

Inclusion of Autistic Adults in the Labor Market: A Critical Analysis from the Perspective of Psychology

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Summary

The inclusion of autistic adults in the labor market remains a significant challenge, despite the...

Advances in recognizing neurodiversity as a spectrum of valuable cognitive variations.

This theoretical-critical essay aims to analyze the main organizational barriers faced by autistic individuals, articulating recent scientific literature with the author's situated experience, as an autistic adult professional in administration. A qualitative approach is adopted, based on an integrative literature review (2018-2025) and autoethnographic reflective analysis.

The findings reveal that the barriers are predominantly structural and multifaceted. Processes exclusionary selection methods, such as standardized behavioral interviews and group dynamics that They prioritize neurotypicality, eliminating qualified autistic candidates from the initial recruitment stage.

Social biases, including stereotypes of "lack of social skills" or "cognitive rigidity,"

They perpetuate implicit discrimination, according to studies by Austin and Pisano (2021) and Crane et al. (2023). Furthermore, the absence of organizational adaptations — such as sensory environments

Controlled behavior, clear written communication, and flexible schedules — exacerbate burnout and turnover. elevated, reported in up to 80% of cases (Hedley et al., 2022). The author's experience corroborates these findings.

Data: In Brazilian corporate contexts, minimal adaptations are needed, such as the use of focus software.

Sensory feedback resulted in increased productivity, in contrast to previous rejections due to...

"Cultural incompatibility." It is argued that effective inclusion requires systemic changes, such as...

adoption of neurodiverse organizational models (e.g., neurodiverse hiring at SAP and Microsoft),

cognitive anti-racist training and performance metrics based on outcomes, not on

social conformity. It is concluded that the articulation between theory and personal experience not only broadens the

understanding the phenomenon, but also strengthening inclusive practices, promoting equity and

Sustainable organizational innovation.

Keywords: Inclusion; Autistic individuals; Labor market; Organizational barriers;

Neurodiversity; Integrative review; Reflective analysis; Selection processes; Social biases;

Organizational adaptations; Systemic changes; Cognitive diversity; Autoethnography;

Burnout; Neurodiverse Hiring.

Abstract

The inclusion of autistic adults in the job market remains a significant challenge, despite advances in recognizing neurodiversity as a spectrum of valuable cognitive variations. This critical theory essay analyzes the main organizational barriers faced by autistic individuals, integrating recent scientific literature with the author's situated experience as an autistic adult professional in business administration. It adopts a qualitative approach, grounded in an integrative literature review (2018-2025 period) and reflective autoethnographic analysis. Findings reveal that barriers are predominantly structural and multifaceted. Exclusive selection processes, such as standardized behavioral interviews and group dynamics favoring neurotypicality, eliminate qualified autistic candidates from the outset. Social biases, including stereotypes of "lack of social skills" or "cognitive rigidity," perpetuate implicit discrimination, as per studies by Austin and Pisano (2021) and Crane et al. (2023). Moreover, the absence of organizational adaptations—such as sensory-controlled environments, clearly written communication, and flexible schedules—exacerbates burnout and high turnover, reported in up to 80% of cases (Hedley et al., 2022). The author's experience corroborates these findings: in Brazilian corporate contexts, minimal adaptations such as sensory-focused software led to greater productivity, in contrast to prior rejections due to "cultural incompatibility." It is argued that effective inclusion requires systemic changes, such as adopting neurodiverse organizational models (eg, neurodiverse hiring at SAP and Microsoft), cognitive antiracism training, and performance metrics based on outcomes rather than social conformity. In conclusion, the articulation between theory and personality experience not only broadens understanding of the phenomenon but also strengthens practices, promoting equity and sustainable organizational innovation.

Keywords: Inclusion; Autistic adults; Job market; Organizational barriers; Neurodiversity; Integrative review; Reflective analysis; Selection processes; Social biases; Organizational adaptations; Systemic changes; Cognitive diversity; Autoethnography; Burnout; Neurodiverse hiring.

1. Introduction

The inclusion of autistic adults in the job market is one of the challenges more complex and urgent in the field of contemporary psychology, especially at the interfaces between mental health, work, and human rights. Despite significant progress in discussions about neurodiversity, it is observed that the participation of autistic individuals in the workforce remains disproportionately low compared to the general population.

"The notion of neurodiversity, consolidated in recent decades, proposes a change paradigmatic in understanding neurological differences, shifting the focus from disability to...

diversity” (Doyle, 2020). However, this change is not yet consistently reflected in Organizational practices, which remain anchored in normative models centered on standards. neurotypical behaviors and social interaction.

In this context, the exclusion of autistic individuals from the labor market cannot be... understood not only as a result of individual characteristics, but rather as an effect of Social and organizational structures that produce and reproduce inequalities. Psychology, especially in its organizational and social aspects, it offers fundamental tools for the A critical analysis of these dynamics.

Furthermore, this study incorporates the dimension of the author's situated experience as an adult. autistic, recognizing it as a relevant epistemological element. This perspective allows for tension. To overcome the limitations of traditional approaches and broaden the understanding of the phenomenon beyond the data. quantitative and general descriptions.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Neurodiversity as a critical paradigm

The concept of neurodiversity emerges as a critique of biomedical approaches. traditional approaches, proposing a broader and more inclusive understanding of cognitive differences. According to Doyle (2020), “this is a biopsychosocial model that recognizes both the challenges and the "Potential of neurodivergent individuals."

From a psychological point of view, this approach implies a profound revision of the categories. diagnostic criteria and normality criteria. The centrality of social adaptation as a parameter of Proper functioning is being questioned, opening space for the appreciation of diversity. cognitive.

2.2 Work Psychology and Structural Exclusion

Work Psychology has historically contributed to the organization of systems. Productive, often reinforcing normative patterns of behavior. Selection processes. Traditional methods, based on open interviews and the assessment of social skills, tend to to prioritize neurotypical individuals.

Austin and Pisano (2017) demonstrate that “such practices function as exclusionary filters, preventing autistic individuals from having their technical skills assessed fairly.” This

This phenomenon can be understood as a form of structural exclusion, in which criteria
Apparently neutral factors produce inequality.

2.3 Subjectivity, work and belonging

Job placement is not limited to the economic dimension, but is profoundly...
related to the construction of identity, belonging, and social recognition. The exclusion of
Being autistic, therefore, implies not only a loss of opportunities, but also impacts.
significant in subjectivity.

Social Psychology contributes to understanding how implicit norms regulate...
belonging to groups, defining who is considered suitable or unsuitable. In this sense, the
Neurocognitive differences are then interpreted as deviations, which reinforces processes of
marginalization.

3. Methodology

This study is characterized as a theoretical-critical essay, based on a review.
The review incorporated an integrative literature review and situated reflective analysis. It included scientific publications.
national and international publications between 2015 and 2024, including databases such as the Library
Virtual Health Library (BVS), in addition to relevant international journals in the fields of psychology,
administration and inclusion.

The data analysis was conducted in an interpretive manner, seeking to identify patterns.
recurring issues and challenging the findings in light of the author's experience. This articulation between theory and
lived experience allows for a more complex and contextualized approach to the phenomenon being investigated.

4. Discussion

4.1 Selection processes as exclusion mechanisms

Selection processes are one of the main points of exclusion for individuals.
autistic individuals. The emphasis on social skills, implicit communication, and reading social context creates
significant barriers.

These criteria, although often considered neutral, reflect cultural patterns.
specific criteria that do not consider cognitive diversity. Thus, exclusion occurs even before...
assessment of technical skills.

4.2 The invisibility of structural barriers

One of the most critical aspects identified in the literature is the invisibility of the barriers. organizational. Frequently, the difficulties faced by autistic individuals are attributed to individual deficits, disregarding the role of the environment.

This perspective reinforces the adaptive logic, according to which the individual must adjust to The system, instead of promoting structural changes. Such logic is incompatible with the principles of inclusion.

4.3 Situated experience as knowledge production

The author's experience reveals that barriers don't only manifest themselves in specific moments. Formal situations, such as interviews, but also in everyday organizational settings. Situations that appear Simple things, like meetings or informal interactions, can become highly exclusionary.

This experiential dimension highlights aspects that often escape methodologies. traditional, reinforcing the importance of including situated perspectives in the production of scientific knowledge.

4.4 Inclusive organizational models

The literature indicates that organizations that adopt structured inclusion models exhibit Better results, both social and productive. Among the most effective practices, the following stand out:

- Restructuring of selection processes
- Environmental adaptations
- Team training
- Valuing technical skills

These strategies indicate that inclusion is not only an ethical issue, but also a competitive advantage.

Final Considerations

The analysis developed in this study highlights the exclusion of autistic adults from the market. This work environment stems from organizational structures that prioritize neurotypical patterns. Overcoming this... This scenario demands profound changes in management models and organizational culture.



The connection between scientific literature and situated experience proved fundamental for Understanding the phenomenon allows for the integration of objective and subjective dimensions.

Finally, the need for Psychology to expand its critical role is highlighted, contributing to... building more inclusive and socially just practices.

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