

Neurodiversity and Work: An Umbrella Review

Neurodiversidade e Trabalho: Uma Revisão Guarda-Chuva

Neurodiversidad y Trabajo: Una Revisión Umbrella

Literature Reviews

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Abstract: Neurodiversity has gained increasing attention in debates on contemporary work. This study aims to conduct an umbrella review of the scientific literature on neurodiversity in occupational contexts, identifying: the types of studies that have been conducted; the forms of neurodiversity addressed; and the available evidence. Searches were conducted in PsycNet, PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, SciELO, Redalyc, and BVS Saúde. Ten reviews focusing on adult workers, published in Portuguese, English, or Spanish within the previous five years met the inclusion criteria. Descriptive and qualitative approaches were most prevalent. Findings converged around three thematic domains: employers' perceptions of neurodiversity; barriers and facilitators to inclusion and professional success; and workplace interventions and support strategies. Further research should expand the studied groups, incorporate sociodemographic variables, and employ mixed and longitudinal methods to strengthen the overall evidence base.

Keywords: neurodevelopmental disorders, employment, literature review, autism spectrum disorder, organizational psychology.

Resumo: A neurodiversidade tem ganhado crescente atenção nos debates sobre o trabalho contemporâneo. Este trabalho tem como objetivo realizar uma revisão guarda-chuva da produção científica acerca da neurodiversidade em contextos ocupacionais, identificando: que tipos de estudo têm sido realizados; a que tipo de neurodiversidade se referem; e quais são as evidências disponíveis. A busca ocorreu nas bases Psycnet, PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, SciELO, Redalyc e BVS Saúde. Foram selecionadas dez revisões relacionadas à neurodiversidade e trabalho, realizadas com adultos trabalhadores, revisadas por pares e publicadas em português, inglês ou espanhol, nos últimos 5 anos. Predominaram estudos descritivos e qualitativos. As evidências concentraram-se em três eixos temáticos: percepções de empregadores sobre a neurodiversidade no contexto de trabalho; barreiras e facilitadores da inclusão e sucesso profissional; e intervenções e estratégias de suporte. Futuras pesquisas devem ampliar grupos estudados, incorporar variáveis sociodemográficas e utilizar métodos mistos e longitudinais.

Palavras-chave: transtornos de neurodesenvolvimento, trabalho, revisão, transtorno do espectro autista, psicologia organizacional.

Resumen: La neurodiversidad ha ganado creciente atención en los debates sobre el trabajo contemporáneo. Este estudio tiene como objetivo realizar una revisión paraguas de la producción científica sobre la neurodiversidad en contextos laborales, identificando: los tipos de estudios realizados; las formas de neurodiversidad abordadas; y las evidencias disponibles. Las búsquedas se realizaron en PsycNet, PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, SciELO, Redalyc y BVS Salud. Diez revisiones centradas en adultos trabajadores, publicadas en portugués, inglés o español durante los cinco años previos, cumplieron los criterios de inclusión. Predominaron los enfoques descriptivos y cualitativos. Los hallazgos convergieron en tres dominios temáticos: percepciones de los empleadores sobre la neurodiversidad; barreras y facilitadores para la inclusión y el éxito profesional; e intervenciones y estrategias de apoyo en el lugar de trabajo. Futuras investigaciones deberían ampliar los grupos estudiados, incorporar variables sociodemográficas y emplear métodos mixtos y longitudinales para fortalecer la base general de evidencia.

Palabras clave: trastornos del neurodesarrollo, trabajo, revisión de la literatura, trastorno del espectro autista, psicología organizacional.

Introduction

Neurodiversity refers to the diversity of human neurological functioning (Goldberg, 2023), expressed in variations in how people experience, think, communicate, and perceive the world through their senses (Marble et al., 2024). When an individual's neurological and behavioral characteristics fall within the statistical range most prevalent in the population, it is considered neurotypical. By contrast, when these characteristics differs substantially from how most people experience the world and presents neural and behavioral traits that are statistically less prevalent, it is considered neurodivergent (Goldberg, 2023; Marble et al., 2024).

The concept of neurodiversity emerged around 1996, when researchers and autistic communities began advocating the view that variations in neurological development are to be expected as part of human evolution (Botha et al., 2024). These variations are understood as a healthy and natural form of neurological diversity within the human species (Goldberg, 2023), analogous to the concept of biodiversity widely accepted in biological sciences (Hutson & Hutson, 2023).

From this perspective, differences in social communication, the ability to recognize and express emotions, levels of attention, and other mental functions are not regarded as "inherently deficient." Rather, they are understood as differences that may have positive or negative outcomes (interpreted as strengths or impairments) depending on the interaction between individuals and the characteristics of the contexts in which they are situated. These differences are therefore understood from a biopsychosocial perspective rather than through the traditional medical model (Ali et al., 2024; Doyle, 2020). Thus, neurodiversity is not only a concept but also a social movement that seeks to challenge structures of exclusion by increasing the recognition and normalization of human neurocognitive heterogeneity, thereby promoting greater awareness, acceptance, and inclusion of people with different forms of cognitive functioning in contemporary society (Goldberg, 2023).

Although the concepts of neurodiversity and neurodivergence have historically been associated with autistic people (Botha et al., 2024), the neurodivergent community also includes people with other developmental disorders, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette syndrome, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. It also includes people with neurological changes resulting from disease or damage to the nervous system, such as aphasia and amnesia, as well as people with affective disorders that affect mood, perception, and behavior, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (Doyle, 2020).

Despite this broad range of cognitive functioning, these groups commonly differ from neurotypical people in psychological assessment processes, in which executive functions and cognitive abilities - like spatial, visual, verbal abilities and memory - are assessed through intelligence tests. Whereas neurotypical people tend to show similar levels of performance (high, low, or average) across their cognitive abilities, neurodivergent individuals often demonstrate substantial variability, with very high performance in some abilities and low performance in others (Doyle, 2020). Thus, on the one hand, neurodivergent people may face specific demands, but, on the other hand, they may possess strengths that are not always available to neurotypical people to the same extent (Tomczak & Kulikowski, 2024). For example, people with dyslexia tend to obtain lower scores on working memory and processing speed but tend to perform better than neurotypical people on global, visual, and spatial abstract reasoning (Taylor & Vestergaard, 2022). Autistic people tend to have stronger abilities in processing complex tasks, identifying patterns, and performing repetitive tasks, whereas people with ADHD tend to have stronger creative problem-solving abilities (Ali et al., 2024).

It is currently estimated that at least 20% of the population (i.e., one in five people) is neurodivergent (Goldberg, 2023). However, because neurodivergence is not necessarily visible and is often not disclosed, whether due to fear of stigmatization, difficulties accessing a diagnosis, or other barriers, people may be unaware of its prevalence and may not know how to interact with neurodivergent people in ways that promote their strengths and potential (Ali et al., 2024).

One of the main contexts in which this occurs is the labor market. Despite growing recognition of the strengths associated with neurodivergence, organizations continue to face resistance and limitations in developing and implementing effective inclusive practices (Iqbal et al., 2025). This is reflected in high rates of unemployment and underemployment, estimated at between 85% and 90% (Branicki et al., 2024). At the same time, neurodiversity has increasingly been recognized as a potential source of competitive advantage for organizations (Tomczak & Kulikowski, 2024). As the global workforce grows, it is therefore considered crucial to develop and implement strategies that not only accommodate but also enhance the unique capabilities of neurodivergent individuals (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024).

Understanding neurodiversity in the workplace is still a relatively recent area of research. Studies aimed at synthesizing evidence on how to create, manage, and maintain healthy and sustainable working conditions for both neurodivergent workers and their employers remain scarce (Ali et al., 2024). Such studies are important for informing more effective inclusive practices and policies, with more positive outcomes for both neurodivergent workers and their employers (Goldberg, 2023), as well as for supporting evidence-based decision-making among researchers, professionals, organizations, and policymakers. Given these gaps, the primary objective of this study

was to conduct an umbrella review (i.e., a systematic review of systematic reviews) of the literature on neurodiversity and work. Specifically, we sought to: (1) identify the types of studies conducted over the past five years; (2) characterize the forms of neurodiversity addressed and the populations included in these studies; and (3) map the main topics addressed in the publications and synthesize the evidence presented within each thematic area.

Method

Initially, the study was planned as a systematic literature review. However, during the initial database searches, a substantial number of reviews on neurodiversity in occupational contexts were identified. Therefore, the scope of the study was broadened, and an umbrella review design was adopted.

Umbrella reviews, also referred to as *overviews of reviews* or *reviews of reviews*, are a type of evidence synthesis that brings together and integrates the findings of different reviews on a given topic. In this type of study, the unit of analysis is not primary studies but the reviews themselves (Liu et al., 2025). This approach is particularly relevant when there is a growing body of reviews on a given field, as it allows for a broad overview of the available scientific literature, comparison of findings across reviews, and identification of convergences, divergences, and gaps in knowledge. Although traditional definitions of umbrella reviews have focused on systematic reviews and meta-analyses, the present study adopted this design as a second-level synthesis, considering different types of reviews that employed systematic procedures for searching and selecting the literature.

The umbrella review was conducted in accordance with the PRIOR (Gates et al., 2022) and PRISMA (Page et al., 2022) guidelines. Searches were conducted in PsycNet, PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, SciELO, and BVS Saúde, selected because they are international and Latin American databases containing relevant scientific literature. The databases were accessed through the CAPES Journal Portal on May 8, 2025. The search terms “neurodiversity AND work,” “neurodiversidade AND trabalho,” and “neurodiversidad AND trabajo” were used in the title, abstract, and keyword fields, with no additional filters applied. Diagnostic synonyms (e.g., specific terms related to neurodevelopmental disorders) were not used in order to prioritize the identification of studies focused on the neurodiversity paradigm over traditional biomedical models.

The retrieved records were exported to *Parsif.al* for independent screening by two reviewers. During the initial screening, the titles and abstracts of the records were examined. When this information was insufficient to determine eligibility, the full text of the article was assessed. Disagreements were resolved by consensus or by a third reviewer.

Publications were included if they met the following inclusion criteria: (a) scoping, systematic, integrative systematic, or meta-analytic reviews; (b) reviews addressing topics related to neurodiversity and work and involving an adult population; (c) published in Portuguese, English, or Spanish; (d) published in peer-reviewed journals; and (e) published within the previous five years, in order to capture the most recent scientific literature, given the emerging nature of the field and contemporary changes in organizational diversity and inclusion practices. Duplicate articles and articles that did not meet any of the inclusion criteria were rejected. Narrative reviews were excluded because they do not necessarily involve systematic procedures for identifying and selecting studies. Articles addressing neurodiversity exclusively in higher education, without a connection to the professional context, were also excluded. Although the university context brings individuals closer to issues related to work, it has characteristics that differ from the labor market itself. Reviews covering multiple contexts, including higher education and work, were considered eligible when they reported findings related to working populations or work contexts.

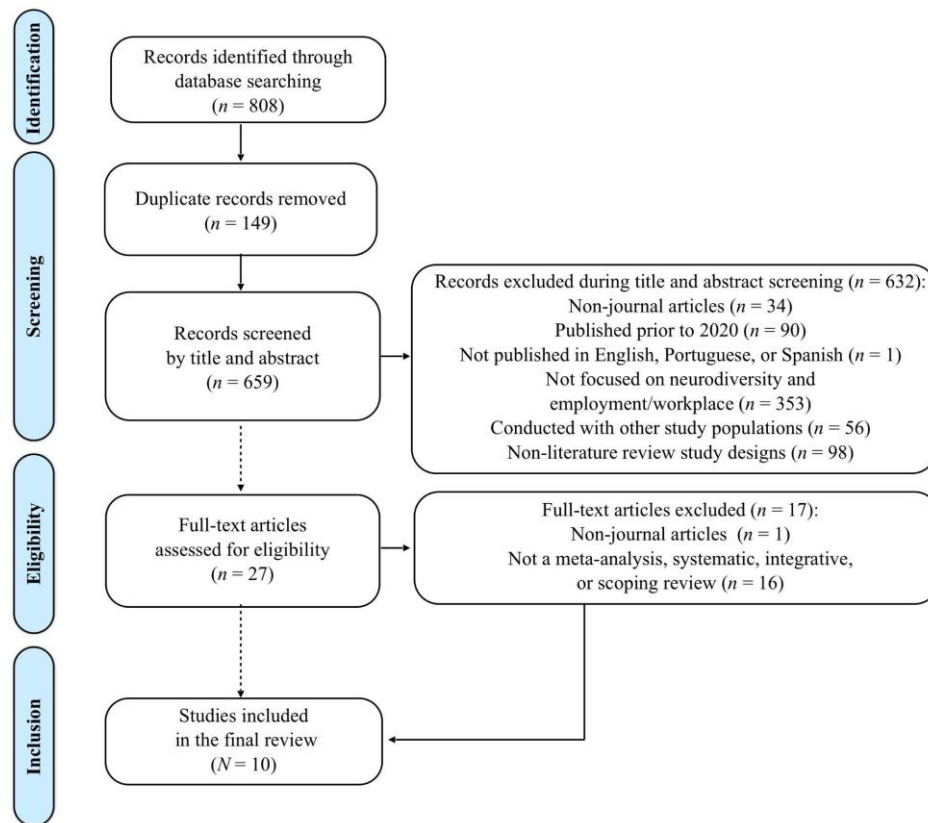
The information retrieved from each publication was recorded and analyzed using a pre-structured extraction table, which included information on: author; year of publication; type of review; objectives; type and number of studies included in the review; search period; characteristics of the populations included in the studies analyzed; and findings. To synthesize the topics addressed, the objectives and findings columns underwent thematic analysis following the six-phase model proposed by Clarke and Braun (2013), conducted manually with the assistance of Google Tables.

Results

A total of 808 records were retrieved. Of these, 149 were excluded as duplicates. The remaining 659 records were assessed according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Figure 1). Ten international reviews were selected for analysis. Collectively, these reviews included 481 primary studies published between 2000 and 2025, comprising at least 11,178 participants (Table 1).

Among the analyzed reviews, three were scoping reviews, five were systematic reviews, and two were integrative systematic reviews. They synthesized findings from various types of primary studies, including clinical trials, experimental studies, observational studies, cohort studies, case studies, and qualitative studies (including in-depth semi-structured interviews, life history interviews, narrative interviews, and focus groups). Despite this diversity, qualitative studies were predominant, followed by cross-sectional observational designs. With the exception of one review (Patten et al., 2024), all other reviews presented their findings predominantly in qualitative form.

Figure 1
PRISMA flow diagram



Study Populations

Four studies aimed to examine issues related to work and neurodivergence in general, without distinguishing between diagnoses. Four focused on autistic people, one on people with dyslexia, and one on learning disorders more broadly.

The samples included participants aged 18 to 80 years, with mean ages commonly ranging from 30 to 40 years. As described in Table 1, few reviews reported participants' demographic characteristics, such as gender and ethnicity, and some did not report the total number of participants in the studies analyzed. With the exception of Selseleh et al. (2025) and Wen et al. (2024), all studies included exclusively neurodivergent participants.

Themes Addressed

The reviews analyzed focused on three main thematic areas: (a) employers' perceptions of neurodiversity in the workplace; (b) barriers to and facilitators of inclusion and professional success; and (c) interventions and support strategies to reduce challenges and enhance potential.

Employers' Perceptions of Neurodiversity in the Workplace

This theme refers to how employers, managers, and coworkers perceive neurodiversity, as well as factors associated with variations in these perceptions. Studies focusing on employers' and managers' perceptions (Bölte et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2024) indicate that most employers still view the hiring of neurodivergent professionals negatively, with (a) preconceived beliefs that they result in lower productivity and higher costs, (b) higher levels of distrust and criticism regarding the inclusion of people with invisible disabilities, and (c) a predominance of stigmatizing views aligned with the biomedical paradigm, attributing difficulties in adaptation to the individual rather than considering the organizational context as a whole.

Table 1*Overview of Analyzed Reviews*

Authors (Year)	Review Type	Main Aims	Study Period	<i>N</i> Studies	Participant Characteristics
Beer et al. (2022)	Systematic	To identify factors from the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health that adults with dyslexia consider relevant to work	2013-2021	19	258 adults with dyslexia, with mean ages ranging from 24.8 to 45.4 years, 49.6% women and 50.4% men, from different occupational fields
Bölte et al. (2025)	Scoping	To provide evidence-based recommendations for identifying and supporting career trajectories with positive work outcomes for neurodivergent people	2010-2020	78	Total not reported
Morris et al. (2025)	Systematic	To review the experiences of autistic adults in relation to work and translationally identify the characteristics of inclusive jobs	No specified period	11	632 autistic adults, aged 19 to 80 years, 64% women, 30% men, 5% non-binary, 4% "other"; predominantly Caucasian ethnicity
Patten et al. (2024)	Systematic	To provide evidence-based recommendations for occupational interventions relevant to autistic people (including in work contexts)	2013-2021	98	Total not reported
Rijswijk et al. (2025)	Integrative	To review the literature on cognitive diversity and neurodiversity in groups (including organizations)	sem período delimitado	71	Total not reported
Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska (2024)	Systematic	To explore the literature on neurodiversity management in workplaces, seeking to identify new research directions, gaps, and methods used	2015-2024	56	Total not reported
Selseleh et al. (2025)	Systematic Integrative	To provide recommendations for Human Resources and Management professionals, focusing on more inclusive and equitable guidance and training for adults with learning disorders	No specified period	41	8201 teachers, academic staff, students, instructors, and facilitators with different forms of neurodivergence
Southey et al. (2024)	Scoping	To identify the perspectives and experiences of autistic adults regarding competitive employment	No specified period	32	1171 autistic adults, aged 18 to 75 years, 42% women, 55% men, 2.5% "other"
Weber et al. (2022)	Systematic	To assess the evidence on physical workplace accommodations and their relationship with performance, well-being, and occupational longevity among neurodivergent workers	2000-2021	20	916 people with ASD, ADHD, dyslexia, or other learning disorders, aged 18 to 80 years. Equal proportions of men and women, from different occupational fields, with university degrees
Wen et al. (2024)	Scoping	To synthesize the main findings from the literature on autism and work from employers' perspectives	2009-2022	55	Employers of autistic workers

Due to these multiple factors, employers and coworkers tend to overestimate the difficulties and underestimate the benefits of employing neurodivergent people, resulting in hiring and inclusion practices that, even when well-intentioned, may reproduce exclusionary and ableist practices (Wen et al., 2024). These perceptions and attitudes have been attributed to limited and/or inaccurate knowledge about neurodivergence, based on limited personal experience, assumptions, and culturally rooted stigma (Bölte et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2024).

Conversely, the reviews also highlight the potential benefits that hiring neurodivergent people may bring to employers. Specific characteristics, such as focus, persistence, attention to detail, creativity, logical thinking, and loyalty, may increase efficiency, accuracy, and innovation at work (Beer et al., 2022). The cognitive diversity promoted by teams that include neurodivergent individuals appears to facilitate knowledge integration and decision quality, stimulating creativity, performance, and innovation (Rijswijk et al., 2025). In addition, inclusive human resource management practices appear to increase employee satisfaction, improve organizational reputation, and expand human capital (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024), pointing to potential competitive advantages.

According to the reviews analyzed, more positive perceptions and attitudes toward hiring and retaining neurodivergent people are associated with certain organizational characteristics (Wen et al., 2024), including: (a) organizational size (large organizations tend to demonstrate greater openness to hiring people with disabilities compared with small and medium-sized organizations); (b) previous experience (organizations with prior experience hiring and supporting people with disabilities are more likely to hold favorable attitudes); and (c) access to support programs provided by external organizations.

Barriers and Facilitators to Inclusion and Professional Success

This theme encompasses findings from studies examining barriers and facilitators to the inclusion and professional success of neurodivergent people. By bringing together findings from multiple studies, it was possible to identify that barriers and facilitators coexist, interact with one another, and operate at multiple level - including individual, interpersonal, organizational, and environmental factors.

Individual factors. Individual characteristics of neurodivergent workers may act as facilitators or barriers, depending on their alignment with the work environment and job demands (Bölte et al., 2025; Morris et al., 2025; Southey et al., 2024; Wen et al., 2024).

A strengths-based approach was highlighted as an important facilitator, emphasizing attributes such as attention to detail, precision, efficiency, and a high degree of loyalty to one's work. When there is a good fit between a neurodivergent person's abilities, restricted interests, intrinsic motivation and the responsibilities and skills expected in the job (i.e., Person-Job Fit), this is associated with greater professional success, productivity, and job satisfaction (Bölte et al., 2025), as well as engagement, a sense of purpose, autonomy, competence, and personal and professional growth (Morris et al., 2025). Such alignment is also important in relation to sensory aspects. Individual characteristics of sensory processing may function as facilitators or barriers, depending on whether and how the work environment allows for and accommodates these individual traits (Morris et al., 2025).

Although alignment between personal and job characteristics is fundamental to the outcomes observed, the reviews emphasize that, due to difficulties entering the labor market, most neurodivergent adults end up accepting whatever employment is available rather than positions compatible with their preferences, abilities, interests, and needs (Bölte et al., 2025). In these cases, a lack of alignment between individual and job characteristics negatively affects experiences of workplace inclusion and retention (Morris et al., 2025). When financial circumstances allow people greater choice in their employment, the possibility of disclosing their neurodivergence and having it positively received was the factor participants valued most in hiring processes, followed by the availability of educational resources, additional support, and guidance, with financial compensation ranking last among the criteria considered in this context (Wen et al., 2024).

Regarding other relevant individual factors, Bölte et al. (2025) highlight that: (a) previous work experience is a more important predictor of subsequent employment success; (b) moderating factors, such as the presence of mental and somatic health problems (e.g., anxiety and depression), may in some cases play a greater role in professional success than other core characteristics of neurodivergence; and (c) sociodemographic characteristics also influence hiring processes. In studies involving people with ADHD, being male and married/cohabiting were positive predictors of labor market participation, whereas belonging to an ethnic minority was associated with lower predictive power for labor market participation.

Interpersonal factors. Among barriers related to interpersonal factors, challenges in communication during social interactions in the workplace were prominent. In this context, the main barriers identified were stigma, discrimination, and ableism. These were expressed through mistreatment by coworkers, exclusion from activities, bullying, injustice, distrust, lack of understanding, and judgment. Such barriers were reported across all studies analyzed and were

associated with experiences of social isolation in the workplace and recurring cycles of unemployment and underemployment (Morris et al., 2025).

As a way of coping, seeking greater acceptance, and attempting to avoid discrimination, all reviews analyzed mention that neurodivergent people feel pressured to “mask” their traits, seeking to suppress neurodivergent characteristics in order to conform to neurotypical social expectations (i.e., *masking*). Although such practices are intended to facilitate social acceptance, they have significant impacts on mental health, including anxiety, depression, burnout, and isolation, which also result in professional challenges (Morris et al., 2025).

Conversely, quality relationships in the workplace are critical facilitators of the hiring and retention of neurodivergent workers, which is essential for minimizing the negative effects of stigma and the need for masking. In this context, the facilitator most consistently highlighted across studies is the presence of coworkers and supervisors who are patient, attentive, supportive, respectful, and accepting of neurodivergence and individual differences (Bölte et al., 2025; Morris et al., 2025). Supervisors’ and coworkers’ knowledge and understanding of neurodiversity and inclusion are also highly valued, as they underpin the ability to support employment and increase the confidence of employees and their colleagues (Wen et al., 2024). These interpersonal dynamics, however, are deeply influenced by the broader organizational structures and environments in which they are embedded.

Organizational factors. The main barriers identified include: (a) the persistence of the biomedical paradigm among employers, attributing problems in the workplace exclusively to neurodivergent people and showing resistance to providing necessary accommodations (Beer et al., 2022; Morris et al., 2025); (b) the lack of inclusive policies and procedures (Weber et al., 2022; Wen et al., 2024); and (c) selection practices that place excessive emphasis on social skills, disadvantaging neurodivergent candidates by limiting their opportunities to demonstrate other skills and knowledge relevant to different positions (Bölte et al., 2025).

As facilitators, the reviews point to the importance of integrating a neuroaffirmative perspective into organizational culture and practices (Morris et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2024). Neuroaffirmative measures mentioned in the studies include: (a) implementing clear and flexible work policies, such as flexibility in work schedules and location, communication methods, and adjustments to the physical environment (described in greater detail in the “Environmental Factors” section below); (b) a predictable and consistent structure in the workplace; (c) clear, direct, and simple communication styles, particularly among leaders (Weber et al., 2022); and (d) awareness, acceptance, and educational training on neurodiversity for coworkers and supervisors. The latter is considered the most effective approach for developing positive relationships and supporting the inclusion of neurodivergent people (Wen et al., 2024). In addition, Selseleh et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of implementing more proactive and universalized support mechanisms that do not depend on disclosure of a disability diagnosis to be accessed. Such support can be promoted through the implementation of the Universal Design for Learning model or through workplace policies and options that are accessible to all employees, rather than only to those who report some form of disability (Selseleh et al., 2025).

According to the reviews, such measures are essential because it is within organizational culture that one of the most complex dilemmas for neurodivergent workers unfolds: the decision of whether or not to disclose their condition. On the one hand, disclosure of a diagnosis is often a formal prerequisite for accessing accommodation and support guaranteed by law or internal policies. On the other hand, disclosure exposes individuals to a real risk of prejudice, discrimination, misunderstandings on the part of coworkers and managers, and even job loss (Morris et al., 2025).

This decision is influenced by a range of personal and contextual factors, including: (a) age at the time of diagnosis; (b) workplace policies and culture; (c) perceptions of how the disclosure will be received by supervisors and coworkers; (d) the level of sensory and social demands in the environment; and (e) the need for accommodations, such as flexible schedules or remote work. These dilemmas are also exacerbated by what Morris et al. (2025) describe as “accommodation gatekeeping,” a systemic practice in which the requirement of a formal diagnosis to obtain support pressures employees to disclose, often before they feel safe to do so. This places the burden of adaptation on the individual and forces them to risk their psychological safety in order to have any chance of accessing more inclusive working conditions. In contrast, Morris et al. (2025) characterize a truly inclusive organizational environment as one in which neurodiversity is normalized to the extent that the benefits of diagnostic disclosure outweigh the potential risks.

Environmental factors. About environmental factors, the reviews analyzed indicate that the physical work environment is a vital factor that can act as either a barrier or a facilitator for neurodivergent workers, directly influencing occupational longevity, performance, and well-being (Weber et al., 2022). The main sensory barriers for individuals with sensory hypersensitivity are regular exposure to a large number of stimuli commonly present in the workplace (Weber et al., 2022), such as open-plan offices, fluorescent lighting, excessive noise, fluctuating temperatures, and visual distractions, which contribute to burnout and mental health-related challenges.

For individuals with hypersensitivity, facilitators primarily aim to reduce these stimuli while also providing opportunities for greater control over the environment. These include regulating the intensity of lighting in the workspace; using earplugs or headphones; accessing private offices, workstations in quiet areas, soundproof cubicles, or decompression rooms for breaks; using screens to minimize visual distractions; controlling the ambient temperature; accessing tactile items (such as *fidget toys*) for self-regulation; and having the option to adjust to remote or hybrid work during critical periods. Such measures are useful as strategies to facilitate inclusion by reducing the impact of stressful environmental stimuli (Morris et al., 2025). Although most research and guidelines focus on hypersensitivity, some also emphasize the importance of environmental control, access to sensory objects, and control over stimulating color schemes for workers who experience hyposensitivity and understimulation (Weber et al., 2022).

Interventions and Support Strategies

Interventions and support strategies for the inclusion of neurodivergent individuals can be broadly organized into two main approaches: those focused on skill development and direct support for the neurodivergent individual, and those aimed at strengthening organizational capacity and transforming the work environment.

Individual-focused interventions. This type of intervention aims to enhance the skills of neurodivergent workers and ensure better alignment between their strengths and the demands of their work roles. Among these strategies, Supported Employment stood out as the most effective and most strongly supported approach for promoting access to and retention in competitive employment (i.e., jobs in the regular labor market, under the same conditions, responsibilities, and remuneration as other workers without disabilities) (Bölte et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2024).

Current evidence indicates that intensive programs based on this model, delivered by employment specialists, enabled up to 90% of participants with autism to obtain competitive employment. In addition to expanding employment opportunities, this intervention is associated with improved quality of life and increased chances of future employability (Bölte et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2024). It is important to note, however, that the successful implementation of supported employment depends on several interrelated factors, including the provision of services such as job coaching, assistance with job searches, transportation services, preparation for working life, and training, as well as detailed assessment of person–job fit and planning of transition processes (Wen et al., 2024).

Beyond this approach, other interventions assessed by Patten et al. (2024) include: (a) programs aimed at developing vocational, communication, and social skills, as well as task management skills, such as the PEERS for Young Adults program (Laugeson et al., 2015; McVey et al., 2016); (b) therapeutic and well-being-promoting interventions, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and mindfulness-based interventions (MBSR), adapted to be affirming of neurodivergent perspectives; (c) personalized mentoring and support programs, with person-centered components, aimed at improving self-awareness and increasing empowerment and social support among neurodivergent people (Morris et al., 2025); and (d) the use of assistive technology to enhance performance and work-relevant communication skills (Beer et al., 2022).

Organization-focused interventions. This type of intervention focuses on changes to the organizational environment, recognizing that inclusion is a shared responsibility. In addition to the organizational factors already mentioned in the section on barriers and facilitators, key strategies in these interventions include: (a) training managers and coworkers on neurodiversity, addressing both the strengths and challenges associated with it, with the aim of challenging stereotypes and addressing the double empathy problem. According to this perspective, communication and understanding difficulties between neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals are not a unilateral deficit of the neurodivergent individual, but rather a mutual difficulty in understanding between people with different neurological processing styles (Milton, 2012), requiring the development of shared communication strategies and mutual understanding (Wen et al., 2024); (b) adapting human resource processes by transforming recruitment and selection practices, including redesigning interviews to allow neurodivergent candidates to demonstrate their technical and analytical competencies more effectively (Morris et al., 2025); and (c) applying principles of Universal Design in the development of work environments, policies, and processes that are inherently accessible to the greatest number of people possible, thereby minimizing the need for individual accommodations (Selseleh et al., 2025).

Discussion

This study aimed to conduct an umbrella review of the literature on neurodiversity and work, synthesizing the types of studies that have been conducted, the populations that have been represented, and the evidence currently available. The reviews examined included relatively large samples. Although six reviews specified the types of neurodivergence investigated, four addressed neurodivergence more broadly, without distinguishing between specific diagnoses. On the one hand, this lack of distinction among different diagnostic groups may reflect an attempt to promote broader inclusion. However, it may also hinder the production of knowledge relevant to different populations

by making it more difficult to identify how particular work environments may be experienced differently by each population, as well as to determine what does or does not work, and for whom (Tomczak & Kulikowski, 2024).

A similar issue was identified with regard to the limited sociodemographic characterization of participants, which failed to account for issues related to intersectionality that are relevant to people's experiences in the workplace. These include limited reporting of ethnic-racial background, age, and gender, which constrains understanding of how different forms of neurodivergence interact with other identities and experiences in the work context (Patten et al., 2024; Weber et al., 2022). Therefore, future studies should consider diverse and representative samples and provide more detailed descriptions of their characteristics, thereby expanding knowledge of how different forms of neurodivergence and intersectional factors shape work experiences.

Methodologically, predominantly descriptive and qualitative designs stood out, allowing researchers to examine the lived experiences, perceptions, and barriers faced by neurodivergent workers (Southey et al., 2024; Wen et al., 2024). Such methodologies are particularly important for giving voice, visibility, and representation to a population that is frequently silenced and misunderstood (Patten et al., 2024). However, this finding also indicates that literature still lacks experimental and longitudinal studies (Wen et al., 2024). In this regard, future research could explore the use of mixed methods, combining qualitative data (to value the experiences and perspectives of neurodivergent workers) with quantitative analyses (to enable more robust and systematic assessments of the effectiveness of workplace interventions and inclusion strategies).

In terms of the knowledge produced, the included studies addressed three main thematic areas: (a) employers' perceptions of neurodiversity in the workplace, (b) barriers to and facilitators of inclusion and career success, and (c) interventions and support strategies. Together, these areas encompass different dimensions of the relationship between neurodiversity and work, providing an overview that highlights both the advances, and the challenges present in the working lives of neurodivergent people.

Regarding the first theme, the studies indicated that employers' perceptions of neurodivergent workers remain predominantly grounded in a biomedical and/or deficit-based model, reinforcing stigma and beliefs that inclusion entails high costs or compromises productivity (Bölte et al., 2025; Morris et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2024). In contrast, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that the inclusion of neurodivergent people can bring several benefits to organizations (Beer et al., 2022; Rijswijk et al., 2025). According to Sharma and Makhija (2024), adopting a neurodiverse organizational culture may provide companies with a competitive advantage by fostering innovation through problem-solving processes enhanced by different perspectives and leadership styles, facilitating the expansion of the talent pool, and promoting better consumer experiences, with improved socioeconomic outcomes for companies and their workers.

More positive and inclusive organizational attitudes were associated with previous experience of inclusion, as well as the presence of institutional policies and external support for managers and teams (Wen et al., 2024). In addition, the need for psychoeducation and awareness-raising regarding neurodivergence to improve inclusion processes was highlighted across all studies. In this regard, future research could advance understanding of the actions (policies, practices, and organizational systems) and psychological processes (stereotype activation, expectations, affective states, and perceptions of justice) that facilitate or hinder the development of more favorable attitudes toward the hiring and inclusion of neurodivergent people (Bölte et al., 2025).

Barriers to and facilitators of inclusion and career success among neurodivergent people were evident in the interplay of individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors. At the individual level, the alignment between a person's skills and interests and the demands of the job (e.g., Person-Job Fit) (Bölte et al., 2025; Morris et al., 2025) was highlighted as important for more favorable productivity, engagement, and well-being outcomes. At the interpersonal level, perceptions of stigma and discrimination and the need for masking were predominant, with implications for the mental health and job retention of neurodivergent people. At the organizational level, barriers included selection processes based on rigid neurotypical norms, the absence of neuroaffirmative policies, and resistance to accommodations, whereas facilitators included flexible practices (such as remote or hybrid work), clear communication, sensory adjustments, and psychologically safe environments to promote well-being, performance, and a sense of belonging. Also at the organizational level, the disclosure dilemma emerged as a particularly sensitive issue for most workers because of the need to disclose a diagnosis to access certain rights while simultaneously facing potential discrimination and uncertainty regarding the impact of disclosure on their careers (Morris et al., 2025). Although barriers and facilitators interact across different aspects, one common element among them is the extent to which relationship quality influences the interplay between individual and job characteristics. For example, inclusive leadership (and, consequently, more positive interpersonal relationships) predicts greater organizational commitment, greater perceived support, better performance, and well-being, with these effects being mediated by a sense of inclusion (Khassawneh, 2025).

To enhance facilitators and reduce barriers, interventions and support strategies can be directed toward the individual and/or the organizational context. At the individual level, Supported Employment was identified as the most effective and well-established intervention for accessing and maintaining competitive employment (Bölte et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2024). Social and vocational skills training programs, specific therapies, personalized mentoring, and the use of assistive technologies also emerged as relevant strategies. However, for these interventions to be effective and ethical, it is essential that they move away from the deficit model and adopt a neuroaffirmative, strengths-based perspective that seeks to foster individual strengths and autonomy (Morris et al., 2025; Patten et al., 2024).

Regarding organizational interventions, in addition to the facilitators identified above, training managers and coworkers on neurodiversity and inclusive communication, as well as reviewing selection processes for neurodivergent people, have been shown to be important for creating more inclusive environments (Morris et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2024). Another relevant intervention is the application of the Universal Design Model to the development of work environments, policies, and processes that are inherently accessible to as many people as possible, thereby minimizing the need for individual accommodation (Selseleh et al., 2025). However, some authors caution that universal design measures are insufficient to address the wide variability of neurodivergent conditions, arguing that more effective accommodations are those individually tailored to each worker, considering their specific characteristics, preferences, and demands (Weber et al., 2022). Therefore, universal design measures should be implemented alongside individualized accommodation aimed at addressing each worker's unique needs, integrating equity and flexibility as central principles of effective organizational inclusion (Morris et al., 2025).

As with interventions focused on the individual, organizational interventions should also incorporate neuroaffirmative approaches (Bölte et al., 2025; Morris et al., 2025; Patten et al., 2024; Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024; Selseleh et al., 2025; Weber et al., 2022). In other words, the aim is not to "adjust" neurodivergent individuals so that they fit the system, but rather to redesign these systems in ways that facilitate the recognition of neurodivergence as a natural variation of the human species that can be a source of important strengths and qualities. This shift entails a transition between social paradigms, from a deficit-focused model toward a biopsychosocial model that allows for a more balanced understanding of the interplay between biology and individual abilities and social and psychological contexts, thereby enabling strengths and potential to be valued.

In practice, this transition is known to face barriers associated with neoliberal logic and the capitalist model of production, which tend to reduce the uniqueness of human experience to parameters of normalization and productivity. Thus, for inclusion to be sustainable, a broader paradigmatic shift may be necessary, from the centrality of individualism toward values of cooperation and collectivity, recognizing vulnerability and interdependence as dimensions inherent to all human beings. In the organizational context, this entails questioning the premise that accommodations cease to be reasonable when they affect immediate performance metrics, as well as recognizing that full citizenship often requires care, rather than productive autonomy alone (Ahonen et al., 2014; Aydos & Fietz, 2017; Doyle, 2020). Accordingly, future research should investigate how public policies addressing work and incorporating sensitivity to neurodiversity and intersectionality may contribute to encouraging more inclusive organizational practices (McDowall et al., 2025). In addition, empirical research should examine how organizational practices based on interdependence, mutual support, and flexibility affect objective performance indicators, such as retention, engagement, and innovation. Producing evidence on the effects of these strategies is essential for strengthening perspectives that inclusion is not incompatible with productivity and has the potential to expand outcomes over the medium and long term (Kirby & Smith, 2021).

Finally, this review aimed to provide an overview of the current state of the literature on neurodiversity and work, synthesizing the available evidence and identifying gaps and possible directions for future research. A key limitation is that it was not possible to conduct risk-of-bias assessments of the primary studies included in the reviews analyzed, as the information required for this procedure was not available in a systematic form. In addition, no formal assessment of the methodological quality of the included reviews or grading of the strength of the evidence was conducted. The absence of these procedures constitutes a limitation of the study and should be considered when interpreting the findings. We also did not systematically assess the overlap of primary studies across the reviews analyzed, as the aim of this study was not to quantify findings but to identify trends, convergences, and gaps in literature. Thus, the same primary study may have been included in more than one review and, consequently, represented more than once in the synthesis. This possibility should be considered when interpreting the results and the reported totals. Accordingly, the 481 primary studies and 11,178 participants represent the sum of the information reported by the included reviews and do not necessarily correspond to independent studies or participants.

Furthermore, all reviews that met the inclusion criteria were conducted in developed countries and published in English. This concentration of evidence calls for caution when generalizing the findings to different cultural and economic contexts, particularly in the Global South. As a review

conducted by Brazilian researchers and published in a Brazilian journal, the present study contributes to this literature while also highlighting the need for further research in Brazil and other Global South contexts to understand how neurodiversity and work intersect within their specific social, cultural, economic, and organizational contexts.

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