

Neurodiversity in the South African Workplace: Corporate Policy and Lived Experience in the Technology Sector, 2004

L, e, r, a, t, o, N, k, o, s, i, ,, J, a, m, e, s, v, a, n, d, e, r, M, e, r, w, e

| Abstract

Background: Neurodiversity in the workplace was an emerging global discourse, yet its application within the African context remained under-

examined. During 2004, South Africa's technology sector was expanding, but the inclusion of neurodivergent professionals was not a recognised focus of corporate policy. Purpose and objectives: This working paper provides an initial exploration of corporate policy approaches and the lived experiences of neurodivergent employees within South Africa's technology sector in 2004. It seeks to identify existing practices and barriers to inclusion specific to this context. Methodology: The study used a qualitative, exploratory design. Data were gathered in 2004 through semi-structured interviews with neurodivergent employees and human resources managers from five technology firms in Johannesburg and Cape Town. A thematic analysis was conducted. Findings: No formal neurodiversity policies or hiring initiatives were identified in the participating companies. A dominant theme from employee interviews was the necessity of individual, undisclosed coping strategies to manage workplace demands. Approximately 80% of neurodivergent interviewees reported experiencing significant workplace fatigue from masking their traits. Conclusion: In 2004, neurodiversity was not an integrated concept within the corporate policy framework of the sampled South African technology firms. Inclusion relied entirely on individual employee adaptation rather than systemic support. Recommendations: Companies should develop formal awareness training for management on neurodiversity. Pilot programmes for workplace adjustments should be considered. Further research is needed to develop contextually relevant frameworks for South Africa. Key words: neurodiversity, South Africa, workplace, technology sector, corporate policy, inclusion, 2004

Contribution statement: This paper provides foundational insight into neurodiversity in the South African workplace, a subject absent from African Studies literature in this period, and establishes a baseline for future research.
