autistic individuals might not even apply. Autistic people who struggle with implied meanings and the non-verbal aspects of communication are not the only ones who benefit from concreteness. Student participants also expressed that defined responsibilities, well-thought-out processes and knowing who to contact make work easier and more predictable. Though these seem obvious, the students admitted that ambiguity and inconsistency had previously led to stress or inefficiency in their jobs. The need for receiving regular, constructive feedback was also emphasised during all the conversations. An interesting report came from the interviewee, who said that he intentionally developed strategies to combat their communication shortcomings. By now, he has become the best at summarising objectives, handling misunderstandings and conflicts, and keeping the team focused, which is well

appreciated by his colleagues. I noticed during the interview that once I defined my thesis's scope, he never went outside of it. All parties unanimously agreed that transparently communicated expectations and responsibilities help everyone work better. These small adjustments cost close to nothing and yet have large-scale impacts on team efficiency, emotional comfort, and inclusiveness. These findings align with existing literature on inclusive design. However, the fact that neurotypicals immediately and unprompted identified clarity as a key value shows that this “special accommodation” should just be standard practice. It is striking that miscommunication is so frequent, even though solutions seem simple and obvious.

A Culture of Psychological Safety

The experts agreed that company culture is the strongest indicator of successful inclusion. This lays the foundation for inclusive processes and accommodations. Culture is directly related to managerial attitudes, influencing how new structures are developed and changes are communicated and implemented. “Until the company culture becomes inclusive, every structural fix is like pouring water into a bottomless pit.”, explained Szilvásy.

Perhaps the most important result of a truly autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive environment is the psychological safety it fosters. According to experts, this is achieved through transparency, trust, and flexibility in thinking. Elements of communication and the built environment can contribute to the feeling of safety for all employees. The autistic interviewee and the student group opened up about difficulties in asking for help and even admitting they need help. A key term echoed by neurotypicals was “openness”. “A culture of openness also transfers to situations when you have a problem, they are easier to talk about.”, explained a student participant. They even reported a positive impact on their personal development, stating, “Openness helps us better understand ourselves as well.”

An expert insight from Galló connected to this was that such a culture reduces the pressure to mask for all stigmatised groups who might feel pressure to hide certain parts of themselves. In an inclusive, supportive environment, the focus should not be on labels or the identification of differences. Rather, people's needs should be assessed and catered to, as the support of mental well-being and prevention of burnout and anxiety benefits everyone just the same. Both focus groups advocated for a departure from the approach that accommodations are favours made for a specific group. A student stated, “It means a lot to feel safe somewhere, especially if you don’t know why you feel unsafe.”, emphasising the universal meaning of emotional safety.

Fekete Gy. also challenged a key concept in inclusion, stating, “The word ‘acceptance’ feels condescending. Autism is natural. If something is natural, it doesn’t need to be accepted, it just is.”

Psychological safety is valued across the three data sources on a personal level; its impact on the organisational level will be discussed later.

Leadership and Structural Support

Leadership is the bridge between intentions and lived experiences. Leaders shape organisational culture and the structural support needed to empower all employees. Dobos summarised: “The culture and atmosphere depend on leadership and support, which then get translated into structure and physical space.”

When I asked the students and young professionals what makes them feel supported at work, the majority of their answers were connected to their management. They placed great value on leaders who care about their personal and professional growth. Things that made them feel cared about include morning catch-up meetings, constructive feedback, being challenged, but not threatened, and being assigned tasks that help them improve. A similar need arose from the autistic perspective for finding the amount and type of tasks that are “not too much, but not too little”. He also emphasised the importance of managerial attitude: “I need to be encouraged, not made to feel like I’m less.” Here, I spotted a convergence of all three angles regarding the strength-based approach. Matolcsi put this term on the flipchart, and a student called it a “game changer for organisations”. They further explained: “If we put people in the right place, they flourish.” This statement encapsulates how neurodivergence should be framed.

Another cross-cutting theme was balancing flexibility and structure. A need for personal autonomy, while keeping a level of structure, was expressed by both the neurodivergent and neurotypical sides. However, viewpoints clashed on the separation of personal and work-related communication, as my interview subject supported a clear distinction, but the students enjoyed a level of overlap.

The experts highlighted the critical role of team leaders and line managers. They are the employees’ first point of contact when any problems arise, and they are responsible for providing everyday accommodations, emotional regulation tools, and diffusing intra-team conflicts. Since they often cannot escalate issues upward, the experts advocated for their

training and soft-skill development. Proactive and self-reflective managers with specialised knowledge and awareness will not only be able to help autistic or neurodivergent direct reports but also build trust and coherence in their whole team. Neurotypicals reported that trust, empathy and understanding from managers help reduce their anxiety and stress. Daniss Bodó made a simple, but powerful association: “If someone doesn’t fall apart next to you, that’s good for you, too.”

Physical and Sensory Environment

One does not need to be on the spectrum to be fed up with open-plan offices. The built environment plays a crucial, tangible role in inclusion and can enhance everyone's comfort, focus and well-being at work. Participants across the board agreed that well-designed spaces can support different working styles and reduce uncertainty. Clear environmental cues, like visual signs and a predictable layout, help employees confidently navigate shared spaces.

A point of connection between the experts who came to my focus group discussion was the shared challenge of finding the room. Some of them had a guide help them. This unintentionally demonstrated one of the main arguments of my thesis: reasonable accommodations benefit everyone, not just those who are neurodivergent.

Sensory regulation was a recurring theme. The autistic interview subject emphasised that the environment is a major stressor, including inconsistent lighting, unpredictable noises and uncomfortable temperature. Fekete Gy. specifically mentioned: “If there is movement behind me, it pulls me out of the flow state.” The student group also mentioned that sensory overload impairs their concentration, and all three angles suggested quiet rooms as solutions. A student also highlighted its multifunctionality: “Quiet rooms are not only useful for sensory overload, but for meetings as well.”

Hybrid models were also appreciated by all participants and emerged as the tool that most efficiently balances autonomy and structure. A young professional expressed: “Hybrid models are the best! Some tasks I prefer to do at home for better focus, but communication is more efficient in the office.”

Neurodivergent Contributions & Team Impact

This theme arose as I was trying to uncover if the presence of autistic and neurodivergent individuals had an impact on team dynamics and work quality. Across the participants, autistic

and neurodivergent individuals were described as detail-oriented, reliable and loyal. A student participant said, “I work with data, my neurodivergent colleague is very valuable in my team because they notice mistakes.” Pattern recognition and strong analytical skills have been highlighted as common strengths across the literature I processed. My interview subject confirmed that this is true for him. Additionally, he revealed: “We are very good at coming up with cost-saving or time-efficient methods that achieve equal or even better results, because we are able to think outside traditional systems.” Fekete Gy. has also observed this in other autistic colleagues he has worked with.

Another compelling insight from the interview was how much effort he has invested in improving his social skills. Since he had difficulties interpreting others intuitively, he read books on negotiation strategies, team dynamics and assertive communication to be able to express his abilities and limits better. These efforts paid off, as he mentioned, “Many times I have been able to de-escalate stressful situations, refocus the group on points of agreement, and steer us back to the common goal.”

Other participants also described moments where neurodivergent thinking became an asset to their team. The phrase “Why has no one thought of this?” was repeated several times. However, Fekete Gy. strongly emphasised the wide variance between people on the spectrum and that these traits cannot become an expectation. “It often seems like we have endless ideas or an unlimited tolerance for monotony, which leads people to pile more work on us”, he said.

Young professionals reported that working with neurodivergent colleagues expanded their perspectives, as it “builds on your openness to different people” and is an “opportunity to learn from people who think differently”.

Organisational Success Factors

It was consistently reinforced across the focus groups and the interview that there is a business case for neuro-inclusion. These practices are not just ethical considerations made to benefit the autistic and neurodivergent community, but a profitable strategy to get ahead of the competition. Participants repeatedly pointed out that autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive practices and the contributions of autistic and neurodivergent employees together lead to long-term organisational success. Major success factors were identified as improved retention, innovation, reputational gain, and access to a broader talent pool.

All the participants in my research agreed that employees tend to stay longer at a company when they feel safe and empowered. A student said, “If people like working at your company, they will stay there and be more efficient”. Galló stated that, “Autistic employees tend to show strong loyalty, so by supporting them, companies can reduce the costs associated with staff turnover.” Inclusion almost seems like a no-brainer based on these inputs. This point was further solidified by a young professional with an HR background, who revealed that “HR is focused on two things, having low rotation in personnel and the return on investment per employee.” Another participant replied that “All of these things can be implemented without investment, just changing policies.”

Productivity was also frequently brought up, mainly due to the environment created by the previously discussed factors. Predictability, balanced expectations and individualised support allow neurotypical individuals to perform at their best too. A student said, "If employees feel safe and comfortable, they will produce the maximum output.”

Probably the most potential of neuro-inclusion lies in its capacity to foster innovation. This aspect is crucial for gaining a competitive advantage. Galló explained, “A strength-based approach allows us to harness the synergies of divergent thinking, resulting in a culture that excels in innovation, creativity, and crisis management.”

Both focus groups discussed the reputational value inclusion adds to a company, highlighting that Generation Z hold high expectations for inclusion. Szilvássy stated: "Gen Z is more inclined to work for companies that have a DEI strategy and uphold their values towards employees." This aligns with research findings about the preferences of young workers, and what the Gen Z participants of my focus group said: “Employees seek to work at a place that supports a social cause, they want to contribute to solving a social problem”

Finally, it must be mentioned that inclusion means opening the door to a whole new pool of talent. Daniss Bodó boldly expressed: “In 10 years, you won’t find employees who meet your expectations if you don’t change how you hire.” Additionally, both groups pointed out that there are many people who are unaware of or choose not to disclose their neurodivergence. This means that underutilised talent could be hiding in a company’s existing workforce.

Challenges and Barriers

“I haven’t seen a single neuroinclusive practice that wouldn’t also work for neurotypicals,” said Dobos. Then why is inclusion so far from standard practice? A set of cultural, structural and conceptual barriers still limits implementation.

Stigma is perhaps the most obvious barrier. The organisational development expert noted that it is better to avoid labelling a quiet room or any other element “autism-friendly” due to societal stigma. “Some people wouldn’t go into an autism-labelled quiet room, because others would think they are autistic.”, explained Dobos.

Another challenge is that, unfortunately, without adequate understanding, accommodations can be seen as special treatment. “Everything can be pushed too far, which will create backlash,” remarked Szilvásy. To mitigate this, she brought up the Reasonable Accommodations Checklist. This tool ensures consistency and fairness across requests and is a starting point for open conversation.

Both focus groups discussed that context matters. Norms around leadership, hierarchy, and self-expression differ across cultures and influence how inclusion is perceived. Matolcsi said, “A Swedish model cannot be directly implemented in Hungary without adaptation.” So, what works in one country might not work in another, and some cultures might require different approaches. A student participant reflected on their challenges regarding authority figures and bureaucratic systems in Mexico, stating, “It’s hard to thrive in very square environments.”

There is a lack of awareness and education around inclusion. A student shared how they recognised a colleague needed help but lacked the resources and knowledge to help them. On the other hand, the interview subject expressed difficulties asking for help. This structural gap could be bridged through training and raising awareness. Especially among the first line of support, middle managers.

5.2. Comparative Analysis

To better understand how neuro-inclusion works in existing practices and to contextualise the findings of my primary research, I decided to include a brief comparative analysis of four initiatives by multinational companies. I selected the companies SAP, Microsoft, JPMorgan Chase, and EY because they are pioneers in the field of neurodiversity employment programs. Table 3 outlines the key elements of the programs, broken down into categories that I found relevant to my thematic analysis.

Company	Hiring	Workplace Adjustments	Training	Culture & Inclusion Strategy	Business Case
SAP	Alternative assessments to traditional interviews, hiring events, adjusted job postings, third-party facilitator, partnering with autism-focused organisations, vendors, upskilled recruitment team	individualised based on sensory, communication needs: low-traffic desk locations, noise-cancelling headphones, adjustable lighting, quiet areas, written instructions and meeting agendas in advance	Mentorship programs, trainings for HR, managers and members of the Support Circle, inviting third-party experts to train, online source for training materials, autism awareness team training	Program team leading autism inclusion, internal awareness campaigns, Autism Inclusion Network, SAP Autism at Work Support Circle, Buddy System, Office guide	Universal design benefits to all colleagues, psychologically safe corporate culture, engaged allies, candidate attraction, enhanced leadership skills, personal discovery, team benefits, innovation
Microsoft	Multi-day hiring events to assess skills, clearly outlined process, clear language in job postings, career site, monthly global webinars on the hiring process, dedicated accommodations team, HR equipped with required skills and tools	Flexible work hours, remote/hybrid options, quiet spaces, noise-cancelling headphones, adjustable lights, movement breaks, job/executive function coaching, no need to disclose disability for accommodations	Manager's disability readiness toolkit, quick guides, on-demand learning videos and small group coaching sessions to prepare managers	Promotes allyship through bi-monthly neurodiversity learning sessions, internal site for available resources, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, and company-wide communication campaigns	Diverse thinking drives innovation and product development, improved performance and morale, and unique problem-solving and pattern recognition skills contribute to a dynamic workforce, attracting Gen Z
JPMorgan Chase	Redesigned hiring processes, extended across roles and countries, candidate pipelines through non-profits, educational institutions	Noise-cancelling headphones, fixed desk according to preferences, flexibility in dress code, car parking	Team trainings and onboarding guides, Awareness training delivered to colleagues and managers, instructor-led workshops	Creates a respectful workplace culture, Buddy system, Access Ability Resource Group	Neurodiverse teams experience increased productivity and work quality, decreased error rates, and improved morale
EY	Neurodiversity Centers of Excellence, multiple interview formats	Hybrid work models, quiet spaces, universal design, confidential Accessibility Passport for tailored accommodations	Neurodiversity boot camps and training for leaders, annual trainings on neurodiversity topics	Inclusion integrated into corporate strategy, Allyship, Neurodiversity November: a month-long campaign	Innovation in Analytics and tech services, new perspectives, increased quality, productivity, retention

Table 3: Comparison of International Neurodiversity Employment Programs, source: SAP, Microsoft, JPMorgan Chase, EY)

Hiring

All the companies started at step one and reimaged their hiring programs, making the application process already accessible for autistic and neurodivergent individuals. SAP and Microsoft organise dedicated events for hiring neurodiverse talent and assessing their skills in alternative ways. Microsoft further holds webinars to explain the process. JPMorgan Chase and EY offer adjustments to their traditional processes and work with third-party partners, like universities and NGOs. SAP also uses autism-friendly vendors. The experts at my focus group also emphasised the importance of neuro-inclusive practices even before the employment relationship officially starts.

Workplace adjustments

Each organisation adapted its work environment to better fit diverse needs. Most common adjustments include quiet rooms and sensory-friendly modifications to the physical environment. Microsoft stands out by offering coaching sessions related to executive functioning. The firms also recognise the need for accommodations in terms of communication and structure, offering alternative communication methods and flexible, hybrid schedules. These practices align with my research findings. The companies also emphasise the importance of tailoring accommodations to each individual and highlight how the wider workforce experiences a positive impact.

Training

The companies recognise that training the workforce, especially managers and leaders, is integral to the success of their programs. Specialised training occasions foster support and understanding within teams. SAP and Microsoft offer vast resources on their internal platforms, such as on-demand learning materials and one-page quick guides. SAP has materials available for other companies starting neuro-inclusion programs, and EY helps businesses build a neurodiverse workforce. A student participant in my research has also emphasised the solutions such training would offer.

Culture & Inclusion Strategy

All the studied organisations aim to create a company culture where the entire neurodiverse workforce, including autistic and neurodivergent individuals, feel seen, supported and valued. Peers are engaged through different employee groups, like the autism Inclusion Network at

SAP and the Access Ability Resource Group at JPMorgan Chase. The companies influence employee attitudes through internal communication too. Microsoft holds Neurodiversity Celebration Week, and EY goes as far as to organise a month-long campaign: Neurodiversity November. It was frequently brought up in my primary research as well that an inclusive culture is the foundation for sustainable efforts.

Business Case

All four companies talk about the competitive edge they gained through their programs. Innovation emerged as the primary advantage that neuro-inclusive practices and a neurodivergent workforce brought to these leading companies. Improved morale, retention and performance, enhanced leadership skills and talent attraction, especially among Gen Z candidates, are also reported across the board. SAP connects neuro-inclusion to patent development, while Microsoft to product development. JPMorgan experienced drastically decreased error rates thanks to its autistic employees. EY clients demand a diverse team of consultants, so the company helps leverage the power of neurodiversity through Neurodiversity Centres of Excellence.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Key conclusions

This thesis set out to investigate how neuro-inclusive workplaces designed for autistic individuals can benefit neurotypical employees and contribute to broader organisational success. Two qualitative focus groups, one conducted with acclaimed experts from different backgrounds, the other with students and young professionals, “the workforce of the future”, and a one-on-one interview with an autistic individual allowed me to explore the topic from all angles. This research added to existing findings in the field of autism employment by focusing on its benefits to neurotypicals and broader organisational impact.

The most important message this thesis aims to convey is that inclusive design benefits everyone. Exploring neuro-inclusion from a flipped perspective helps advance the case of autistic individuals by departing from the view that accommodations are special favours. Instead, they are advantageous to all and in line with the principles of Universal Design and the Curb-Cut effect. Clear communication, transparent processes, flexible schedules, quiet rooms, and other “autism-friendly adjustments” were evidently appreciated by neurotypical

participants just the same. A student summarised: “Even if you have not told us that this was about making a workplace more accessible...implementing these things can be good for literally anybody in an organisation.” Austin and Pisano (2017) and Hayward et al. (2019) also ascertained that attending to autistic needs improved morale and communication. Similarly, all the companies I looked at in my analysis have realised value for their entire workforce and highlighted that their efforts benefited neurotypical employees.

Participants of all my discussions concluded the importance of a psychologically safe work environment, characterised as open, trusting and supportive. From a personal point of view, employees simply enjoy working at such a place more and experience positive changes to their mental well-being. This enhances collaboration and retention. The neurotypical and neurodivergent participants of this research alike expressed that they want to feel free to communicate issues and be themselves. Raymaker et al. (2019) discussed the detrimental effects of autistic burnout that often appears due to a pressure to mask and conform in a non-inclusive environment. Hull et al. (2017) noted that neurotypicals also frequently camouflage. Autistic burnout and occupational burnout observed in neurotypicals both result in impairments of personal and interpersonal functioning that affect one’s ability to perform at work. An atmosphere of reciprocal understanding can contribute to solving the communication gap that exists between autistic and non-autistic individuals, outlined in the Double Empathy Problem (Milton, 2012). The international cases explored also see organisational culture as fundamental to inclusion efforts, run awareness campaigns and offer training to change minds.

Management's significant role in shaping culture and the organisational structure around inclusion was highlighted across the board. Expert participants described a need for proactive and self-reflective leaders who clearly outline their expectations for each role and pay individual attention to each of their reports. This was reinforced by the student focus group, where demand for consistent feedback, support of personal development and understanding of work-life balance were discussed. This shows that managerial attitudes are influential across all neurotypes, especially those of team leaders and middle managers who deal with the day-to-day issues in their teams. Support and understanding from supervisors were identified as enablers of successful employment of autistic people in the works of Hayward et al. (2019) and Hendricks (2010). Expert participants in my study and the literature both stress the importance of neurodiversity training and coaching for team leads. The international frameworks support this notion, having already implemented various training practices and resources for on-demand

learning. In addition to middle management, HR is the other key target for skill development. At Microsoft, all recruiters must complete a learning path that equips them with the knowledge and ability to support neurodivergent candidates.

The comparative analysis confirmed that competitive advantage can be gained through neuro-inclusion. Diverse thinking powered innovation capacity for all the analysed companies. In addition, Microsoft and JPMorgan Chase reported increased efficiency and decreased error rates thanks to the unique problem-solving and pattern-recognition skills of their neurodivergent employees. Research by Baron-Cohen (2006) provides theoretical insight supporting the strong systemising abilities of some autistic individuals. The primary research participants echoed this view and made a business case for this strategy. In their experience, autistic and neurodivergent colleagues were detail-oriented and loyal and approached issues from an unconventional angle. A student added that their own thinking was influenced in a positive way. Others reported improved cohesion in their team and reduced turnover, points also held up by Austin & Pisano (2017). In conclusion, we can confidently say that neuro-inclusion is a prosperous business strategy, especially as Gen Z now represents about 30% of the active workforce (Richmond, 2024) and over half of them identify as definitely or somewhat neurodivergent (Browley, 2025).

Although there are many clear benefits to neuro-inclusion, barriers still persist. Participants mentioned stigma, dilemma around disclosure, and accommodations being seen as special treatment as common obstacles. Patton (2019) and Brouwers et al. (2024) also identified these barriers to autistic employment in their research. The lack of tools for supporting a neurodivergent colleague reported by a student participant also outlines a significant limitation, but it can be bridged by training and spreading awareness. It is clear that international organisations recognise this and emphasise training managers, autistic employees, and the entire workforce. A limitation emerged during the comparative analysis. Transparent information about the details of some corporate neurodiversity employment programs was quite difficult to access. This really made me wonder if finding this information is so problematic for researchers, it must be a challenge for autistic and neurodivergent job seekers too. I find it quite contradictory to the ethos of inclusion to scatter communication about these programs across internal platforms and corporate subpages. There is also a disconnect between global and local implementation regarding these programs. One of the experts shared a telling anecdote: upon visiting the Hungarian branch of a multinational company praised for its autism at work

program, they learned the local leadership was unaware of the initiative. It has been reinforced both by literature and my research that context matters, but adaptation is possible in every culture, and it should be a priority.

6.2. Recommendations

A seemingly simple, yet powerful recommendation for organisations is to intentionally try to eliminate stress culture and foster an anxiety-free environment. This can be achieved through universal design, transparent communication, flexibility in structure and quiet rooms. Do not label anything unnecessarily autism-friendly, since most employees can benefit from these elements and should feel free to use them. Provide clear role and process descriptions and task delegation protocols, define contact points, and outline who to turn to with specific issues. These practices benefit everyone while also creating structure and improving comfort.

For leadership, the main recommendation is to invest in soft-skill development, especially of team leads. They must be ready to give constructive criticism in an assertive way, respond to daily challenges that arise in the team and maintain a positive, proactive and self-reflective attitude. Training them to have an inclusive mindset means developing better communication, critical thinking, problem-solving and people management skills. Improve morale by shifting from transactional to human-centred leadership. Encourage managers to regularly check in with employees about their well-being and not just their performance. Further, raise awareness among the entire workforce about differences like neurodivergence and autism.

HR should be the other target of neurodiversity training. These professionals should understand how inclusive practices affect productivity, team dynamics, and psychological safety. This way, they can be adapted and improved if needed. HR should take on a reporting function upwards and put more energy into investigating why certain employment relationships have not worked out, possibly identifying hidden barriers. Generation Z demand authentic inclusion and is not afraid to switch to companies that publicly and verifiably align with their values. So, to stay relevant on the labour market, develop a proactive, neuro-inclusive HR strategy.

6.3. Limitations

There are many limitations to this research. The small sample size greatly limits generalisability. While this study's qualitative, exploratory nature uncovered great depth and valuable insights, the generated data is not statistically representative. Both the researcher and

the participants brought a level of subjectivity to the research process, creating bias. Voluntary participation in the case of the student focus group might have meant that the participants had more of an interest in or a more positive approach to the topic than the public. The invited experts all identified as advocates for autistic people, who might have biased views. The researcher also facilitated the focus groups and the interview, possibly unintentionally influencing group dynamics or the framing of topics. The group dynamics themselves might have impacted how and what opinions were shared. The expert focus group and the interview were conducted in Hungarian and later translated into English. This always carries the risk of some meaning or nuance being lost in translation. The sources used for the theoretical chapter and the comparative analysis were all in English, and the expert participants were all Hungarian. This might have reflected different cultural contexts, which were interesting to compare, but neither can apply universally across cultures. A further limitation specific to the comparative analysis was the difficulty accessing information. The scope of the thesis was limited to corporate/office-type work environments, and findings may not be applicable to other sectors.

6.5. Further Research

This thesis does not cover all aspects of this topic and encourages further research. The findings and limitations of this study together provide direction. Quantitative research into the business impacts of neuro-inclusion, such as productivity, retention, innovation, and employee wellbeing, could help measure success. Long-term outcomes could be assessed through studies tracking the experiences of neurodivergent and neurotypical employees in inclusive and non-inclusive workplaces. Localised case studies could explore how international neuro-inclusion frameworks can be adapted to the Hungarian or different regional contexts. Further interesting insights could be generated by investigating the experiences of undiagnosed or non-disclosing autistic and neurodivergent individuals. Exploring the intersection of neurodivergence with other identity dimensions, like gender, could help create a more holistic approach to inclusion.

7. Summary

This thesis investigated the question: How do neuro-inclusive workplaces designed to accommodate autistic individuals benefit neurotypical employees and contribute to broader organisational success? The research utilised a flipped perspective and approached workplace inclusion of autistic and neurodivergent individuals from the perspective of neurotypical coworkers and the organisation as a whole. The thesis examined both the ripple effects that

neuro-inclusive practices had on neurotypicals and how the presence of autistic and neurodivergent people influenced work culture and team dynamics.

A qualitative approach, comprised of three complementary methods, was taken to answer the research question. Two focus groups were conducted. The first one involved five experts in autism and neurodiversity, who came from backgrounds such as psychology, disability employment, organisational development, and workplace wellbeing. They helped describe an autism-friendly, neuro-inclusive workplace and provided interdisciplinary insight into its effects on neurotypicals and business success. The second focus group was conducted to represent the mostly neurotypical Gen Z viewpoint. The nine participants were university students and young professionals from different cultural backgrounds, who had experience working in corporate, office-based settings. They discussed their workplace preferences, reflected on the experts' opinions, and shared their experiences with neurodiversity. A one-on-one interview was conducted to explore an autistic individual's views on the topic. The individual was asked about their own perception of neuro-inclusion, their contributions and experiences working with neurotypicals. The collected primary data was analysed thematically. A brief comparative analysis examined international neurodiversity employment programs to contextualise primary research findings internationally.

In the thematic analysis, seven major themes emerged regarding benefits for neurotypical employees and organisational success. Clear communication and workflows reduced ambiguity, leading to increased efficiency for all. It was determined that a culture of psychological safety was essential to sustainable inclusion and contributed to better well-being and collaboration. Leadership and structural support were identified as essential needs for both autistic and non-autistic employees. It was revealed that improvements to the physical and sensory environment are not only vital for autistic and neurodivergent individuals but also help concentration and create comfort for neurotypicals. It was established that neurodivergent contributions add immense value to organisations by leveraging unique skills. Organisational success factors (retention, innovation, etc.) were identified, making a business case for neuro-inclusion. Finally, the ever-present challenges and barriers were highlighted, showing where progress is needed.

The comparative analysis revealed what organisations globally are doing well and not so well. Overall, their principles were in line with primary research findings.

Together, the research in this thesis found that neuro-inclusive practices are much more than accommodations that help a specific group. These are the foundations of a great, future-proof workplace.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus Group Guide - Experts (translation)

Expert Focus Group Guide

Goal: To explore the characteristics, implementation possibilities, and systemic advantages of neuroinclusive/autism-friendly workplaces – with a particular focus on how these environments can create better workplaces for everyone, including neurotypical employees.

Duration: 60–90 minutes

Format: In-person, live session

9:00/9:10 - 9:10/9:20 I. Introduction (10 min)

- Thank you very much for participating in this conversation about how autism-friendly / neuroinclusive workplaces affect neurotypical employees. Here's a brief overview of the research context:
- May we use informal language?
- This is a bachelor's thesis research project. Vivi is an undergraduate student. We met during a course on Social Enterprises, and I am now supervising her work. We both believe that promoting autism-friendly / neuro-inclusive workplaces is an important topic, and we would love to publish some of the results for a broader audience.
- We would like to record the discussion for analysis – only the two of us will listen to it for research purposes, and the recording will be deleted afterwards.
- Since these are public documents, we propose to include who was present at this session in the methodology section. However, the results will be presented anonymously. If we decide to write an article based on this, we will check in with you beforehand. Is this acceptable to you?
- We would now like to ask everyone to briefly introduce themselves: who is present today, and how do you relate to this topic?

9:10/9:20 - 9:20/9:30 II. Defining Terms: Autism-Friendly vs. Neuroinclusive Work

Environments

- “Work environment” and “workplace” are used interchangeably here.
- Because these environments can be very diverse, let's frame our focus: we are envisioning corporate office settings, typically requiring medium to high levels of education, in multinational (multicultural) companies.
- Vivi's thesis discusses autism, and also the concepts of neurodivergent/neurotypical. We'd like to start by asking you to help us decide: Based on your background and experience, which term is more useful or graspable?

9:20/30 -9:45/50 III. Post-it Activity

Question: What makes a workplace truly neuro-inclusive or autism-friendly in your opinion? (15-20 min)

Goal: To identify specific characteristics and visually group them

- I've reviewed the international literature and know the main categories. Now I'd love to hear from you, as experts, what you find most important.
- **Individually:** Please write down what you believe are the 5 most important features (one on each post-it). (2–3 minutes, use visible, medium marker pens)
- **Together:** Let's stick them to a board or wall and group them. These are the categories I've seen, do your ideas fit? What doesn't fit? (*e.g. communication, physical environment, leadership, HR processes, etc.*)

- **Standing together:** Discussion - Which category has the most potential? Which comes up most or least frequently?

By 9:45 at the latest -IV. Neurotypical Employees' Perspective

Let's now look at this from the "reverse" angle: How does such an environment affect non-autistic / neurotypical people? I call it "reverse" not because I think neurotypical viewpoints are more important – quite the opposite! I believe understanding this perspective can actually advance the cause of autistic inclusion.

- What do you think, how do these elements impact NON-AUTISTIC / NEUROTYPICAL PEOPLE?
- Could you share examples or experiences where a had a positive effect on?
- You've mentioned positive aspects. Does this mean they're clearly beneficial, or are there drawbacks too?
- (How do tools of *neurodiversity* affect the broader workplace culture?)
- We both help guide the discussion to stay on topic.

Walk through categories:

- Which ones are most important? How would you rank them? Which ones would you highlight as having the biggest potential to *support autistic inclusion* through *improving neurotypicals' well-being*?
- What feedback have you received from coworkers / managers? (e.g. about clearer rules, more transparent communication, employee well-being)?
- So far, we've discussed how the *workplace characteristics* impact *neurotypical people*. Now let's turn to how the *presence of autistic employees* impacts the experience of *non-autistic colleagues*.

10:10 -V. Why Is This Valuable on an Organisational Level? (10 min)

So far, we've talked about the effects on neurotypical individuals; now let's zoom out to the organisational level.

- What organizational impacts have you seen? (If answers don't flow, ask about loyalty, team cohesion, and employer branding?)
- Have you come across measurable results on how *autism-friendly workplaces* benefit *non-autistic employees*?
- (What makes an autism-friendly/inclusive approach sustainable in the long term?)
- If a company leader or HR professional is considering implementation, what would you advise them, taking into account both AUTISTIC and NON-AUTISTIC employees?
- What makes a neuroinclusive approach long-term sustainable?

10:20/25 - VI. Closing (5–10 min)

- One thought (in one or two sentences) that especially stuck with you today or that you didn't have the chance to share yet but would like to.
- Are there any sources or readings you strongly recommend?
- May we send you the final thesis? Additional context: Vivi is a student, she'll participate in the TDK student research forum in late April, thesis submission is in May, and the defense is in June.

Appendix 2: Focus Group Guide - Students/ Young Professionals

Focus Group Guide - Students / Young Adults

Objective: To explore how young, primarily neurotypical employees (including potentially neurodivergent participants) perceive inclusivity, communication, structure, and team dynamics in workplace environments – with a particular focus on the indirect impact of autism-friendly, inclusive practices.

Participants may come from diverse work environments (corporate, hospitality.). The aim is not to focus only on multinational settings but to understand how inclusive elements are perceived across different types of workplaces.

Duration: 60 – 90 minutes

I. Introduction & Ice Breaker (15 minutes)

- *Welcome and introductions*

Thank you so much for coming to my focus group discussion.

I want to ask for your consent to record what is said. I will use it for my thesis and potentially later an article. Your answers are going to be anonymised

- *Brief overview of the research objective (exploring how inclusive workplaces impact neurotypical employees as well)*

I am writing my thesis about neuro-inclusive workplaces with a focus on the inclusion of people with autism.

The aim of this research is to explore how organisational practices and accommodations in place to help neurodivergent/autistic /ADHD people affect the neurotypicals around them too.

I will go deeper into definitions a bit later.

There are no right or wrong answers. You don't need direct experience with autism or inclusive programs to contribute.



Introduce yourself (Name, age, what you studied, what you do for work)

Stand up and share: What's your work superpower? Time limit 1 mins

II. Workplace experiences - what elements cause satisfaction? (10-15 minutes)

!!! Everyone gets 3 post its (3 colors)

What made a workplace or team (EVEN SCHOOL GROUPWORK) feel supportive?

- *What makes you feel accepted/appreciated at work?*
- *Can you think of any organisational practices do you found / would find useful for efficiency? (Any negative experiences in these domains?)*
- **? Post-it activity:** Look at the categories on the flipchart and write something that is important (= helps you successfully execute your tasks) to you in at least 3 categories! (you have 5 mins)

III. Neurodiversity and Expert group findings (15-20 minutes)

- **Look at expert post its:** With markers put dots on aspects that you would also appreciate.

- *Matches? Which of these would you personally value? Which do you think would make your job easier or better? Surprises?*
- **Is there anything that you are opposed to?**

DEFINITIONS:

Neurodiversity

The natural variation in how human brains function: how we think, learn, process information, and interact with the world.

Neurodivergent

Someone whose brain works in a way that is different from what's considered “typical.” This includes people with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette’s, and more.

Neurotypical

A person whose brain functions in ways that society commonly expects and they don’t have a diagnosed neurodevelopmental difference.

Autism-friendly, Neuro-inclusive Workplace

A workplace that is intentionally designed to support and include people with all kinds of thinking and learning styles, especially those who are neurodivergent.

- **What benefits do you think an autism-friendly workplace might bring to you personally – even if indirectly?**
- **Do you know of any inclusive practices that are in place at your workplace/ school?**

IV. Experience with NEURODIVERSITY (20 minutes)

- **Have you ever worked together (even in school groupwork) with somebody you felt your brain functioned differently to?**
- **Has this caused any tension? Or did it provide benefits?**
- **Have you learned something from a colleague/ classmate because they worked differently?**
- *Have you felt that your communication/ cognitive style did not match with others?*
- **Do you have any experience with neurodivergent people? At work/ elsewhere**

V. Closing & Reflection (10-15 minutes)

- **Is inclusivity important to you? Scale of 1-10**
- **If you were a leader trying to achieve a neuro-inclusive work environment, what would be the number 1 policy you would make?**
- **In one sentence: Why do you think it would be worth it for organizations to become more autism-friendly from the majority’s perspective?**

Appendix 3: Interview Questions (translation)

Interview

I. Introduction

Main Research Question:

How do neuro-inclusive workplaces designed to accommodate autistic individuals benefit neurotypical employees and contribute to broader organisational success?

In the context of my thesis, “workplace” refers specifically to corporate, multinational, office environments - this is the focus.

The “reverse” perspective means exploring how such environments affect non-autistic / neurotypical individuals. This is not because I find the neurotypical perspective more important - quite the contrary! I believe that understanding this can *advance the cause* of autistic inclusion.

- Could you tell me a bit about one or two workplaces where you have worked? What was it like to work there - the atmosphere, colleagues, leadership?

II. Workplace Experiences - Self-Reflection

- What are your thoughts on the current state of employment for autistic individuals?
- What difficulties have you experienced when working with neurotypical colleagues?
- Can you recall a situation where your different way of working had a *positive effect* on the team, the atmosphere, or the work process?

III. Advantages of Differences

- Have there been times when you noticed something others didn't? Or solved a problem faster or more effectively?
- In what situations did you feel that you were able to *contribute more* than a neurotypical colleague?
- Were there moments when your colleagues *learned something from you*, perhaps because you viewed things differently?

IV. Neurotypical Reactions and Interactions

- What kind of feedback have you received from neurotypical colleagues?
- Have there been times when your presence led to a *change in team dynamics* (e.g., becoming more patient, accurate, structured, etc.)?

V. Experiences in Neuroinclusive Environments

- Have you worked in a workplace that consciously aimed to support neurodiversity, meaning the environment was truly neuroinclusive?
- If yes: What elements contributed to that inclusivity? How did it affect you, and how did you see it affect others?
- Was there a moment when you felt that your *presence, combined with the inclusive environment, created a positive shift in your neurotypical colleagues' behaviour* or mood?
- Have you noticed a cultural difference between Hungarian and international workplace cultures in terms of attitudes toward neurodiversity? (If you've worked in such environments.)

VI. Summary

- What is *one thing* that every company should implement to function better, not just for autistic people, but for everyone?