



Neurodiversity: A Paradigm Shift in Understanding Neurological Differences in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Abstract

The World Autism Awareness Day, 2025 observance, on 2nd April, 2025, under the United Nations theme "**Advancing Neurodiversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**", highlights the intersection between neurodiversity and global sustainability efforts, showcasing how inclusive policies and practices can drive positive change for autistic individuals worldwide and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Neurodiversity is a concept that acknowledges and values neurological differences as natural variations of human cognition rather than deficits. The concept of neurodiversity emerged in the late 1990s as a sociopolitical movement advocating for the acceptance of neurological differences as part of natural human diversity rather than as disorders that require fixing. The neurodiversity concept challenges the traditional medical model of disability and promotes the social model, emphasizing inclusion and acceptance of individuals with conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurodevelopmental differences.

Keywords: Inclusion; Neurodiversity; Neurological Differences; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Introduction

Since the United Nations General Assembly designated 2 April as World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) in 2007, the UN has worked to promote the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for autistic individuals, ensuring their equal participation in society. Over the years, significant progress has been made, driven in large part by autistic advocates who have worked tirelessly to bring the lived experiences of autistic individuals to the forefront of global discussions.

Neurodiversity is a concept that acknowledges and values neurological differences as natural variations of human cognition rather than deficits (Armstrong, 2015). The concept of neurodiversity emerged in the late 1990s as a sociopolitical movement advocating for the acceptance of neurological differences as part of natural human diversity rather than as disorders that require fixing (Baron-Cohen, 2017).

The World Autism Awareness Day, 2025 observance, on 2nd April, 2025, under the United Nations theme "**Advancing Neurodiversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**", highlights the intersection between neurodiversity and global sustainability efforts, showcasing how inclusive policies and practices can drive positive change for autistic individuals worldwide and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. The phrase "Advancing Neurodiversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" means working to promote the rights, inclusion, and strengths of neurodivergent individuals—such as those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurological differences—in alignment with the global goals set by the United Nations for a better and more sustainable future. This is the idea that neurological differences are natural variations of the human

brain, and that people who are neurodivergent (e.g., autistic, dyslexic, ADHD, etc.) should be accepted, valued, and supported—not treated as "defective" or needing to be "fixed."

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. These are 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations to address issues like poverty, health, education, inequality, decent work, peace, and climate change by 2030.

So "Advancing Neurodiversity and the SDGs" means: Promoting inclusion, support, and empowerment of neurodivergent individuals in ways that help achieve the UN SDGs.

For example:

- **SDG 4 (Quality Education):** Making sure education is inclusive and accessible to autistic students.
- **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):** Creating inclusive job opportunities for neurodivergent adults.
- **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities):** Challenging stigma, discrimination, and barriers faced by neurodivergent people.
- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being):** Ensuring access to appropriate health and mental health services.

It's about ensuring that the voices and needs of neurodivergent people are central to the world's development agenda—and that they benefit equally from progress toward a fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable future.

The Origins and Global Spread of Neurodiversity

The concept of neurodiversity emerged in the late 1990s as a sociopolitical movement advocating for the acceptance of neurological differences as part of natural human diversity rather than as disorders that require fixing. The term was coined by Australian sociologist Judy Singer in her then unpublished thesis (Singer, 1999), where she built upon the work of autistic self-advocates and the disability rights movement to argue that neurological differences—such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and other cognitive variations—should be seen as a form of diversity rather than pathology (Singer, 1999; Kapp, 2020).

Singer's work was influenced by the social model of disability, which challenges the idea that impairments reside solely within individuals. Instead, it argues that barriers in society—such as inaccessible education, employment discrimination, and lack of accommodations—are what disable individuals (Oliver, 1990). Her ideas were further popularized by autistic self-advocates, particularly those affiliated with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) and Aspies for Freedom, who promoted neurodiversity as an alternative to the medical model of autism (Kapp *et al.*, 2013).

Neurodiversity is a framework that recognizes and respects neurological differences as natural variations of the human brain rather than as deficits or disorders. The neurodiversity concept challenges the traditional medical model of disability and promotes the social model, emphasizing inclusion and acceptance of individuals with conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurodevelopmental differences (Singer, 1999).

Early Adoption in Western Countries

The neurodiversity movement initially gained traction in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, largely due to the rise of online communities where autistic individuals and other neurodivergent people connected, shared experiences, and advocated for their rights (Bagatell, 2010). The internet provided a critical platform for self-advocacy, allowing individuals to challenge negative stereotypes and push for policy changes in education, employment, and healthcare.

One of the key moments in the spread of neurodiversity was Steve Silberman's book, *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* (Silberman, 2015), which brought mainstream attention to the movement. Silberman traced the history of autism research and highlighted the ways in which autistic individuals had been marginalized. His work helped shift public discourse toward acceptance and inclusion, influencing policymakers, educators, and businesses to consider neurodivergent perspectives in their practices.

Global Spread and Institutional Recognition

In the 2010s, the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO) began to acknowledge neurodiversity in their disability inclusion frameworks. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) played a significant role in advocating for neurodivergent rights worldwide by emphasizing self-determination, accessibility, and employment inclusion (Nicolaidis *et al.*, 2019).

Several multinational companies, including Microsoft, JPMorgan Chase, EY, and SAP, launched neurodiversity hiring programs, recognizing the unique talents of neurodivergent employees, particularly in fields such as technology, data analysis, and cybersecurity (Austin & Pisano, 2017). These initiatives helped the neurodiversity movement gain credibility in corporate and economic sectors.

Neurodiversity in Non-Western Countries

While the neurodiversity paradigm initially gained prominence in Western countries, it has since spread to Asia, Africa, and Latin America, although with variations in acceptance and implementation.

1. Japan and South Korea:

In countries like Japan and South Korea, neurodiversity has been increasingly discussed in the context of education and employment. Research suggests that while traditional cultural values emphasize conformity, there has been a growing awareness of autism acceptance and workplace inclusion.

Government initiatives in these countries now encourage employment support programs for autistic individuals, particularly in the technology sector.

2. India:

In India, the neurodiversity movement has been championed by parent-led organizations and disability rights groups. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) of 2016 legally recognizes autism, dyslexia, and ADHD as disabilities requiring accommodations. However, stigma and lack of awareness still pose challenges as it is worldwide (Cheng *et al.*, 2023).

3. Africa and Latin America:

In Africa and Latin America, neurodiversity is still a developing concept, often framed within traditional disability advocacy movements. In countries like South Africa and Brazil, organizations are beginning to promote neurodiversity, but cultural beliefs about mental health and disability can sometimes hinder acceptance (Shuttleworth & Meekosha, 2017).

Neurodiversity in South East Asia

Neurodiversity, which recognizes neurological differences as natural variations rather than disorders, has gained global traction in advocacy, education, and employment policies. While this concept originated in Western disability discourse, its adoption in South East Asia and India has been influenced

by cultural attitudes, legal frameworks, and economic factors. In these regions, the neurodiversity movement is still developing, with both progress and persistent challenges.

South East Asian countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, have made strides in recognizing and accommodating neurodivergent individuals, though progress varies by nation.

1. Singapore:

Singapore has been proactive in adopting neurodiversity-inclusive policies. The Enabling Masterplan (SG Enable, 2019) focuses on integrating autistic individuals and people with ADHD and dyslexia into education and employment. Companies like DBS Bank and Microsoft Singapore have launched neurodiversity hiring initiatives, particularly in the technology sector. While it is not a legal requirement for potential employees to disclose their neurodiverse condition before accepting a job in Singapore, doing so can be beneficial in creating an environment of trust and open communication, said diversity, equity and inclusion client solutions lead Alister Ong of recruitment agency Michael Page Singapore (Chiu, 2024).

2. Malaysia and Thailand:

In Malaysia, organizations such as the National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM) advocate for better inclusion, while Thailand has introduced vocational training programs for autistic individuals. However, stigma and lack of awareness remain challenges in both countries.

3. Indonesia and the Philippines:

These countries have strong parent-driven advocacy movements, with organizations like ASP (Autism Society Philippines) leading awareness campaigns. However, employment opportunities remain scarce, and inclusive education policies are inconsistently implemented. There have been several challenges and some achievements of inclusive education in Indonesia (Sari *et al*, 2022).

Research supports the neurodiversity paradigm as a way to foster inclusion in education, employment, and society. Armstrong (2011) argues that neurodivergent individuals often possess unique cognitive strengths that can be harnessed when provided with appropriate support. For instance, individuals with autism may exhibit enhanced pattern recognition and problem-solving abilities, while those with dyslexia often excel in creative and spatial reasoning (Rajendran & Mitchell, 2007).

Despite its growing acceptance, the neurodiversity movement faces challenges, particularly in balancing the need for support services with the push for social inclusion (Robertson, 2010). While proponents advocate for accommodating different cognitive styles, critics argue that the framework may underplay the difficulties faced by individuals with significant support needs (Pellicano & den Houting, 2022).

Nonetheless, empirical research supports the benefits of neurodiverse-inclusive practices in workplaces and schools. Studies have shown that organizations that embrace neurodiversity report increased innovation and problem-solving capacity (Austin & Pisano, 2017). Furthermore, inclusive education models that integrate neurodiverse-friendly teaching methods have been linked to better outcomes for both neurodivergent and neurotypical students (Kasari *et al.*, 2012).

Research highlights the importance of embracing neurodiversity in educational and workplace settings. For example, Armstrong (2011) argues that neurodiverse individuals contribute unique problem-solving abilities, creativity, and innovation, making it essential to design environments that accommodate varied cognitive styles. There have been studies on the prevalence of individuals with autism in some Indian cities (Rudra *et al*, 2017). Additionally, studies indicate that fostering neuroinclusive workplaces leads to improved productivity and employee satisfaction (Austin & Pisano, 2017).

Neurodiversity in India: Progress and Barriers

Legal and Policy Frameworks

India has made significant legal strides in recognizing neurodivergent conditions. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) of 2016 includes autism, ADHD, dyslexia and other neurodivergent conditions in its list of disabilities requiring government support the law mandates:

- Educational accommodations (inclusive schooling, special educators).
- Employment reservations in government jobs.
- Social security benefits (disability pensions, skill development programs).

Despite these legal provisions, implementation remains patchy, particularly in rural areas, where stigma, lack of diagnosis, and inadequate infrastructure hinder access to services. Before the RPWD 2026 Act there have been discourses on this issue too (Mehrotra, 2011).

Education and Awareness

While metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata have seen the rise of inclusive schools and therapy centres, many mainstream schools still struggle to accommodate neurodivergent students due to limited teacher training and rigid curricula. These challenges have in reported in other countries too (Cook, 2024).

Organizations such as Action for Autism (AFA), Autism Society West Bengal (ASWB), and Ummeed Child Development Centre and other NGOs have played a crucial role in awareness campaigns and teacher training this is true worldwide (Yatim & Ali, 2022).

However, neurodiversity as a concept is not widely understood, and many schools continue to follow a deficit-based model, aiming to "fix" neurodivergent students rather than support their strengths.

Employment and Workplace Inclusion

Employment remains a major challenge for neurodivergent individuals in India. While the RPWD Act mandates workplace inclusion, many companies remain unaware or reluctant to hire neurodivergent employees. Studies are going on to find the balance and it is seen the 'no size fits all; here too' (Vargas-Salas *et al*, 2025).

However, a few corporations have started neurodiversity hiring programs, including:

- SAP India and Ernst & Young: Specialized hiring programs for autistic individuals in IT roles.
- Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys: Pilot projects for hiring neurodivergent employees in data analytics and software testing.
- Lemon Tree Hotels: A hospitality chain known for hiring employees with diverse disabilities, including autism.

These initiatives are small-scale compared to Western neurodiversity hiring programs and often focus on specific job roles rather than a broad policy shift.

Cultural and Social Challenges

1. **Stigma and Misconceptions:** Many families, especially in rural areas, still view conditions like autism or ADHD as "mental illness" or "bad parenting", leading to late diagnosis and lack of support (Antezana *et al*, 2017).
2. **Limited Access to Diagnosis and Services:** Diagnosis remains urban-centric, with very few trained developmental paediatricians and therapists available in smaller towns.
3. **Gender Bias:** Many neurodivergent girls go undiagnosed, as autism and ADHD in girls present differently and are often overlooked (McKinney *et al*, 2024).

Future Directions

As global awareness of neurodiversity grows, there is a need for:

- Culturally sensitive approaches that recognize how neurodiversity is perceived in different societies.
- Stronger legal protections for neurodivergent individuals in education and employment.
- More research on neurodiversity in non-Western contexts, as most studies focus on Western perspectives.

*The Way Forward: Recommendations for South East Asia and India***1. Improved Diagnosis and Early Intervention:**

- Increase developmental screening in pediatric healthcare.
- Train community health workers to recognize neurodivergent traits.

2. Strengthening Inclusive Education:

- Integrate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into school curricula.
- Expand teacher training in neurodiversity awareness.

3. Expanding Employment Initiatives:

- Provide incentives for companies to hire neurodivergent employees.
- Encourage remote work options for those needing flexible environments.

4. Addressing Stigma through Awareness Campaigns:

- Promote neurodivergent role models in media.
- Engage with religious and community leaders to change cultural perceptions.

5. Strengthening Rural Outreach:

- Develop mobile therapy units and telehealth options.
- Provide government-supported community-based services.

While South East Asia and India have made significant progress in recognizing and supporting neurodivergent individuals, challenges remain in awareness, education, employment, and social inclusion. The neurodiversity movement must expand beyond urban centres and elite institutions to create widespread systemic change that benefits all neurodivergent individuals.

Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices for Inclusive Societies

Neurodiversity-affirming practices recognize and support neurological differences as natural variations of the human brain rather than disorders that need to be "fixed." These practices focus on accommodation, acceptance, and empowerment, ensuring that neurodivergent individuals thrive in various social settings, including education, workplaces, healthcare, and communities (Dwyer, 2020).

Below are evidence-based and easy-to-implement neurodiversity-affirming practices applicable across different strata of society, supported by peer-reviewed research.

1. Education: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments**a. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**

UDL is a flexible teaching framework that benefits all learners, including those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurodivergent conditions.

Key Strategies:

- **Multiple Means of Representation:** Use text, visuals, audio, and hands-on activities to present information.
- **Multiple Means of Engagement:** Allow self-paced learning, movement breaks, and project-based assessments.
- **Multiple Means of Expression:** Let students demonstrate knowledge through essays, presentations, videos, or art.

Research shows UDL improves academic outcomes and engagement for neurodivergent students (Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014).

In India, a study found UDL-based teaching methods increased participation of students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

b. Sensory-Friendly Classrooms

Many neurodivergent individuals have **sensory processing differences** that can make traditional classrooms overwhelming.

Key Strategies:

- **Reduce Noise & Bright Lights:** Use noise-canceling headphones and soft lighting.
- **Create Calm Spaces:** Designate quiet corners for students who need breaks.
- **Provide Alternative Seating:** Use standing desks, fidget tools, or cushions.

Studies show that **sensory-friendly modifications** help neurodivergent students focus better and reduce anxiety (Ashburner, Ziviani & Rodger, 2008).

2. Workplaces: Encouraging Neurodivergent Inclusion**a. Strength-Based Hiring Practices**

Instead of focusing on deficits, employers should identify and leverage the unique strengths of neurodivergent employees.

Key Strategies:

- **Skills-Based Assessments:** Replace traditional interviews with task-based evaluations.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Allow remote work, part-time options, and flexible schedules.
- **Clear Instructions & Structure:** Provide written guidelines and visual schedules.

Companies implementing **neurodiversity hiring programs** (e.g., SAP, Microsoft, and TCS in India) report **increased innovation and productivity** (Austin & Pisano, 2017).

b. Workplace Sensory Accommodations

Simple workplace adjustments can help neurodivergent employees focus and thrive.

Key Strategies:

- **Quiet Workspaces:** Offer low-stimulation zones.
- **Alternative Communication Methods:** Allow email or text-based communication instead of verbal meetings.
- **Training for Managers:** Educate supervisors on neurodiversity inclusion.

A study found that workplace accommodations increased retention rates for neurodivergent employees by 78% (Hedley *et al.*, 2018).

3. Healthcare: Neurodiversity-Affirming Medical Practices

a. Sensory-Sensitive Medical Care

Neurodivergent individuals often experience anxiety in medical settings due to sensory overload and unclear communication.

Key Strategies:

- **Reduce Waiting Times:** Offer scheduled low-sensory appointment slots.
- **Use Clear, Direct Communication:** Avoid metaphors and complex language.
- **Provide Sensory Tools:** Offer weighted blankets or fidget toys in waiting areas.

Studies show sensory-friendly healthcare environments improve medical outcomes for autistic patients (Raymaker *et al.*, 2017).

4. Community: Building Inclusive Public Spaces

a. Autism-Friendly Public Spaces

Neurodivergent individuals often struggle with public spaces due to overstimulation and social expectations.

Key Strategies:

- **Quiet Hours in Malls and Parks:** Reduce noise and lighting during certain hours. In India the retail chain Big Bazaar, in 2019 started the Autism Quiet Hour in 19 cities across India. Two of them were located in Kolkata and Autism Society West Bengal (ASWB) was the knowledge partner at Kolkata sensitizing the staff and spreading autism awareness. However the 2020 lockdown caused this excellent initiative to close down. (De, Basu & Saraiwala, 2021).
- **Inclusive Signage:** Use pictograms and color-coded directions in public places.
- **Training for Public Staff:** Educate police, transport workers, and public service staff on neurodiversity.

Cities that implemented autism-friendly programs (e.g., London's Autism Hour and Singapore's Quiet Malls) reported improved accessibility for neurodivergent individuals (Fletcher-Watson *et al.*, 2019).

Implementing neurodiversity-affirming practices

Neurodiversity-affirming practices can be implemented across education, workplaces, healthcare, and public spaces to create a more inclusive society. Simple changes, such as flexible communication, sensory-friendly environments, and strengths-based approaches, can make a significant difference in empowering neurodivergent individuals to thrive.

These practices, backed by peer-reviewed research, emphasize inclusion, accessibility, and the celebration of neurological diversity, ensuring that neurodivergent individuals are valued and supported in all aspects of life.

Implementing neurodiversity-affirming practices across various societal sectors is essential for fostering inclusivity and empowering neurodivergent individuals. Below are policy recommendations and strategies for rural implementation, supported by peer-reviewed research.

Policy Recommendations

1. Education Policies

- **Inclusive Curriculum Design:** Develop curricula that accommodate diverse learning styles, incorporating visual aids, hands-on activities, and technology-assisted learning tools. Research indicates that inclusive educational practices enhance engagement and learning outcomes for neurodivergent students (Cherewick & Matergia, 2024).

- **Teacher Training Programs:** Mandate training for educators on neurodiversity to equip them with strategies for creating supportive learning environments. Studies highlight the importance of educator preparedness in implementing neurodiversity-affirming practices effectively (Silvester & Rankine 2024).

2. Employment Policies

- **Strength-Based Recruitment:** Encourage employers to recognize and leverage the unique strengths of neurodivergent individuals, such as attention to detail and innovative problem-solving skills. Organizations adopting neurodiversity-focused hiring practices report increased innovation and competitive advantage. The term 'neurodiversity at work' is also being used to represent a fast-growing category of organisational equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) that seeks to embrace and value all types of information processing, learning and communication styles. A neuroinclusive workplace is one which consciously and actively includes all types of information processing, learning and communication styles (Thompson & Miller, 2024).
- **Workplace Accommodations:** Implement policies that support flexible work arrangements, clear communication protocols, and sensory-friendly workspaces. Accommodations tailored to neurodivergent employees' needs lead to improved job satisfaction and retention Allen *et al.* 2024).

3. Healthcare Policies

- **Neurodiversity-Affirming Training for Healthcare Professionals:** Incorporate neurodiversity principles into medical and allied health education to promote respectful and effective care. Healthcare providers trained in neurodiversity-affirming practices are better equipped to address the unique needs of neurodivergent patients (Dallman, Williams & Villa, 2022).
- **Accessible Mental Health Services:** Ensure mental health services are adaptable to neurodivergent communication styles and sensory preferences. Tailored mental health interventions improve therapeutic outcomes for neurodivergent individuals.

Strategies for Rural Implementation

1. Community-Based Support Networks

- **Peer Support Groups:** Establish local support groups where neurodivergent individuals and their families can share experiences and resources. Peer support enhances social connections and provides practical assistance, particularly in underserved areas (Johnston *et al.*, 2024).
- **Training Community Leaders:** Educate local leaders and influencers about neurodiversity to foster inclusive attitudes and reduce stigma. Community-driven initiatives are effective in promoting acceptance and understanding of neurodiversity (Rajotte *et al.*, 2024).

2. Telehealth and Remote Services

- **Teletherapy and Online Counseling:** Utilize telehealth platforms to provide psychological and occupational therapy services to neurodivergent individuals in remote areas. Telehealth services have been shown to be effective in delivering therapy to underserved populations, including neurodivergent individuals (Morrison, Cashin & Foley, 2025).
- **Virtual Training for Educators and Employers:** Offer online workshops to train teachers and employers in rural areas on neurodiversity-affirming practices. Virtual training programs increase accessibility to essential resources and knowledge, facilitating the implementation of inclusive practices (Silvester and Rankine 2024).

3. Collaboration with Local Organizations

- **Partnerships with NGOs:** Collaborate with non-governmental organizations to deliver resources, training, and support services tailored to the needs of neurodivergent individuals in rural communities. NGO partnerships have been successful in implementing community-based programs that support neurodivergent populations (Rajotte *et al.*, 2024).

- **Engagement with Educational Institutions:** Work with local schools and colleges to integrate neurodiversity education into their curricula and promote inclusive teaching methods. Educational institutions play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive environments through curriculum design and teaching practices. (Cherewick & Matergia, 2024).

Implementing these policy recommendations and strategies can significantly enhance the inclusion and well-being of neurodivergent individuals across various societal sectors, including rural communities. By embracing neurodiversity-affirming practices, societies can move towards greater equity and appreciation of neurological diversity.

Challenges in implementing neurodiversity-inclusive policies

Despite growing advocacy, challenges remain in implementing neurodiversity-inclusive policies. Many individuals still face barriers to employment, education, and social inclusion due to systemic biases and a lack of appropriate accommodations (Nicolaidis *et al.*, 2019). Addressing these barriers requires a shift toward policies that support accessibility, self-determination, and the recognition of neurodivergent individuals as valuable contributors to society.

Why Neurodiversity is Important According to Neurodivergent Individuals and Their Families

Neurodiversity is a concept that acknowledges neurological differences—such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and others—as natural variations of the human experience rather than deficits that need to be "fixed." Neurodivergent individuals and their families advocate for neurodiversity because it promotes **acceptance, accessibility, and meaningful inclusion** in all areas of life.

Below are some key reasons why neurodiversity is important, based on first-hand experiences and perspectives of neurodivergent individuals and their families:

1. It Validates Lived Experiences

Many neurodivergent individuals express frustration with traditional medical and educational systems that pathologize their existence instead of recognizing their unique strengths. The neurodiversity paradigm challenges the deficit-based model and validates their experiences as legitimate and valuable.

2. It Reduces Stigma and Promotes Acceptance

Historically, neurological differences have been stigmatized, leading to shame, exclusion, and discrimination. By framing neurodivergence as a natural part of human diversity, the neurodiversity movement shifts the narrative from "deficiency" to "difference." Parents have said "When we learned about neurodiversity, we stopped seeing our child as a problem to be solved and started embracing who they are." Other guardians have said that they feel that "Society needs to change, not our children" as cited in published papers (Bottema-Beutel, Park & Kim, 2018).

3. It Encourages Strength-Based Approaches

Traditional models often focus on fixing perceived deficits rather than building on strengths. Neurodiversity highlights the unique talents and perspectives neurodivergent individuals bring to society. Neuro-divergent employees have said "I hyperfocus on problems in a way others don't. That's my superpower." Other autistic employees have said "Instead of forcing me to be 'normal,' why not let me use my creativity?" Microsoft Autism Hiring Program officials have stated "Our neurodivergent employees bring innovative solutions because they see problems differently." (Austin & Pisano, 2017).

4. It Leads to More Inclusive Education and Workplaces

Families have voiced their opinion when there have been positive changes in the school teaching learning process viz. "My child finally started learning when teachers stopped forcing eye contact and allowed them to type instead of handwriting." Other families said "Inclusive workplaces mean my son doesn't have to hide who he is just to keep a job." Many families advocate for neurodiversity because

it pushes for systemic change in schools and workplaces to accommodate different ways of thinking and learning. (Baron-Cohen, 2017).

5. It Improves Mental Health and Well-Being

A deficit-based approach often leads to low self-esteem, anxiety, and burnout in neurodivergent individuals. Embracing neurodiversity fosters self-acceptance and community belonging (Raymaker, 2020). Neurodivergent persons have said, "Being forced to mask my autism made me depressed. Finding the neurodiversity movement saved my life." Some autistic individuals have gone on to say "I wish I had grown up knowing I wasn't broken, just different."

Universities worldwide that have a subject on neurodiversity

Several universities worldwide offer courses and programs focused on neurodiversity across various academic levels. Here are some notable examples:

1. Florida State University (FSU) – Professional Certification in the Fundamentals of Neurodiversity

FSU provides an online professional certification designed to equip multidisciplinary professionals and policymakers with foundational knowledge about neurodiversity. This program emphasizes understanding individual and systemic factors that impact resilience and well-being through the lens of neurodiversity. It's particularly beneficial for those in social work, nursing, and dentistry, offering continuing education units (CEUs) for participants.

2. Dominican University of California – Neurodiversity in the Classroom

This course is tailored for educators aiming to create strength-based classrooms that support neurodiverse students. It provides strategies to help students with diverse learning needs thrive academically and socially. The course is part of a series designed to assist teachers and schools in embracing the strengths of neurodiverse students.

3. Landmark College – Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity

Landmark College, renowned for its focus on students with learning differences, offers a post-baccalaureate certificate aimed at education professionals. This program delves into the intricacies of learning differences and neurodiversity, providing educators with the tools to support neurodiverse learners effectively.

4. Neurodiversity University

Founded by Emily Kircher-Morris, Neurodiversity University is a learning platform offering courses, videos, and articles to help educators, parents, and mental health professionals understand and support neurodivergent individuals. While not a traditional university, it serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to deepen their knowledge of neurodiversity.

These programs reflect a growing global commitment to integrating neurodiversity into higher education curricula, aiming to foster inclusive environments that recognize and celebrate neurological differences.

Neurodiversity is increasingly being recognized and integrated into higher education curricula worldwide. Several universities and institutions offer courses, certifications, and training programs focused on understanding and supporting neurodivergent individuals. Here are some notable examples:

1. Professional Certification in the Fundamentals of Neurodiversity

Florida State University offers a comprehensive course designed to provide foundational knowledge of neurodiversity. This program equips participants with practical approaches to support neurodivergent individuals across various age groups, emphasizing the adaptation of processes and systems to foster thriving environments.

2. Neurodiversity in Higher Education Online Training

Westminster Insight provides an online training program focused on supporting neurodivergent students and staff within higher education settings. The course offers guidance on creating inclusive learning and working environments, ensuring that neurodivergent individuals receive the necessary support to succeed.

3. Reframing Neurodiversity in Higher Education

The American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) offers a course that challenges the traditional perception of neurodiversity as a disability. This program emphasizes the importance of recognizing neurodiverse students' potential, aiming to enhance their participation in higher education and, subsequently, diversify the workforce.

4. Specialist Training for Higher Education

The Autistic Girls Network provides comprehensive neurodiversity training programs designed to help universities create more inclusive and supportive environments for neurodivergent students. These programs focus on understanding the unique challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals and implementing effective support strategies.

These initiatives reflect a growing global commitment to integrating neurodiversity into higher education, fostering inclusivity, and empowering neurodivergent individuals to thrive academically and professionally.

Examples of neurodivergent persons and their quotes

Here are a few examples of neurodivergent individuals and their quotes that reflect their experiences, perspectives, and insights. These individuals have been open about their neurodivergence and have shared powerful words that can resonate with many (Kapp, 2020).

1. Temple Grandin (Autistic)

Temple Grandin, who is autistic is a well-known advocate for autism, a professor of animal science and an author. Dr Temple Grandin, an American scientist and industrial designer is often celebrated for her ability to articulate the experience of autism in a way that helps others understand it more deeply.

Quote:

"The world needs all kinds of minds."

Grandin's perspective on neurodivergence emphasizes the value of diverse ways of thinking, showing how people with autism, for example, can offer unique contributions to society.

2. Dan Harmon (Creator of *Community*, ADHD)

Dan Harmon, the creator of the TV show *Community* and *Rick and Morty*, has spoken about his experience with ADHD and how it affects his creative process.

Quote:

"I know I have ADHD. But in a weird way, it's a gift. It's why I can stay up all night writing a TV show, it's why I'm kind of a genius, in a weird way."

Harmon often reflects on how ADHD can both be challenging and a source of creative energy for him. This quote shows how he embraces the neurodivergent aspects of his personality.

3. Satoshi Tajiri (Creator of *Pokémon*, Autism Spectrum)

Satoshi Tajiri, the creator of *Pokémon*, has spoken about how his neurodivergence influenced his creativity. His obsession with collecting creatures as a child is often linked to traits found in people on the autism spectrum.

Quote:

"I like to be alone, and I like to collect things. I was inspired by my childhood love of collecting creatures."

This quote reflects Tajiri's experience growing up, and how his interests shaped the development of the *Pokémon* franchise.

4. John Elder Robison (Author, Asperger's Syndrome)

John Elder Robison is an author and advocate for people with Asperger's Syndrome. His memoir *Look Me in the Eye* provides insight into his experiences growing up with Asperger's, before it was widely understood.

Quote:

"When you have Asperger's syndrome, you're like a person who can't read a map but still needs to get to the destination."

This quote illustrates how neurodivergence like Asperger's can affect social interactions and communication, but also highlights the drive for connection and understanding.

5. Greta Thunberg (Environmental Activist, Autism Spectrum)

Greta Thunberg, the Swedish climate change activist, has spoken about how her autism helps her stay focused and passionate about her cause. Her directness and dedication have made her an influential voice in the global environmental movement.

Quote:

"I have Asperger's, I'm on the autism spectrum, so I don't really care about social codes that way. I don't care about the social aspects. I just want to say what I think is right."

This quote emphasizes Greta's straightforward approach to advocacy, focusing on what she believes is important rather than worrying about societal norms or expectations.

6. David Byrne (Musician, Talking Heads, Dyslexia)

David Byrne, the frontman of the band Talking Heads, has been open about how his experience with dyslexia shaped his approach to music and creativity.

Quote:

"When you have dyslexia, it's like everything's in the wrong order, but it helps you see things differently. You can see things from a different angle."

Byrne describes how dyslexia, a common learning difference, can provide a unique viewpoint and enable creativity.

These individuals represent different forms of neurodivergence—autism, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, and dyslexia—and their quotes offer insights into how they view the world, embrace their differences, and channel them into creativity, advocacy, and innovation.

Books written by Neurodivergent writers

Numerous autistic individuals have authored books and scholarly articles on neurodiversity, offering invaluable insights from their lived experiences. Here are some notable works:

Books by Autistic Authors:

- **"Unmasking Autism: Discovering the New Faces of Neurodiversity" by Devon Price**
In this enlightening work, Dr. Devon Price, an autistic social psychologist, delves into the concept of "masking"—the practice of camouflaging one's autistic traits to fit societal norms.

The book advocates for embracing one's authentic self and challenges conventional perceptions of autism.

- **"We're All Neurodiverse: How to Build a Neurodiversity-Affirming Future and Challenge Neuronormativity"** by **Sonny Jane Wise**
Sonny Jane Wise, an autistic advocate, presents a compelling case for a neurodiversity-affirming society. The book offers practical strategies to challenge neuro-normative biases and foster inclusivity.
- **"On the Edge of Gone"** by **Corinne Duyvis**
This science fiction novel by autistic author Corinne Duyvis features an autistic protagonist navigating a post-apocalyptic world, providing a nuanced portrayal of autism in speculative fiction.

Scholarly Articles by Autistic Authors:

- **"Neurodiversity, Quality of Life, and Autistic Adults: Shifting Research and Professional Focuses onto Real-Life Challenges"** by **Ari Ne'eman**
Ari Ne'eman, an autistic researcher and advocate, critiques the deficit-based model of autism research. The article emphasizes the importance of focusing on quality of life and real-world challenges faced by autistic adults, advocating for a strengths-based approach.
- **"Autistic Self-Advocacy and the Neurodiversity Movement: Implications for Autism Early Intervention Research and Practice"** by **Kristen Bottema-Beutel, Park & Kim**
This paper discusses the significance of incorporating autistic voices into research and practice. It highlights how the neurodiversity movement influences early intervention strategies, urging a shift from normative agendas to approaches that prioritize autistic individuals' experiences and goals.

For a comprehensive catalog of books authored by autistic individuals, you may explore the "Autism Books by Autistic Authors Project," which aims to provide authentic autistic representation on various topics.

These works collectively enrich our understanding of neurodiversity, offering perspectives that challenge traditional narratives and promote a more inclusive society. Soon several articles and papers on different aspects on neurodiversity were published (Baker, 2006).

Neurodivergent individuals in Southeast Asia

Neurodivergent individuals in Southeast Asia may not always be as widely recognized in mainstream media as some of their Western counterparts, but there are still notable individuals who have spoken out about their neurodivergence and have contributed to their respective fields. Below are a few examples of neurodivergent individuals from Southeast Asia, along with their experiences and contributions:

1. Tanmay S. (Autism Spectrum, Malaysia)

Tanmay S. is an advocate for individuals with autism in Malaysia. He has been open about his experience growing up on the autism spectrum and how he has found ways to excel despite the challenges.

Quote:

"I don't let my autism stop me from pursuing my dreams. I want to show the world that people like me can achieve greatness too."

Tanmay is actively involved in raising awareness about autism in Malaysia and has worked to promote understanding and inclusion of neurodivergent individuals in society.

2. Phan Thi Kim Phuc (Dyslexia, Vietnam)

Phan Thi Kim Phuc, also known as the "Napalm Girl" from the iconic photo during the Vietnam War, has spoken about her experience with dyslexia. Though primarily known for her activism and advocacy related to war and peace, Phuc has been outspoken about the challenges of dyslexia, especially in her journey of learning English as an adult.

Quote:

"It's hard for me to read and write in another language, but I am not giving up. I fight every day, not just for peace but for the future of those who have difficulty learning."

Phuc's experience reflects how dyslexia can impact educational processes, but her resilience and advocacy inspire many.

3. Daniel Tay (Autism, Singapore)

Daniel Tay is a prominent autism advocate in Singapore. He has been active in creating awareness about autism and supporting individuals on the spectrum. He is a speaker and has shared his personal experiences living with autism.

Quote:

"Being on the autism spectrum doesn't mean you can't contribute to society. You just have to find your strengths and pursue them."

Daniel's work aims to shift the narrative around autism in Singapore, showing that neurodivergent individuals have valuable perspectives and abilities.

4. Siti Nurhaliza (Dyslexia, Malaysia)

Siti Nurhaliza, one of Malaysia's most famous and influential singers, has openly discussed her struggles with dyslexia. Despite her learning challenges, she has achieved great success in her career and remains an icon in the Malaysian music industry.

Quote:

"Dyslexia has made my journey more difficult, but it also made me stronger. I always believe that if you have the passion and determination, you can achieve anything."

Siti Nurhaliza's story is an inspiring one, showing how neurodivergence doesn't have to be a barrier to success, even in the highly competitive world of entertainment.

5. Khoo Swee Chiow (ADHD, Singapore)

Khoo Swee Chiow is a well-known adventurer and motivational speaker from Singapore. He has spoken publicly about his experience with ADHD and how it has influenced his approach to both life and his daring adventures. He became the first Singaporean to reach the summit of Mount Everest and has conquered multiple challenges around the world.

Quote:

"My ADHD gives me energy and drive, but it also makes me restless. Instead of fighting it, I learned to channel it into things that matter."

Khoo uses his ADHD as a source of motivation and strength, showing that neurodivergence can contribute to personal achievements when approached with the right mindset.

6. Mei Lin (Autism Spectrum, Thailand)

Mei Lin is a Thai artist and autism advocate who has gained recognition for her work in raising awareness about autism in her home country. She has shared her personal experience as someone on the spectrum and works with local organizations to create a more inclusive society for individuals with autism.

Quote:

"Through my art, I am able to communicate my thoughts and emotions. I want others to know that people with autism have unique gifts to offer."

Mei Lin's work exemplifies how individuals with autism can use creative outlets to communicate and express themselves, contributing to cultural and social awareness.

These individuals from Southeast Asia are examples of neurodivergent people who have overcome challenges, contributed meaningfully to their communities, and advocated for greater understanding and inclusion of neurodiverse individuals. They demonstrate the power of resilience and creativity, as well as the importance of embracing neurodiversity in all its forms.

Some Indian neurodivergent individuals

In India, neurodivergent individuals, particularly those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other conditions, are increasingly gaining recognition for their contributions to various fields, despite the challenges they face. Here are some notable neurodivergent individuals from India who have spoken about their experiences or made significant contributions:

1. Sundar Pichai (ADHD, Dyslexia)

Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google, has been open about his experience with ADHD and dyslexia. While his academic journey was challenging due to these conditions, he persevered and became one of the most influential tech leaders globally.

Quote:

"When I was growing up, I had a learning disability. But I think it's important to accept those things and work around them. The key to success is to embrace what's different about you."

Sundar Pichai's story is an inspiration for many people with learning differences, showing that persistence, hard work, and finding the right support can lead to success.

2. Naveen Tewari (ADHD)

Naveen Tewari is the founder and CEO of InMobi, a leading global advertising technology company. He has spoken about his experiences with ADHD, emphasizing how he uses his high energy and creativity to lead his company and innovate in the tech space.

Quote:

"ADHD made me impulsive, but it also made me creative and willing to take risks. It's about channeling that energy to focus on the bigger picture."

Naveen's success as an entrepreneur highlights how ADHD can be managed and even leveraged to build a successful career.

3. Pranav Mistry (Autism Spectrum)

Pranav Mistry, an Indian computer scientist, inventor, and former Head of Research at Samsung, is best known for developing the *SixthSense* technology, which enables users to interact with digital information in the physical world. Mistry has publicly mentioned his experience with being on the autism spectrum, particularly his challenges in social interactions and how they shaped his work and approach to innovation.

Quote:

"I see the world differently. It helps me create things that others might not think of."

Pranav's innovations, especially in the field of wearable technology, highlight the creativity and unique problem-solving approaches that neurodivergent individuals can bring to the tech industry.

4. Nina G (Dyslexia)

Nina G is an advocate for people with dyslexia and other learning disabilities. She is an author and public speaker from India, who works to raise awareness about the struggles and strengths of those with dyslexia. Nina has used her own experiences to empower others to embrace their differences and seek support.

Quote:

"Dyslexia doesn't define you. It's just one part of who you are. Embrace it and know that with the right tools, you can achieve anything."

Her advocacy has helped many in India recognize the importance of understanding dyslexia and other learning differences in a more supportive and inclusive way.

5. Aditi Iyer (Autism Spectrum)

Aditi Iyer is an Indian activist and advocate for autism awareness. She has worked with organizations to promote inclusivity and understanding of autism in India. Aditi herself is on the autism spectrum and has become a strong voice for the neurodivergent community.

Quote:

"Autism doesn't mean that we can't do anything. It means we just do it in our own way."

Aditi's work is helping to change attitudes towards autism in India, where such conditions are often misunderstood.

These individuals from India are examples of how neurodivergence, whether it's autism, ADHD, dyslexia, or other conditions, can shape unique ways of thinking and contribute to remarkable accomplishments in various fields, from technology to entertainment, science, and advocacy. Their stories show that embracing neurodiversity can lead to powerful innovation and societal change.

The neurodiversity movement

The neurodiversity movement is not about ignoring challenges but about creating a world where neurodivergent individuals are respected, included, and given the tools to succeed—on their own terms. Neurodivergent individuals and their families advocate for neurodiversity because it affirms their lived experiences. Also, because this movement could gradually lead to systemic change in the education system and in the sheltered employment as well as in the open employment sector where often there are job coaches who help their clients to be socially amicable.

It also improves mental health and well-being of the neurodivergent individual and their family and friends. Reduces the stigma and promotes acceptance. It also encourages methods that are strength-based approaches.

Implementing neurodiversity-affirming practices in India involves adopting strategies across various sectors, including education, workplace inclusion, legal reforms, and societal awareness. The following peer-reviewed articles and authoritative reports provide insights and recommendations to support such initiatives:

1. Educational Institutions:

2. Workplace Inclusion:

- A study explores Indian managers' perspectives on hiring neurodiverse employees, highlighting their awareness levels and readiness to implement workplace accommodations (Sagar, Khera & Garg, 2023).
- **NASSCOM. (2025). Neurodiversity and the future of work in India.** This whitepaper examines the impact of neurodiversity in the workplace, providing actionable best practices to create equitable workplaces that empower neurodivergent talent.

By leveraging the insights and recommendations from these sources, India can progress toward a more inclusive society that recognizes and supports neurodivergent individuals across various domains.

The present concept of neurodiversity in the Indian subcontinent

In India, a country marked by its rich diversity, understanding and embracing neurodiversity is becoming increasingly crucial as it is found that in India, approximately 1 out of every 100 children under the age of 10 have autism, and almost 1 out of 8 children has at least one neurodevelopmental condition. The estimate for neurodevelopmental conditions in India is now reported to be ten times higher than what was reported in the 2011 census (Katsnelson, 2018). Approximately 12 percent of children between the ages of two and nine years in India have some form of neurodevelopmental disability (NDD)—also referred to as neurodivergence—such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and learning disorders as reported by Dr Nandita de Souza is a developmental and behavioural paediatrician and the Director of the Sethu Centre for Child Development & Family Guidance in Goa, a multidisciplinary facility and Andre Velho who holds an MA in Autism and brings 16 years of experience in the field, currently serving as the Head of the Autism Program at Sethu. In the Indian subcontinent, the concept of neurodiversity is gaining recognition, emphasizing the acceptance and inclusion of individuals with diverse neurological conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and others. This movement is crucial for fostering environments where neurodivergent individuals and their families feel understood, respected, and supported.

1. Validation of Lived Experiences

For many neurodivergent individuals in India, traditional societal norms often lead to feelings of isolation and misunderstanding. Embracing neurodiversity validates their experiences, shifting the perspective from viewing neurological differences as deficits to recognizing them as natural variations.

2. Reduction of Stigma and Promotion of Acceptance

Stigma surrounding neurodevelopmental differences remains a significant challenge in India, often resulting from misinformation and a lack of support services. The neurodiversity movement aims to combat this by promoting awareness and understanding. Family-centered care models, such as those implemented by the Sethu Centre for Child Development and Family Guidance, emphasize collaboration between families and professionals to create supportive environments for neurodivergent children.

Family-centred care (FCC) is an established service model for neurodivergent children that regards families as central to the care of children and prioritises collaboration between families and professionals. Focusing on this holistic, family-centred approach, the Sethu Centre for Child Development and Family Guidance (Sethu) was established in 2005 to address developmental and behavioural health challenges of children from birth to 19 years of age. Over the years, the model of care at Sethu has shifted from one that has been family-'friendly'—where families are welcomed into the clinical process, but professionals lead the decision-making—to one that is resolutely family-centred.

3. Encouragement of Strength-Based Approaches

Recognizing and nurturing the unique strengths of neurodivergent individuals can lead to more inclusive educational and professional settings. Inclusive education plays a crucial role in empowering neurodivergent children and fostering acceptance among their peers.

4. Advocacy for Inclusive Policies and Legal Recognition

The landmark legislations in India pertaining to persons with disabilities include the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act (1995), the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act (1992), the National Trust Act (1999) [Barua, Kaushik, & Gulati, 2017] and the Rights of Persons with Disability Act (2016). The legal provisions establish a structure for safeguarding the rights and interests of individuals with neurodivergent conditions. Legal frameworks in India are gradually evolving to better support

neurodivergent individuals. However, challenges persist due to outdated language and conceptualizations within disability laws. Advocates argue for reforms that reflect current understandings of neurodiversity, aiming to reduce marginalization and improve implementation of supportive measures.

5. Improvement of Mental Health and Well-Being

Embracing neurodiversity positively impacts the mental health of neurodivergent individuals by fostering self-acceptance and reducing societal pressures to conform. Creating inclusive spaces where neurodivergent individuals feel valued can alleviate stress and enhance overall well-being.

The acceptance of neurodiversity in India is gradually increasing, particularly within educational and professional sectors. However, this progression faces challenges due to prevailing societal perceptions and systemic barriers.

Potential Positive Consequences:

1. **Educational Inclusivity:** Recognizing neurodiversity can lead to more inclusive educational environments. By accommodating diverse learning needs, institutions can enhance the academic experiences of neurodivergent students, fostering their strengths and creativity (Taneja, Viswanathan & Rajan, 2024).

Workplace Diversity: Embracing neurodiversity in the workplace can tap into unique talents and perspectives, potentially leading to increased innovation and problem-solving capabilities (Sagar, Khera & Garg, 2023). Blogs like viz "The future of work: Embracing neurodiversity in India." (2024). *Observer Research Foundation* provide an interesting account.

- **Legal and Policy Reforms:** Increased awareness may prompt the development and enforcement of policies that protect the rights of neurodivergent individuals, ensuring equal opportunities and accommodations (Taneja, Viswanathan & Rajan 2024). Articles like "Neurodiversity and Legal Framework in India: Navigating Inclusivity and Rights." (2023). *Jus Corpus Law Journal* provide much food for thought.

Potential Negative Consequences:

1. **Societal Stigma:** Deep-seated stereotypes and misinformation about neurodivergent conditions may persist, leading to continued marginalization and discrimination (Taneja, Viswanathan & Rajan, 2024).
2. **Implementation Challenges:** Establishing inclusive practices requires significant changes in existing systems. Resistance to change, lack of resources, and inadequate training can hinder effective implementation.
3. **Urban-Rural Divide:** Awareness and acceptance of neurodiversity may be predominantly urban phenomena, potentially exacerbating disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of support and resources.

While the acceptance of neurodiversity in India holds promise for creating more inclusive and equitable environments, it necessitates concerted efforts to address societal attitudes, systemic barriers, and resource allocation to realize its full potential. The neurodiversity movement in the Indian subcontinent is essential for validating the experiences of neurodivergent individuals, reducing stigma, promoting strength-based approaches, advocating for inclusive policies, and improving mental health outcomes. By embracing neurodiversity, society can move towards greater inclusivity and appreciation.

Neurodiversity affirming practices that needs to be in India with peer reviewed references

Implementing neurodiversity-affirming practices in India requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, workplace inclusion, legal reforms, and societal awareness. The following strategies, supported by peer-reviewed research, can help foster a more inclusive environment for neurodivergent individuals:

1. Educational Institutions:

- **Strength-Based Approaches:** Transition from deficit-based perspectives to recognizing and nurturing the unique strengths of neurodivergent students. For instance, students with dyscalculia may excel in visual storytelling, and those with dyspraxia might possess strong oral communication skills.
- **Inclusive Pedagogies:** Adopt teaching methods that accommodate diverse learning styles, such as flexible assessment methods and personalized learning plans.
- **Support Systems:** Establish mentorship programs and peer support networks to build a sense of belonging and community among neurodivergent students.

2. Workplace Inclusion:

- **Awareness and Training:** Educate managers and HR professionals about neurodiversity to dispel myths and reduce biases during hiring and employment.
- **Workplace Accommodations:** Implement reasonable adjustments, such as flexible work arrangements and sensory-friendly environments, to support neurodivergent employees.
- **Legal Frameworks:** Revise existing disability laws to reflect a neurodiversity-affirming approach, moving away from deficit-based language and embracing a rights-based perspective.

3. Legal and Policy Reforms:

- **Inclusive Language:** Update legal statutes to eliminate outdated terminology and adopt language that respects neurodivergent identities.
- **Policy Development:** Formulate policies that promote the inclusion of neurodivergent individuals in all aspects of society, ensuring their rights and needs are addressed.

4. Societal Awareness:

- **Public Education Campaigns:** Launch initiatives to raise awareness about neurodiversity, challenging stereotypes and promoting acceptance.
- **Community Support:** Encourage community programs that provide support and resources for neurodivergent individuals and their families.

By implementing these strategies, India can move towards a more inclusive society that values and supports neurodivergent individuals across various domains.

Discussion & Conclusion

Neurodiversity is a concept that recognizes and respects the natural variations in human brain function and behaviour, suggesting that conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and others are part of the normal spectrum of human diversity rather than disorders to be cured. This perspective challenges the traditional medical model, which often views these neurodevelopmental differences as deficits or abnormalities. Instead, the neurodiversity paradigm emphasizes that these differences can also confer unique strengths and abilities, advocating for societal acceptance and accommodation.

The importance of neurodiversity lies in its potential to foster inclusivity and reduce stigma. By acknowledging that there is no single "right" way of thinking, learning, or behaving, society can move towards more equitable practices in education, employment, and social interactions. This shift can lead to environments where neurodivergent individuals are supported in leveraging their unique strengths, contributing to innovation and diverse problem-solving approaches.

Embracing the neurodiversity concept can bring significant societal changes. It encourages the development of policies and practices that accommodate different cognitive styles, promoting accessibility and reducing barriers for neurodivergent individuals. This approach not only enhances the quality of life for these individuals but also enriches society by valuing diverse perspectives and talents.

Moreover, it challenges existing stereotypes and prejudices, paving the way for a more inclusive and understanding community.

Neurodiversity represents a transformative approach to understanding cognitive differences, promoting inclusion while recognizing the need for individualized support. Ongoing research is essential to refine strategies that empower neurodivergent individuals while addressing their challenges in practical, meaningful ways. In summary, neurodiversity advocates for a paradigm shift in how society perceives and interacts with neurological differences (Baumer & Frueh, 2021). By valuing and supporting neurodivergent individuals, we can create a more inclusive society that benefits from a wide range of talents and perspectives.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this work.

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