

# Embracing Neurodiversity: **RECOGNISING STRENGTHS BEYOND CHALLENGES**



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Dr. Saurabh Bansal is trained in Neurology at the prestigious institute, PGIMER CHD. He was awarded a scholarship in the field of Clinical Movement Disorders at the University of Western Ontario, Canada and has won various awards in the field of neurology.

Neurodiversity is a term that celebrates the diversity of all individuals, highlighting the unique strengths and talents that people possess, especially those with neurological or developmental conditions. While it encompasses various conditions, it is often associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and other neurodevelopmental conditions. In India alone, approximately 2 million people are identified as neuro diverse, according to a report by Deloitte.

**The global prevalence of an early-onset of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is ~1% and is a priority for the global mental health agenda. 78 million people worldwide are affected by autism, and the impact on individuals and families is enormous. INCLIN study suggests that ASD prevalence across five states in the north and west India was as high as one in 125 children between the 2-6 years age group and 1 in 80 among children in 6-9 years age; overall, the prevalence in India is estimated to be 1 in 89.**

Neurodiversity differs from mental illness, which involves changes in a person's 'state of mind' from their 'normal self.' The causes of neurodevelopmental conditions are diverse and can include factors such as genetics, trauma at birth, infectious diseases, immune disorders, nutritional factors, and physical trauma.

Contrary to viewing neurodiversity as a disadvantage, contemporary perspectives regard it as a unique blessing. Research suggests that neurodivergent individuals bring distinctive strengths and talents to the table, contributing significant value to organisations. For instance, individuals with autism often demonstrate exceptional attention to detail, remarkable memory, and an ability to focus intensely on tasks for extended periods. Similarly, those with dyslexia may exhibit outstanding problem-solving skills, creative thinking, and meticulous attention to detail.

Recognising and harnessing these strengths, some forward-thinking companies have reformed their Human Resources (HR) processes to actively seek neuro diverse talent. Among these companies are industry leaders such as SAP, Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), Microsoft, Willis Towers Watson, Ford, and EY. These organisations have not only seen reputational enhancements but have also experienced tangible benefits in terms of productivity gains, improved quality, enhanced innovative capabilities, and increased overall employee engagement.

Creating an inclusive work environment that values neurodiversity is not only socially responsible but also makes good business sense. By embracing the unique talents and perspectives of neurodivergent individuals, companies can foster innovation, boost productivity, and create a workplace where every employee feels valued and empowered.

The paradigm shift towards recognising and embracing neurodiversity is a positive step forward. It challenges stereotypes and encourages a more inclusive and supportive society. As awareness grows, more organisations are likely to follow suit, unlocking the full potential of every individual, regardless of their neurodivergent characteristics. Ultimately, embracing neurodiversity is not just a celebration of differences; it is an investment in a richer, more dynamic future for workplaces and communities alike.

\*\*Source: Public Health Dimensions of Autism Spectrum Disorder in India: An Overview - [https://journalofcomprehensivehealth.co.in/index.php/jch/article/view/207#:~:text=The%20global%20prevalence%20of%20an,mental%20health%20agenda%20\(1\).](https://journalofcomprehensivehealth.co.in/index.php/jch/article/view/207#:~:text=The%20global%20prevalence%20of%20an,mental%20health%20agenda%20(1).)



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