



THE ROLE OF INCLUSIVE HR PRACTICE IN NEURODIVERSE TALENT RETENTION IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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Abstract

Neurodiversity inclusion is increasingly relevant to international business, yet limited evidence explains how inclusive HR practices shape neurodivergent talent retention and career development. This study explores HR practices and perceptions of inclusiveness in international business contexts. A semi-structured interview method was used in a qualitative interpretivist design consisting of 12 participants, five HR professionals, three supervisors, and four neurodivergent employees. The analysis was done mainly with inductive reflexive thematic analysis with the help of ATLAS.ti software. The six themes that emerged were symbolic inclusion, the lack of formal human resource policies, the implementation by the managers, the strain of the workplace and the psychological strain, the impact on job satisfaction, career progression and retention, and the need for structured training and policy-based changes. The results identify gaps between intended HR practices and employees' experiences. In conclusion, this study highlights the significance of having consistent policies, managerial skills, flexible adjustments, and structured support to ensure the retention of talent with the brain wiring of ADHD and autism internationally.

Keywords: Neurodiversity, HR Practices, Workplace Inclusion, Employee Retention, International Business Environment

1. Introduction

Neurodiversity is the inherent differences in the human brain and incorporates Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), ADHD, dyslexia, and other cognitive differences (Goldberg, 2023; Volpone & Hennekam, 2026). Recent research indicates that approximately 15–20% of the global population is neurodivergent, highlighting the importance of neurodiversity as a relevant concern for workplace inclusion, HRM, innovation, and inclusive, equitable organizational systems (Nair et al., 2025). Recruitment difficulties, uniform performance measures, inaccessible workplaces, stigma and poor accommodation may all be problems for neurodivergent employees. In international business contexts, these are all important issues because multinational and internationally operating organisations must devise HR Policies in various cultural and institutional contexts. In previous studies of multinational corporations (MNCs), neurodiversity has also been recognized as a potentially “invisible” aspect of workforce inequality, and is argued to make the implementation of cross-border diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives more complex (Ott et al., 2022).



As a result, HRM research has begun to move away from the deficit-driven approach toward developing an understanding of how organisational practices can promote neuroinclusive practices in recruitment, onboarding, neuroinclusive job design, flexible working, training and development, employee resource groups, and retention of neurodivergent talent/employees with their perspectives (Özbilgin et al., 2026).

But the effectiveness and the implementation of many interventions to neurodivergence in HRM is still under explored and needs more empirical validation. Further, Kersten et al. (2025), who conducted interviews with 30 HR professionals, supervisors and neurodivergent employees, show that strengths-based HRM can also help to include neurodivergent employees via strengths identification, job crafting and awareness training, but these practices need to be integrated into a supportive HR system to be effective rather than undertaken as standalone initiatives. Career satisfaction and turnover intentions of neurodivergent talent must be explained with the interaction between individual experiences and workplace conditions, as shown by McDowall et al. (2025). Similar research also highlights that neurodivergent workers still have obstacles to their career success, despite growing interest within organizations in neuroinclusion (Kersten et al., 2025).

Despite this, there is a gap in the literature of HRM and the international business context in which many organizations operate. While some studies focus on the relationship between neurodiversity and HR within organizations, others look at the relationship between neurodiversity and HR in a national employment system, or in specific HR practices, there is less knowledge of how inclusive HR practices function in an international business context with various institutional, cultural and managerial contexts. Previous studies have pointed out the importance of having increased focus on neurodiversity management in multinational organizations, such as recruitment, workplace organization, management practices, leadership, stigma reduction, and inclusive organizational practices (Grabińska, 2024).

This is a significant limitation as a formally inclusive HR policy can lead to an exclusive employee experience. Furthermore, MNCs serve across societal contexts of varying levels of neurodiversity awareness and acceptance, and standardized approaches to inclusion may be insufficient (Ott et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a lack of understanding of how the interaction between HR policies, managerial implementation and the experiences that employees encounter at work affect job satisfaction, career mobility and the retention of neurodivergent employees in international business environments. This study is designed to explore how inclusive HR practices can contribute to retaining and developing neurodivergent staff in international settings. This study seeks to answer this question:

“How do inclusive HR practices influence the retention and career development of neurodivergent employees in international business environments?”

In order to answer this question, the paper will seek the following objectives:

1. To analyse the existing situation, neurodiversity inclusion in International Business Environment, especially HR policies and practices.
2. To investigate the issues experienced by neurodivergent employees in International Business Environment, in relation to job satisfaction, career mobility, and retention.
3. To explore the contribution of HR professionals and supervisors to introducing inclusive HR practices and helping neurodivergent employees.
4. To offer feasible suggestions to the organizations operating in International Business Environment on ways of improving inclusivity and better retention strategies on neurodivergent workers

The study has three contributions to the international-business research on neurodiversity. First, it builds on existing research on inclusive HR practices by incorporating the notion of neurodivergent talent retention and career development in various international business settings. Second, it merges the insights of the neurodivergent employees, HR practitioners and line managers to explore any potential misalignment between the intended, delivered and experienced HR practices. Third, it offers both practical suggestions on the strengthening of HR policies, managerial support and workplace adaptations to facilitate career progression and retention of neurodivergent people in international workplace contexts.



2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Strengths-Based Approach to HRM and Neurodiversity*

The traditional practices in Human Resource Management focus on identifying weaknesses through a deficit-based approach instead of utilising employees' strengths (Silverman et al., 2023). Strengths-Based Human Resource Management (SBHRM) directs organizational focus toward maximising individual employee potential which helps organizations build

2.2 *Inclusive HR Practices for Retaining Neuro-diverse Talent*

Organization success in employee retention of neuro-diverse talent depends heavily on HR practices that both respect their particular aptitudes along with their special requirements. The standard HR methods fall short to create suitable workplaces for neuro-divergent employees thus they increase employee departures simultaneously with decreased workplace involvement. Organizations using strengths-based HR strategies together with inclusive practices retain neuro-divergent employees through providing environments where they gain value and support besides empowerment (O'Hara, 2022). An inclusive HR framework lessens this bias through the combination of the several practices including the hiring process which must use strengths-based evaluation methods for selection purposes (Puspasari & Hapsari, 2024). Similarly neurodivergent employees receive tools through feedback systems along with self-assessment protocols that enhance their knowledge of personal strengths. The integration of strengths identification protocols into HR policies enables organizations to match job responsibilities to personal capabilities which strengthens employee satisfaction and lowers employee turnover (Gürbüz et al., 2022).

Neurodivergent employees require accessible structures to deploy their strengths effectively because strength recognition by itself presents no solutions. The strategic implementation of job crafting together with task customization forms essential human resources approaches for retaining staff by matching roles to individual cognitive capabilities and skills (Nurmalitasaria & Puspitarini, 2024). Strengthened utilization through human resources management requires two interventions including flexible work design systems enable employees to rearrange their responsibilities so they perform based on both their natural abilities and individual preference areas (Babapour Chafi et al., 2021). Similarly, the training of managers about neurodiversity will allow them to guide their teams toward performance-based work assignments (Sellergren, 2024). According to Odasso Weschenfelder (2024), employers should provide sensory-friendly work environments in combination with adjustable work hours and assistive tools to increase productivity. The ability of neurodiverse workers to utilize their strengths leads to better organizational commitment and decreased employee turnover while raising both performance and staff engagement (Ali et al., 2024).

Worker retention depends on an employee's capacity to achieve professional advancement inside their workplace (Sepahvand & Bagherzadeh Khodashahri, 2021). Neurodivergent workers encounter professional plateaus because organizations fail to customized growth options and improperly estimate their professional direction (Seicean, 2024).

2.3 *Impact of Inclusive HRM on Employee Retention*

The implementation of inclusive HR practices supports the retention of neurodiverse employees through active promotion of belonging to the organization together with fair treatment and long-term job development. The current human resource models demonstrate a weakness when handling specific challenges of neurodiverse employees because they overlook workplace discrimination together with restricted job structures and limited career development paths (Walkowiak, 2024). Numerous managers fail to develop awareness of effective neurodivergent employee retention strategies because they lack proper training. Integrating inclusive HRM practices enables organizations to experience improved psychological safety among neurodivergent employees which creates a secure work environment for them to display their needs and skills (Walkowiak, 2024). Psychological safety operates with workplace adjustments that feature flexible work arrangements as well as sensory-friendly office spaces and alternative communication channels to boost job satisfaction and decrease stress-related employee departures (Kaaria & Karemu, 2024). Employee retention relies heavily on how employees are evaluated in their work and how they can progress in their careers (Sepahvand & Bagherzadeh Khodashahri, 2021).



2.4 Neurodiversity Inclusion in International Business Environments

In international business contexts, the understanding of neurological differences/disabilities, disclosure and workplace accommodation, and inclusion can differ across cultural and institutional settings, creating unique challenges for neurodiversity inclusion. Ott et al. (2022) describe the idea of neurodiversity as a potential invisible form of inequality in MNCs and state that the cultural sensitivities of global operating environments make it difficult to integrate neurodiversity into the thinking behind cross-border diversity, equity and inclusion strategies. This indicates that migrating inclusion policies standardised at the parent company to the subsidiaries might not result in comparable employee experiences. Current evidence suggests that there is a need to go beyond formal inclusion. In their synthesis of 56 studies from 12 countries, Koldas et al. (2025) highlight supportive managers, flexible work practices, assistive technologies and organizational changes as key enablers of neurodivergent employment and show that workplace experiences remain variable. Likewise, McDowall et al. (2025) believe that neuroinclusion needs to be addressed in terms of interaction between individual characteristics and the workplace environment and psychosocial support, rather than through the application of a standard organisational solution. But there is still no dominant tendency to include explicitly comparative international-business research in the contemporary literature.

2.5 Barriers to Implementing Neuroinclusive HR Practices in International Business Environments

While there is an increasing amount of attention paid to inclusion and the importance of neurodiversity in the workplace, the translation of those commitments into consistent HR practice is problematic, according to Özbilgin et al. (2026), who argue that the barriers to doing so are interconnected, and that they include limited organizational knowledge and buy-in, legal ambiguity, disclosure dilemmas and resistance to systemic change. Empirical evidence also suggests that these problems are found throughout the organizations. Among the barriers to re-employment by Houdek (2022) and Koldas et al. (2025) are the lack of workplace adjustments, lack of awareness of neurodiversity, stigma and fear of disclosure, ineffective recruitment practices, lack of managerial support and inconsistencies regarding the implementation of policies. In the same way, Nair et al. (2025) list stigma, fear and a lack of accommodations as continuing barriers between the organizations and neurodivergent people, while there is growing awareness of the abilities of neurodivergent employees. These results show that claiming HR policies that are inclusive is an indicator of successful neuroinclusion is exposing an important gap in the approach to neuroinclusion (Erbil et al., 2025). Further, the problem might be exacerbated in international business settings since corporate policies are executed in different managerial, cultural, and institutional contexts (Ott et al., 2022).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In the present study, a qualitative research design was used that aimed to investigate how inclusive HR practices can enhance the retention and career development of neurodivergent employees working in international business environments. The qualitative method was perceived as the most suitable since the study sought to obtain a deep understanding of lived experiences, perceptions, and the meanings assigned to HR practices, managerial support and workplace inclusion (Pathak et al., 2013). Empirical studies have been scarce on the inclusion of neurodiversity in the international business environment. In this regard, an exploratory qualitative research design was important in understanding social and organizational dynamics that cannot be sufficiently addressed in quantitative terms.

An interpretivist paradigm was used in the study, which is based on the assumption that reality is a social construct, and this reality can be best understood by the views of people who are directly involved (Alharahsneh & Pius, 2020).

3.2 Sampling Strategy and Participants

The purposive sampling method was used to select the participants who had the appropriate knowledge and experience in the field of neurodiversity and HR practices (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Participants were identified on the basis of their firsthand experience with workplace policies, supervision, or their experience of neurodivergence in internationally operating organizations or international business environments.

The sample was based on three critical respondent groups:



- HR professionals (HR1–HR5) in charge of HR policies, wellbeing of employees, and the inclusion initiatives of an organization.
- Supervisors/Line managers (S1–S3) those who directly report to the HR manager, managing the teams and executing the HR policies on the operational level.
- Neurodivergent employees (NDE1–NDE4) employees who have experienced neurodivergence and are navigating practices in the workplace.

A total of 12 participants were included in the study. Ahmed (2025) propose that the more relevant a sample is to the research question, the fewer participants are needed to achieve saturation. In addition, sample adequacy was directed by information power, which suggests that focused and information rich samples might need fewer participants. Adequacy was defined based on the scope of the study, the specificity of the samples and the richness of the data, rather than on numerical thresholds (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

3.3 Participant Demographics

The study comprised HR professionals, line managers, and neurodivergent employees from various industries, international business settings, etc. They represented different roles and offered insights about HR policy, management and inclusion at work. The full demographic profile of the participants is given in Appendix A.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. It gave the participants flexibility to discuss their experiences without compromising the research objectives (Eppich et al., 2019; Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2021). All interviews were conducted online roughly 30–40 minutes. The semi-structured format allowed the researchers to probe, clarify and follow up to get detailed descriptions of participants' workplace experiences. The conversational interview format was used so that the participants could discuss the topics open-endedly and could feel comfortable, especially in the case of neurodivergent participants. The interviews were conducted English. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and anonymized with the participants identified (HR1–HR5, S1–S3 and NDE1–NDE4) to ensure participants' identities remain protected while maintaining analytical clarity. Ethical principles were followed to protect participants' rights, privacy, confidentiality, and voluntary participation (Hosseini & Haukas, 2025). Participants were given information regarding the purpose of the research, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw prior to offering informed consent.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Network diagrams created in ATLAS.ti were also used to visually map interview quotes. It helped to identify patterns that directly informed the development of central themes.

Figure 1

Coding of Transcriptions

Question 1: How would you describe your organisation's current approach to neurodiversity inclusion?

HR1: Umm, I would say that we are trying, but it's still basic. Neurodiversity is not actually considered the main agenda.

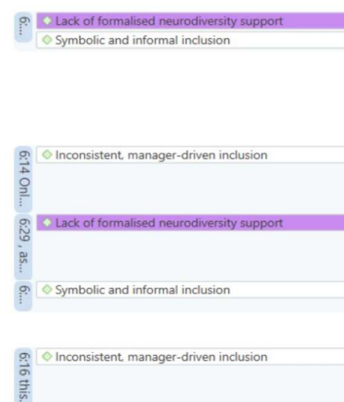
HR2: We talk about inclusion generally, but it's more about treating people equally at the workplace. Although it's fine, but its not actually helpful for neurodivergent employees.

HR3: I wish there were more formal awareness about it. As it's very informal at present. Only caring managers help, but others no, no... not really.

HR4: I think we are in an early phase, as there is no official policy yet, but HR responds sometimes if any concerns are raised.

HR5: We only talk about inclusion in meetings, but neurodiversity? Umm, not really addressed.

S1: I think managers are trying, but this approach is inconsistent and not evenly implemented across departments.



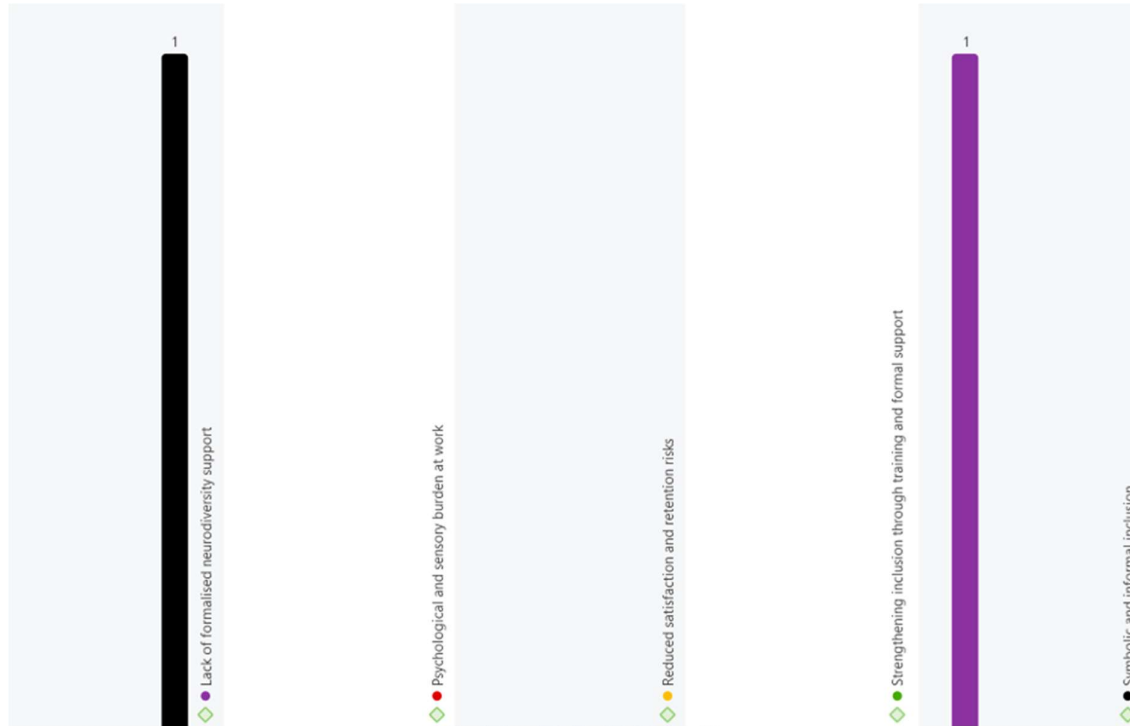
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The codes were visually identified and grouped into meaningful categories (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Code-Cooccurrence Bar Chart



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Thematic analysis was performed in multiple steps:

- Familiarization of the data by repetitive reading of transcripts.
- Preliminary open coding, in which portions of texts were coded meaningfully.
- Categorization of similar codes based on repeating patterns among respondents.
- The thematic development, in which 2–3 similar codes were grouped into larger thematic categories.

A memo table (see Appendix B) was created to organize key concepts, noun phrases, and their frequency from interview data. It supported systematic coding and theme development.

Table 1

Themes Identification After Coding

Theme	Meaning	Verbatim Data (Grounded Quotes)	Open Codes	Category
Symbolic and Informal Neurodiversity Inclusion	Neurodiversity inclusion exists largely in rhetoric, informal discussions, or individual goodwill rather than structured practice.	“We are trying, but it’s still basic” (HR1); “We only talk about inclusion in meetings” (HR5); “They say ‘all are equal,’ but it’s not seen in practice” (NDE1); “inclusion... feels invisible” (NDE3)	Basic efforts; Talk without action; Equality rhetoric	Superficial inclusion
Absence of Formal Policies and Consistent HR Practices	Lack of institutionalized neurodiversity policies leads to ad	“There is no official policy yet” (HR4); “No, we do not have any formal practices”	No policy	Policy vacuum

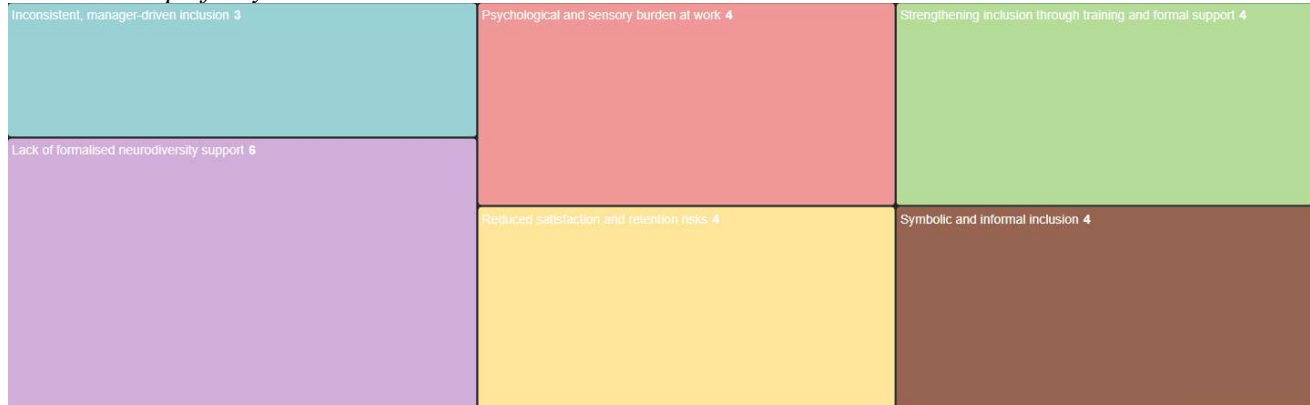


Theme	Meaning	Verbatim Data (Grounded Quotes)	Open Codes	Category
Manager-Dependent and Uneven Implementation of Inclusion	hoc, unclear, and inconsistent support.	(HR3); “everything... feels ad hoc and inconsistent” (NDE3) “I would prefer to see clear guidelines” (NDE4); “Only caring managers help” (HR3); “You have to be lucky and have a manager you like” (NDE2); “approach is inconsistent and not evenly implemented” (S1)	Need for clarity; Individual support; Managerial gatekeeping; Luck-based support; Uneven implementation	Managerial gatekeeping
	Inclusion is largely dependent on individual managers rather than organizational systems.			
Daily Work Challenges and Psychological Strain	Neurodivergent employees face sensory, communication, and emotional challenges that increase stress and exhaustion.	“noise and open offices as a major challenge” (HR2); “pressure to be normal... it is exhausting” (HR4); “social interactions draining” (S2); “I feel undervalued when I am not heard” (NDE1) “They become demotivated” (HR1); “silently leave their jobs” (HR3); “Promotion depends on visibility” (HR2); “I feel that I am stuck” (NDE2) “need for effective neurodiversity policies” (HR1); “empathy and flexibility are the main skills” (HR3); “Practical workshops would be better” (S3); “Retention becomes easier through consistent accommodations” (NDE4)	Sensory overload; Masking fatigue; Social exhaustion	Psychological burden
Impact on Job Satisfaction, Career Progression, and Retention	Inadequate support leads to demotivation, stalled careers, and hidden turnover.		Demotivation; Quiet exit; Visibility bias; Career stagnation	Negative work outcomes
Need for Structured Training and Policy-Driven Improvements	Participants consistently call for formal policies, manager training, and consistent accommodations to improve inclusion and retention.		Policy reform; Capacity building; Inclusive skills; Applied training; Sustained support	Strengthening inclusion through training and formal support



Figure 3

Thematic Map of Key Patterns



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.

Figure 3 shows a thematic map that summarizes key patterns which have been identified from participant responses. It shows important areas such as inconsistent inclusion, psychological burden, and the need for formal support. Moreover, the size of each theme also shows the relative frequency and emphasis in the qualitative data. Thus, it provides a visual overview of the main findings of the study.

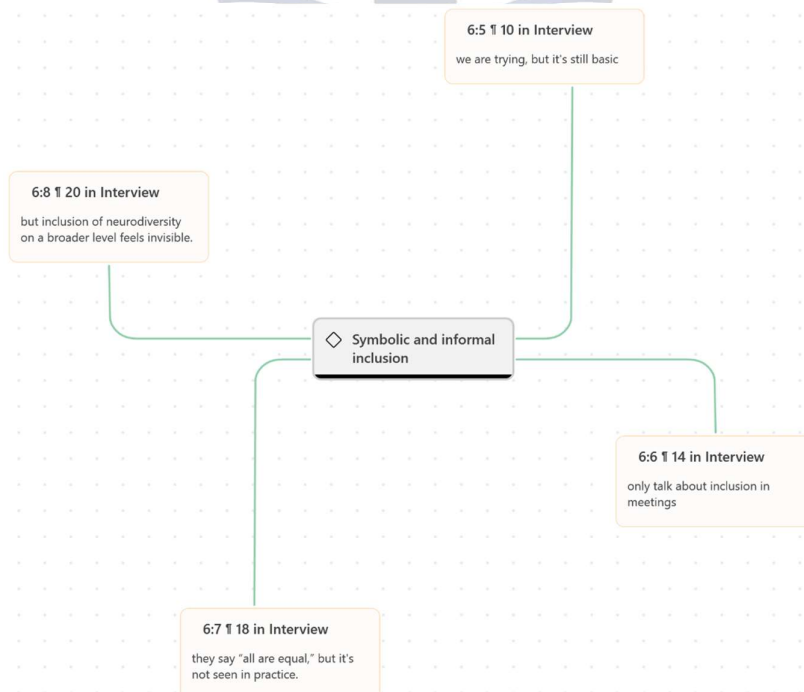
4. Results

Theme I: Symbolic and Informal Neurodiversity Inclusion

Figure 4 shows the network diagram, which illustrates that interview quotes were coded and linked to form a central concept. The links in the network represent how the observation about “invisible” neurodiversity or “basic” efforts are built in order to conceptualize the theme “Symbolic and informal inclusion”.

Figure 4

Network Diagram of Theme I



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.



Results indicate that neurodiversity inclusions across the studied international business environments tend to be symbolic, rather than embedded within formal organizational practices. Respondents highlighted that neurodiversity is acknowledged superficially by their organizations but not prioritized as either a strategic or operational imperative. The term “basic” descriptions of efforts point to initiatives or early-stage engagement but lack structured planning or long-term commitment. This proposes a potential gap between organizational commitments to inclusion and their translation into formal HR practices within internationally operating organizations. As HR1 explained;

Umm, I would say that we are trying, but it’s still basic. Neurodiversity is not actually considered the main agenda.

Respondents also discussed a clear gap between inclusive strategies and the lived experience. While equality is promoted in words, that does not change over into meaningful support or accommodations for neurodivergent employees. Collectively, these remarks deliver the message that inclusion is framed in generic terms of equality and not equity. In this regard, different needs require tailored responses. It also shows that symbolic inclusion might foster fairness on the surface; however, it can mask underlying exclusion. Therefore, it might leave neurodivergent employees feeling invisible. NDE1 also shared that;

They say ‘all are equal,’ but it’s not seen in practice.

Theme II: Absence of Formal Policies and Consistent HR Practices

Figure 5 demonstrates the role of evidence in the form of quotes that support the main theme, i.e., Lack of formalized neurodiversity support. In this regard, the relationships between the nodes emphasize the “gaps in structure”. However, the idea of “ad hoc” procedures merging with the need for formal policy also constitutes the theme.

Figure 5

Network Diagram Theme II



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.

Respondents also emphasized the need for structured support in the absence of inclusion guidelines. The availability of support in HR is confined to merely reacting to complaints instead of taking the initiative to support the concerns of employees before they are complained about. In this regard, HR4 also explained that;

I think we are in an early phase, as there is no official policy yet, but HR responds sometimes if any concerns are raised.

It shows a practice of inconsistency in the implementation of support for employees. There is a lack of standardized structures for support regarding inclusion for neurodivergent employees. These employees mainly face uncertainties in the absence of proper guidelines in the company. NDE3 explained that;

Everything, right now, feels like ad hoc and inconsistent.

Therefore, the theme underscores the critical need for implementing clear and standardized HR policies. It also highlights the importance of consistent implementation strategies to ensure that inclusion is effectively embedded in organizational structures. Consequently, within international business environments, the findings highlight the need to replace ad hoc support with formal and consistently implemented neuroinclusive HR practices.

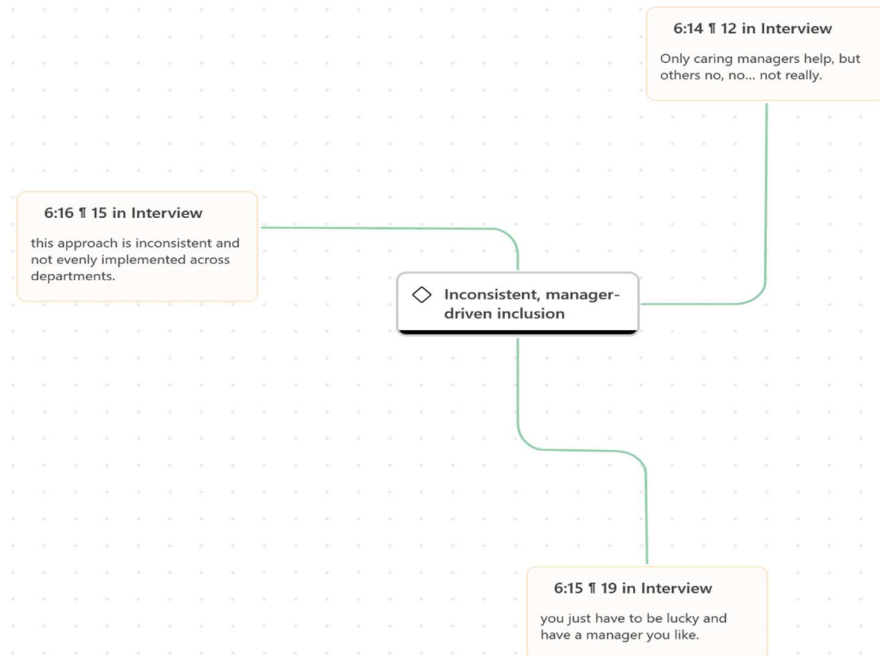


Theme III: Manager-Dependent and Uneven Implementation of Inclusion

Figure 6 shows that interview quotes, which are nodes of data, have been used for creating a theme of “inconsistent, manager-controlled inclusion.” The network implies that the inclusion of students depends on the managers rather than the policy in place, hence the reliance is on “luck”.

Figure 6

Network Diagram Theme III



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.

Results also highlight that rather than consistent organizational practices, the experiences of neurodivergent employees are heavily dependent on individual managers. Respondents also felt that supportive managers make a real difference. They provide guidance, accommodations, and understanding. On the other hand, managers who are less attentive make other employees feel unsupported. It fosters a “luck-based” system, where inclusion is unpredictable and inconsistently applied throughout the organization. HR3 explained that;

Only caring managers help, but others no, no... not really.

Employees might flourish and work well with one manager but struggle with another. It leads to unequal provision of opportunities and prevailing feelings of frustration or invisibility. These findings also highlight that reliance on individual managers rather than formal structures can risk establishing inequality. This is because employees cannot rely on receiving the support they need. The key implication is that inclusion cannot be left to personal goodwill alone. In this context, it is important to implement standardized policies, training, and monitoring so that the provision of fair support can be ensured for all employees. Effective inclusion requires both committed leadership and structured processes. S1 also said that;

I think managers are trying, but this approach is inconsistent and not evenly implemented across departments.

This manager-dependent variation highlights the gap between intended HR policies and their implementation, emphasizing the need for consistent managerial practices across international business environments.

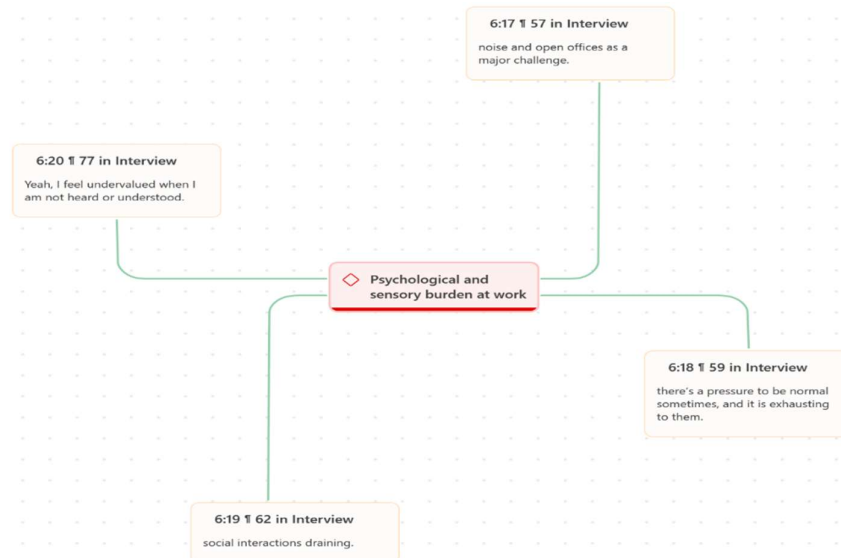
Theme IV: Daily Work Challenges and Psychological Strain

Figure 7 shows how some of these stress factors work towards creating this theme, i.e., Psychological and sensory burden at work.



Figure 7

Network Diagram Theme IV



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.

Respondents also focus on the everyday difficulties faced by neurodivergent employees in the workplace. However, these difficulties also strongly impacted their mental well-being. Findings included the importance of the environment, which could include noisy or open-plan offices that could be overwhelming and impact productivity. HR2 discussed that;

Some staff consider noise and open offices as a major challenge.

Additionally, there is social and psychological pressure to fit into the norms of the workplace. Workers feel that they must fit in if they are to be accepted. This can be physically draining. As HR4 also pointed out that;

You know, there's a pressure to be normal sometimes, and it is exhausting to them.

Findings demonstrate that a sense of inclusivity is more than a measure that must be taken by the manager. It is also about the work environment that impacts the employee. Thus, it is important to prioritize physical and social aspects of the work environment that influence work practices. These findings highlight the need for neuroinclusive HR practices that address everyday working conditions and provide flexible, individualized support in international business environments.

Theme V: Impact on Job Satisfaction, Career Progression, and Retention

Figure 8 shows that interview quotes exemplifying career stagnation, demotivation, and silent quitting combine to create the theme "Reduced satisfaction and retention risks".

Figure 8

Network Diagram Theme V



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.



Results also highlight the role of inadequate inclusion in affecting motivation, growth, and long-term engagement of neurodivergent employees. Respondents indicated that when the needs and accommodations of the workplace are not fulfilled, it makes employees discouraged. It was also mentioned by HR1.

When their needs are not addressed, they become demotivated.

Through this, the employees will not feel motivated or valued within the organization. This may influence the organization negatively, as some employees may feel “stuck” within their same job placements without room for growth. NDE2 highlighted that;

Sometimes, I feel that I am stuck in a similar job for so long.

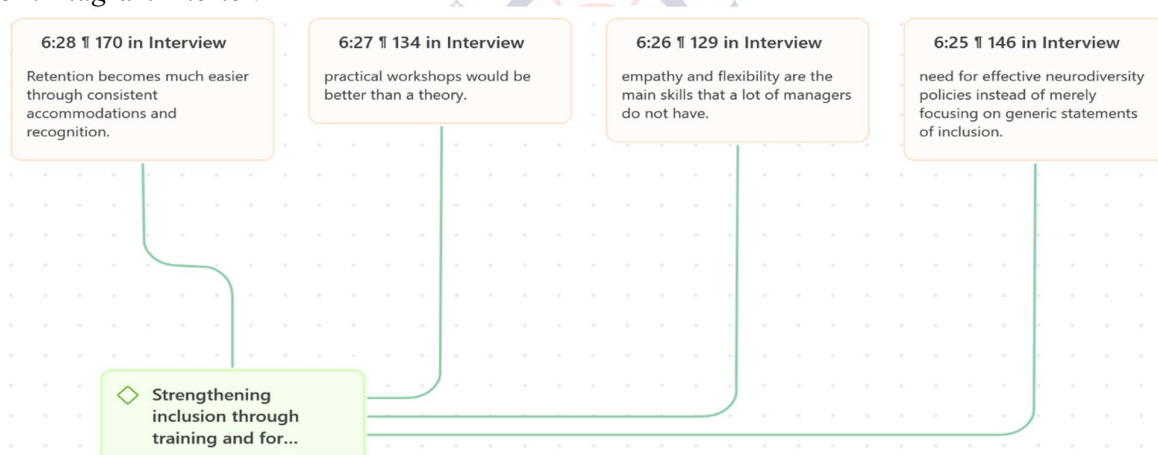
Over time, this will affect the organization negatively as employees who are not valued may leave the organization in search of better places that value them. The findings emphasize that inclusion is not just based on equality but is closely tied to the organizational outcomes, such as employee satisfaction, performance, and commitment. It is important to address the needs of neurodivergent employees through tailored support, career development opportunities, and recognition. In this way, employee motivation and growth will increase. It will also help to retain skilled staff and lead to a stronger and more inclusive workplace.

Theme VI: Need for Structured Training and Policy-Driven Improvements

Figure 9 shows how interview quotes on workshops, formal policies, and manager empathy are connected for the formulation of theme VI. It indicates that structured support, rather than generic statements, forms the basis for the following theme: Strengthening inclusion by training and formalization.

Figure 9

Network Diagram Theme V



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.

Formal policies and training also hold immense importance in creating an inclusive workplace for neurodivergent employees. In this regard, respondents also mentioned that generic statements about inclusion are not enough. Therefore, organizations should also focus on developing clear and actionable neurodiversity policies so that practices can be consistently guided across teams. HR1 mentioned that;

There is an utmost need for effective neurodiversity policies instead of merely focusing on generic statements of inclusion.

If structured training is provided to the managers and staff, it can also improve understanding of neurodivergent needs. Most importantly, it can reduce unconscious bias and ensure that the accommodations are applied fairly. Employees also highlighted that consistent support, recognition, and accommodations increase their satisfaction with the job. Most importantly, it can make retention easier. Contrarily, ad hoc approaches exert a feeling of ignorance among employees. In this way, staff also feel overlooked and undervalued. NDE4 said that;

I think retention becomes much easier through consistent accommodations and recognition.

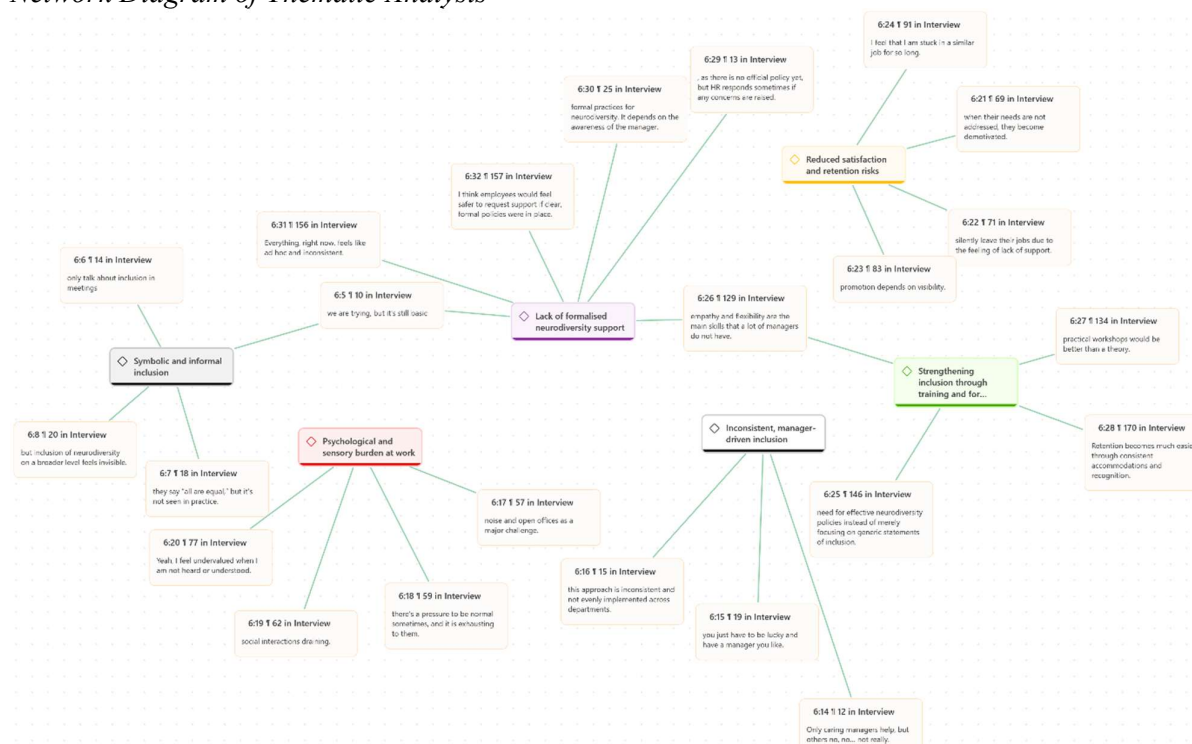


Improvements based on proper policies must be implemented within the organization. These policies should also be combined with ongoing training. It is important to bring inclusion into organizational culture rather than leaving it dependent on individual managers or chance.

Therefore, it is also important to focus on formal policies and structured training. In this way, neurodivergent employees can be supported effectively. Moreover, their engagement can be enhanced and a more equitable and sustainable workplace can be fostered. These findings highlight the need for consistent yet flexible neuroinclusive HR practices to support neurodivergent talent retention in international business environments.

Figure 10

Network Diagram of Thematic Analysis



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.

Figure 11 shows a tree map that helps to justify RO1. It shows how the major concerns in international business work environment are quantitatively depicted in relation to “HR” and “policies,” which are directly linked to “managers” and “awareness.” It also helps in showing how “existing situation” is established through the high frequency of discussion related to the absence of “formal” frameworks.

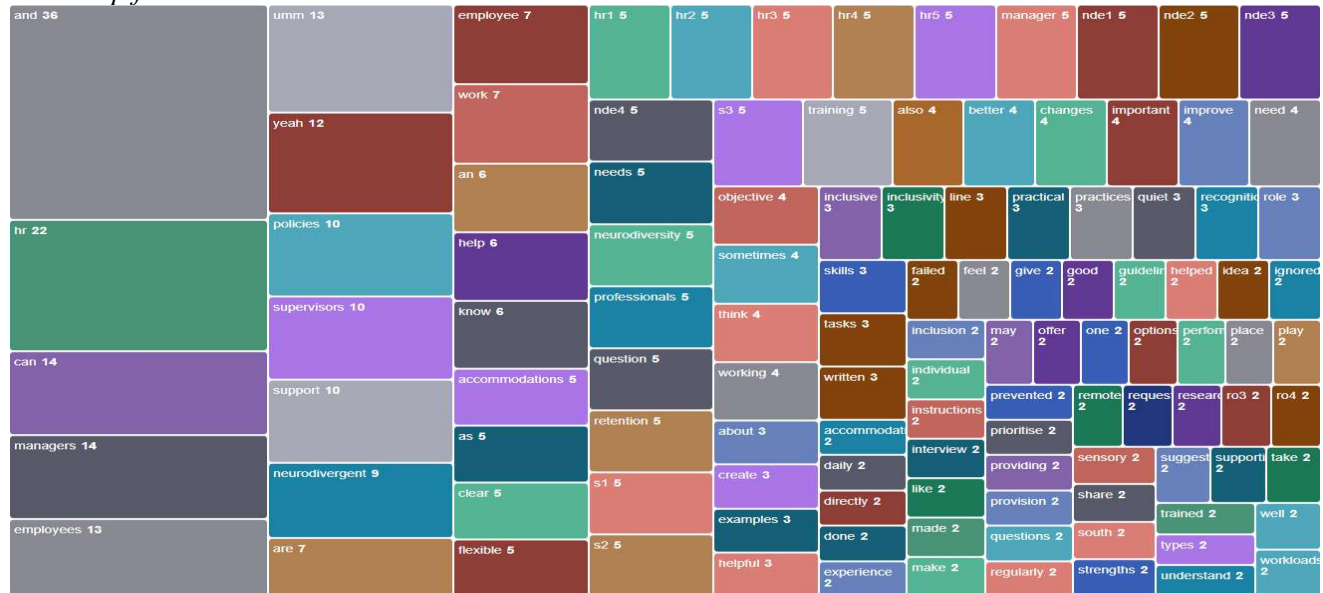




Figure 13 also presents RO3, pointing out how the terms “supervisors” (10), “managers” (14), and “hr” (22) are often connected with the provision of “support” and “accommodations.” It can be observed that how these crucial stakeholders play a crucial part within the movement from “generic” statements to the implementation of “practical” and “clear” inclusive practices is made clear with this graphic illustration present in figure below.

Figure 13

Tree Map for RO3



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.

Figure 14 also supports the aim of providing practical suggestions. It highlights the current demands in interviews like “policies” (8), “support” (6). It is clear from this tree map presentation that “retention” (5) is attained as well as “recognition” (3) through “clear” and “flexible” practices, rather than through theory. These patterns highlight the importance of clear, flexible, and supportive HR practices for neurodivergent talent retention in international business environments.

Figure 14

Tree Map for RO4



Note. Figure content as supplied in the source file.



5. Discussion

The results show that inclusive HR practices, limited, informal, or non-existent, negatively affect the retention, career trajectories, and workplace experiences of neurodivergent employees in international business environments. Throughout the findings, it became apparent that symbolic or surface-level inclusion is not effective in enhancing employee performance. On the contrary, it continues to support the invisibility and disengagement patterns. The narratives of the respondents revealed that in those organizations, where neurodiversity is merely an officially recognized notion, the idea of equality fails to provide the equity-based support that is required to encourage the development of a sustainable career and retain neurodivergent talents. This is consistent with the rest of the literature that suggests that the statements of generic equality devoid of actionable accommodations cannot change the workforce outcomes of employees with neurological differences (Koldas et al., 2025). In international business environments, these findings emphasize the importance of translating formal inclusion commitments into consistent and practical HR support.

The results also showed that the lack of formal HR policies and inconsistent HR practices specifically aimed at neurodiversity can undermine retention. Instead of being proactive in terms of structural support, organizations are known to collapse into reactive responses after problems have occurred. This lack of consistency in implementation results in a skewed system of luck-based implementation. However, it also influences the long-term engagement of employees. These informal strategies are contrary to the past studies that have found that effective inclusion for neurodivergent employees is reliant on structured interventions and workplace supports by the employer (Wen et al., 2024). However, these are still limited in current practice which highlights a gap between policy and implementation. Manager-dependent inclusion has been observed in the results. It has been indicated a thoroughly-reported obstacle in the study of neurodiversity, i.e., the lack of managerial awareness and education regarding neurodivergent requirements (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024). Prior studies also indicate that supervisors who do not have neurodiversity knowledge can attribute social or performance difficulties to perceived individual failures, which leads to exclusionary performance and judgments (Koldas et al., 2025).

Results also underscored the psychological and sensory pressures that neurodivergent employees experience in hostile environments such as open plan offices, and pressure to fit in, which further fuels career stagnation and emotional exhaustion. These lived experiences reflect the results of larger studies, which find workplace stressors, sensory overload, stigma, and the need to mask as prominent harms to well-being and organizational commitment (Pryke-Hobbes et al., 2023). Poor structural support is therefore not only a barrier to career development but also results in diminished job satisfaction and increased risk of silent quitting. These outcomes are also in line with the literature about poor inclusion and disengagement. The present research indicates that the results of this initiative do not become tangible without being formalized and constantly implemented. Overall, the findings position inclusive HR practice as an important organizational mechanism for supporting neurodivergent talent retention in international business environments, while demonstrating that policy alone is insufficient without consistent managerial implementation, appropriate accommodations, and attention to employees lived workplace experiences.

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This paper makes its contribution to the theory of workplace inclusion by showing how neurodiversity is managed in international business environments. It highlights that equality in words does not equal equity in action. The results also extend the current theoretical frameworks of inclusive HRM. It highlights the relevance of formal policies, systematic procedures, and manager training in determining outcomes in terms of employee retention and career development (Kiran et al., 2024). It further confirms that environmental and social conditions in the workplace have a huge impact on the well-being and productivity of neurodivergent workers (LeFevre-Levy et al., 2023), an issue requiring greater attention within international business environments. Connecting lived experiences to the organizational structures, the study presents the empirical evidence that inclusion cannot be based only on the discretion of the manager or ad hoc actions. This assists



in narrowing down on theoretical frameworks of inclusion. It implies that policy-based and systemic methods are necessary to achieve fair outcomes in the workplace and support neurodivergent talent retention.

6.2 Practical Implications

To practitioners, the study emphasizes why the organizations operating in international business environments should institutionalize neurodiversity inclusion. HR should focus on the inclusion of neurodiversity by designing effective policies and systematic practices (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024). Regular accommodations, training of managers, and awareness programs should be established in organizations so that fair treatment of the employees can be ensured, instead of letting the inclusion be at the personal level. This study also provides important practical insights regarding the active encouragement of employees that can boost their satisfaction, career expansion, and retention. Most importantly, managers should also be educated on learning about neurodivergent requirements and how to foster an inclusive environment so that stress can be minimized and employees can do their best. Also, workplace design, such as noise control and flexible working should be taken into account so that the daily work experience can be enhanced (Fayyad et al., 2024). Comprehensively, the research provides reflective advice on how to integrate neurodiversity in organizational culture. It should be prioritized by firms as it can lead to long-term engagement and fair opportunities and strengthen the retention of neurodivergent talent in international business environments.

7. Limitations and Future Research Indications

The study is restricted by a small sample size that focuses on international business environments. However, this could limit the generalizability of the results. Also, the qualitative design is based on self-reported experiences that might be affected by personal perceptions or recall bias. Further research should be conducted on the topic of inclusion of neurodiversity in larger cross-country samples in different international business settings.

The direct effect of structured HR practices on retention and career progression could also be measured in future studies with the help of quantitative studies. The effectiveness of particular interventions, including manager training, workplace design, and policy implementation, may also be investigated by future researchers to reinforce the evidence-based inclusion strategies. Future studies may also explore the impact of cultural and institutional context on the implementation and effectiveness of neuroinclusive HR practices in different countries.

Author's Contributions

All authors participated in ideation, development, and writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were guaranteed throughout the research process.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The authors are committed to transparency and will provide detailed methodological information and analysis protocols upon request.



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Appendix A

Table A

Demographic Profile of Participants

Participant	Role	Sector	Country	Organizational Context	Years of Experience	Neurotype
HR1	HR	Technology	Pakistan	Internationally operating organisation	8	N/A
HR2	HR	Financial Services	UAE	Multinational organisation	10	N/A
HR3	HR	Professional Services	UK	Multinational organisation	7	N/A
HR4	HR	Technology	Pakistan	Internationally operating organisation	6	N/A
HR5	HR	Business Services	UAE	Internationally operating organisation	9	N/A
S1	Supervisor/Line Manager	Technology	Pakistan	Internationally operating organisation	6	N/A
S2	Supervisor/Line Manager	Professional Services	UK	Multinational organisation	8	N/A
S3	Supervisor/Line Manager	Financial Services	UAE	Multinational organisation	5	N/A
NDE1	Neurodivergent Employee	Technology	Pakistan	Internationally operating organisation	4	N/A
NDE2	Neurodivergent Employee	Professional Services	UK	Multinational organisation	5	N/A
NDE3	Neurodivergent Employee	Business Services	UAE	Internationally operating	3	N/A



Appendix B

Table B

Memo Table of Key Concepts and Noun Phrases Supporting Theme Development

Concept	Count	Noun Phrases
employee	37	neurodivergent employees (14); “employees (9)”; “employee needs (2)”; “a few employees (1)”; “a neurodivergent employee (1)”; “an employee (1)”; “employee support (1)”; “employees’ loyalty (1)”; “employees’ well-being (1)”; “less employee engagement (1)”; “real employee stories (1)”; “some employees (1)”; “some neurodivergent employees (1)”; “the employee (1)”; “the neurodivergent employees (1)”
hr	31	hr (11); “hr professionals (5)”; “hr policies (3)”; “hr or line managers (2)”; “hr staff (2)”; “the hr (2)”; “what hr policies (2)”; “both hr (1)”; “inclusive hr practices (1)”; “particularly hr policies (1)”; “some hr individuals (1)”
manager	31	managers (14); “the managers (3)”; “a manager (2)”; “hr or line managers (2)”; “my manager (2)”; “the manager (2)”; “flexible working and understanding managers (1)”; “line managers (1)”; “one manager (1)”; “only caring managers (1)”; “some managers (1)”; “the supportive managers (1)”
policy	19	policies (4); “hr policies (3)”; “what hr policies (2)”; “a policy (1)”; “clear, formal policies (1)”; “effective neurodiversity policies (1)”; “formal policies (1)”; “inclusive policies (1)”; “no official policy (1)”; “no standard policies (1)”; “particularly hr policies (1)”; “some policies (1)”; “the policy (1)”
neurodiversity	16	neurodiversity (11); “neurodiversity inclusion (3)”; “effective neurodiversity policies (1)”; “neurodiversity conditions (1)”
neurodivergent	15	neurodivergent employees (12); “neurodivergent talent (1)”; “some neurodivergent employees (1)”; “the neurodivergent employees (1)”
practice	14	practices (5); “practice (2)”; “workplace practices (2)”; “an inclusive practice (1)”; “any formal practices (1)”; “improved practices (1)”; “inclusive hr practices (1)”; “inclusive practices (1)”
Umm	14	umm (14)
support	12	support (7); “the support (2)”; “employee support (1)”; “enough organizational support (1)”; “team support (1)”
retention	11	retention (8); “long-term retention (2)”; “inclusivity and retention strategies (1)”
supervisor	11	supervisors (8); “the supervisors (2)”; “supportive supervisors (1)”
workplace	11	the workplace (5); “workplace practices (2)”; “a more inclusive workplace (1)”; “our workplace (1)”; “international workplaces (1)”; “workplaces (1)”
inclusion	10	inclusion (5); “neurodiversity inclusion (3)”; “general inclusion (1)”; “the general inclusion (1)”
job	10	influence job satisfaction (2); “job satisfaction (2)”; “the job (2)”; “a similar job (1)”; “job switching (1)”; “reduced job satisfaction (1)”; “their jobs (1)”
need	9	employee needs (2); “their needs (2)”; “an utmost need (1)”; “mental health and sensory needs (1)”; “our individual needs (1)”; “our needs (1)”; “sensory needs (1)”
organization	8	the organization (5); “your organization’s current approach (2)”; “international organizations (1)”
question	8	question (8)
working	8	flexible working hours (2); “working (2)”; “different working styles (1)”; “flexible working and understanding managers (1)”; “remote working (1)”; “safer and flexible working conditions (1)”
accommodation	8	accommodations (4); “accommodation training (1)”; “consistent accommodations (1)”; “official accommodation (1)”; “the accommodations (1)”
training	8	training (4); “formal training (2)”; “accommodation training (1)”; “the mentoring training (1)”



Concept	Count	Noun Phrases
awareness	7	awareness (3); “awareness sessions (1)”; “less awareness (1)”; “more formal awareness (1)”; “the awareness (1)”
challenge	6	how do these challenges (2); “a major challenge (1)”; “challenges (1)”; “these challenges (1)”; “what challenges (1)”
progression	6	career progression (3); “a limited career progression and growth opportunities (1)”; “guidance limits progression (1)”; “progression (1)”
career	6	career progression (3); “a limited career progression and growth opportunities (1)”; “career mobility (1)”; “clearer career paths (1)”
satisfaction	6	influence job satisfaction (2); “job satisfaction (2)”; “reduced job satisfaction (1)”; “their satisfaction (1)”
lack	6	a lack (3); “lack (3)”
work	6	an inclusive work environment (1); “flexible work arrangements (1)”; “good work (1)”; “remote work (1)”; “remote work options (1)”; “work style (1)”
staff	5	hr staff (2); “neurodivergent staff (1)”; “some neurodivergent staff (1)”; “some staff (1)”
people	5	people (3); “all people (1)”; “the people (1)”
performance	5	performance (2); “performance review (1)”; “performance reviews (1)”; “rigid performance metrics (1)”
term	5	long-term retention (2); “long-term engagement (1)”; “long-term opportunities (1)”; “terms (1)”
professional	5	hr professionals (5)
task	4	tasks (2); “listening and task adjustment (1)”; “the tasks (1)”
change	4	what changes (2); “changes (1)”; “little changes (1)”
umm	4	umm (4)
implementation	4	implementation (3); “their implementation (1)”
team	4	our teams (1); “some teams (1)”; “team support (1)”; “the team leader (1)”
Interview Questions	4	interview questions (4)
Objective	4	research objective (4)
research	4	research objective (4)
inclusivity	3	inclusivity (2); “inclusivity and retention strategies (1)”
skill	3	what skills (2); “the main skills (1)”
line	3	hr or line managers (2); “line managers (1)”
example	3	examples (2); “various examples (1)”
role	3	what role (2); “a role (1)”
mentorship	3	mentorship (2); “mentorship programs (1)”
opportunity	3	a limited career progression and growth opportunities (1); “an opportunity (1)”; “long-term opportunities (1)”
strength	3	also strengths (1); “individual strengths (1)”; “my strengths (1)”
objective	3	objective (3)
issue	3	a great issue (1); “the issues (1)”; “the practical issues (1)”
idea	3	a good idea (1); “an idea (1)”; “no idea (1)”
guideline	3	clear guidelines (1); “the guidelines (1)”; “written guidelines (1)”
style	3	different styles (1); “different working styles (1)”; “work style (1)”
time	3	the time (2); “the longest time (1)”
experience	3	your experience (2); “an experience (1)”
approach	3	your organization’s current approach (2); “this approach (1)”
growth	2	a limited career progression and growth opportunities (1); “the growth (1)”
condition	2	neurodiversity conditions (1); “safer and flexible working conditions (1)”
contribution	2	our contributions (1); “the contribution (1)”
absence	2	the absence (2)
guidance	2	guidance (1); “guidance limits progression (1)”
framework	2	the framework (1); “transparent and clear frameworks (1)”



Concept	Count	Noun Phrases
place	2	place (1); “the first place (1)”
workload	2	readjust workloads (1); “workloads (1)”
conflict	2	conflict resolution (1); “conflicts (1)”
adjustment	2	adjustments (1); “listening and task adjustment (1)”
one	2	no one (1); “not just a few ones (1)”
engagement	2	less employee engagement (1); “long-term engagement (1)”
request	2	repeated requests (1); “this request (1)”
instruction	2	clear written instructions (1); “written instructions (1)”
strategy	2	communication strategy (1); “inclusivity and retention strategies (1)”
type	2	what types (2)
provision	2	provision (1); “the provision (1)”
recognition	2	recognition (2)
option	2	flexible options (1); “remote work options (1)”
worker	2	neurodivergent workers (1); “workers (1)”
deadline	2	deadlines (2)
overload	2	sensory overload (2)
other	2	others (2)
meeting	2	meetings (2)
neurodivergence	2	neurodivergence (1); “what neurodivergence (1)”
level	2	a broader level (1); “the level (1)”
hour	2	flexible working hours (2)
being	2	employees’ well-being (1); “well-being (1)”
norm	2	the norm (1); “the norms (1)”
workshop	2	additional workshops (1); “practical workshops (1)”
resource	2	human resources (1); “limited resources (1)”
day	2	day (2)
influence	2	influence job satisfaction (2)
motivation	2	motivation (2)
communication	2	communication (1); “communication strategy (1)”
problem	2	a common problem (1); “a major problem (1)”
information	2	information (2)
office	2	open offices (1); “the office (1)”
lot	2	a lot (2)
majority	2	the majority (2)
transcription	1	interview transcription (1)
Interview	1	interview transcription (1)
situation	1	the existing situation (1)