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ARTICLE

Neurodiversity: expanding the boundaries of diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations

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Abstract

In recent decades, the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) agenda has highlighted the importance of including different minority groups in organizations. Despite the scientific advances of DE&I in the field of management and organizations, the neurodiversity movement has been neglected both in the literature and in organizational practice. This theoretical essay discusses how the neurodiversity movement can be included in this segment to propose a research agenda that recognizes neurominorities as a relevant social group to be investigated in academic research. We present four propositions as guidelines for future research into the intersection between DE&I and neurodiversity based on economic, critical, and interdisciplinary perspectives linked to labor market dynamics.

Keywords: Neurodiversity. Diversity. Equity and inclusion. Organizations.

Neurodiversidade: expandindo as fronteiras da diversidade, equidade e inclusão nas organizações

Resumo

Nas últimas décadas, a agenda de diversidade, equidade e inclusão (DE&I) tem colocado em evidência a importância da inclusão de diferentes grupos minorizados nas organizações. Apesar dos avanços científicos da DE&I no campo de gestão e organizações, o movimento da neurodiversidade tem sido negligenciado tanto na literatura quanto na prática organizacional. Nesse contexto, o objetivo deste ensaio teórico é discorrer sobre como o movimento da neurodiversidade pode ser inserido nesse segmento, no intuito de propor uma agenda de pesquisa que reconheça as neurominorias como um grupo social relevante a ser investigado nas pesquisas acadêmicas. Ao final, são apresentadas 4 proposições que fornecem diretrizes para futuras pesquisas sobre a interseção entre DE&I e neurodiversidade, as quais são fundamentadas nas perspectivas econômica, crítica, interdisciplinar e ligadas às dinâmicas do mercado de trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Neurodiversidade. Diversidade. Equidade e inclusão. Organizações.

Neurodiversidad: ampliando los límites de la diversidad, equidad y inclusión en las organizaciones

Resumen

En las últimas décadas, la agenda de diversidad, equidad e inclusión (DEI) ha puesto de relieve la importancia de incluir a diferentes grupos minoritarios en las organizaciones. A pesar de los avances científicos de la DEI en el ámbito de la gestión y las organizaciones, el movimiento de la neurodiversidad ha sido desatendido tanto en la literatura como en la práctica organizativa. En este contexto, el objetivo de este ensayo teórico es discutir cómo el movimiento de la neurodiversidad puede incluirse en este segmento, con la intención de proponer una agenda de investigación que reconozca a las neurominorías como un grupo social relevante a explorar en las investigaciones académicas. Al final, se presentan 4 proposiciones que proporcionan directrices para futuras investigaciones sobre la intersección entre la DEI y la neurodiversidad, basadas en perspectivas económicas, críticas e interdisciplinares y vinculadas a las dinámicas del mercado laboral.

Palabras clave: Neurodiversidad. Diversidad. Equidad e inclusión. Organizaciones.

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INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) have gained increasing relevance, driven by organizations' concerns with promoting fairer and more inclusive environments (Deloitte, 2022; HBR, 2020). In the organizational context, DE&I encompasses the inclusion of minority groups, covering issues such as gender, race, LGBTQIAPN+, and disability, among other underrepresented groups in organizations and society (Deloitte, 2022; Fraga et al., 2022; Köllen, 2021; Yadav & Lenka, 2020).

Over the last few decades, DE&I has transcended the merely practical scope of organizations, emerging as a scientific perspective in the business and management fields (Fraga et al., 2022). The evolution of such perspective is characterized by a set of different interpretations of the phenomenon of diversity in organizations (Fonseca, Matitz, & Chaerki, 2022; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2013; Köllen, 2021). For many authors, it encompasses tendency of both an economic and critical nature (Alves & Galeão-Silva, 2004; Teixeira, Oliveira, Diniz, & Marcondes, 2021; Yadav & Lenka, 2020; Yadav & Lenka, 2023).

Regardless of the researchers' approach, the discussion on DE&I has advanced considerably, as pointed out in the most recent systematic reviews (Fonseca, Matitz, & Chaerki, 2022; Fraga et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023; Yadav & Lenka, 2020; 2023). The predominance of certain minority groups (gender and race, for instance) in studies covering this topic, highlights challenges, as diversity practices in organizations are not carried out in isolation between different groups. The lack of representation of certain minoritized groups in DE&I research and practices, such as neurominorities, presents theoretical and empirical challenges (Doyle, 2020; BAM, 2023).

Neurominorities – neuroatypical or neurodivergent people – are individuals whose neurological development differs from what is considered "normal" in the human brain (Doyle, 2020), such as autism spectrum disorder (Doyle & McDowall, 2021). This social group faces several barriers regarding inclusion in organizations and the job market (Leopoldino, 2015; Leopoldino & Costa-Coelho, 2017), requiring advances in research and practices that approach the dimension of neurodiversity, i.e., the study of neurominorities (other neurodivergences are also included here, such as ADHD, Dyslexia, and Tourette syndrome).

DE&I literature has neglected neurominorities as part of human diversity, and empirical research is scarce, especially in Brazil (Basto & Cepellos, 2023; Leopoldino & Costa-Coelho, 2017). Thus, as a central question of our essay, we maintain that there is an interdisciplinary literature that contemplates neurodiversity; however, it remains disconnected from research in the field of DE&I (Doyle & McDowall, 2021; LeFevre-Levy, Melson-Silimon, Harmata, Hulett, & Carter, 2023). Establishing the connection between these domains is imperative to promote scientific advancement in DE&I.

There are numerous reasons for including neurominorities as part of the DE&I agenda. Scientific studies suggest that although 15% to 20% of the population has some type of neurodivergence (Doyle, 2020), a large proportion suffers discrimination and social stigma in society and organizations (Elraz, 2018; Turnock, Langley, & Jones, 2022). In Brazil, for example, data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) indicate that 85% of autistic adults are unemployed (Rocha, 2019). This rate is similar to that observed in European countries and the United States at around 80% (Forbes, 2021; Gov.uk, 2023).

Other empirical studies indicate that the unemployment rate of neurominorities in developed countries can be up to three times higher than that observed for individuals with physical disabilities and six times higher compared to people without disabilities (Khan, Grabarski, & Buckmaster, 2022). These disparities can be attributed to the lack of knowledge on the part of organizations when it comes to creating inclusive work environments for neurodivergent individuals (Doyle & McDowall, 2021). According to a study conducted by Deloitte (2022) in Brazil, although large organizations have started incorporating neurodiversity as a voluntary initiative into their diversity strategies, the adoption rate is only 5%.

Research on neurodiversity has taken its own path in interdisciplinary studies in the international literature (Doyle & McDowall, 2021; Khan, Grabarski, & Buckmaster, 2022; LeFevre-Levy et al., 2023). However, when consulting the SciELO and Spell databases for Brazilian studies, only the articles by Ortega (2008; 2009) mentioned the issue of neurodiversity. There are also some interdisciplinary examples in the Google Scholar database but in contexts outside the field of DE&I, which highlights the need for further research. Therefore, this theoretical essay seeks to combine the trajectories of DE&I and neurodiversity literature to present a research agenda that recognizes neurominorities as a minoritized group to be investigated in DE&I research.

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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations increasingly grapple with challenges tied to social inequalities, which directly impact well-being and coexistence in society. Movements against racism (Bernstein, Bulger, Salipante, & Weisinger, 2020; Otten, Faughnan, Flattley, & Fleurinor, 2022), endeavors for gender equality (Cukier, Gagnon, & Latif, 2019), and fights against discrimination toward the LGBTQIAPN+ community (Teixeira et al., 2021; Paniza & Moresco, 2022) have been pivotal in instigating new public policies and organizational initiatives to mitigate systemic injustices concerning the inclusion of these marginalized social groups in both society and organizations (Cukier, Gagnon, & Latif, 2019; Otten et al., 2022).

The term "diversity" gained prominence through the social movements of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, culminating in the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This legislation aimed to ensure equal opportunities and equitable employment practices for various marginalized social groups, including Black people, women, and individuals with disabilities (PWDs) (Alves & Galeão-Silva, 2004; Byrd & Sparkman, 2022). In response to governmental affirmative actions during that era, diversity management became ingrained in organizational practices and scientific literature (Cox & Blake, 1991; Fleury, 2000). It evolved into a means of internally controlling and managing diversity, often associated with discourses on creativity, innovation, and competitive advantage (Cox & Blake, 1991; Fleury, 2000).

DE&I literature is characterized by distinct philosophical bases with two predominant approaches: economic and critical perspectives (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2013; Byrd & Sparkman, 2022). The economic perspective views DE&I as a tool for companies to achieve economic performance and competitive advantage. It argues that a heterogeneous organization, comprising individuals with diverse experiences, cultures, personalities, ages, genders, and races, fosters new business opportunities in terms of innovation, problem-solving, productivity, and reputation among stakeholders (Costa, Sampaio, & Flores, 2019; Ferreira & Rais, 2016).

Conversely, the critical perspective aims to unveil business discourses and highlight the mechanisms of oppression, discrimination, and prejudice affecting minority groups within organizational structures (Alves & Galeão-Silva, 2004; Irigaray, Stocker, & Mancebo, 2022; Saraiva & Irigaray, 2009; Teixeira et al., 2021). It posits that the purpose of organizations is not solely economic but primarily ethical, with a responsibility to promote equality and social justice. From this viewpoint, organizations are morally obliged to advocate for "impartiality, fairness, and justice in support of socially marginalized individuals and groups" (Byrd & Sparkman, 2022, p. 85).

Moreover, the critical perspective seeks to elucidate power dynamics and domination in both organizations and society, such as the underrepresentation of women on boards of directors (Barros & Kirschbaum, 2023). While a review of international literature by Fonseca, Matitz, and Chaerki (2022) reveals the predominance of the economic perspective, representing 67% of total publications, Byrd and Sparkman (2022) advocate for the complementary nature of these approaches, which have historically been viewed as mutually exclusive.

Despite the absence of consensus on the concept of diversity, as Fraga et al. (2022) noted, the economic and critical philosophical bases diverge in their understanding of the term and its objects of investigation. The economic perspective incorporates broader definitions and nuances of individual differences, such as diversity of thoughts, skills, personalities, culture, and work experience, while the critical perspective focuses on researching minoritized groups in social and organizational contexts (Byrd & Sparkman, 2022).

For Köllen (2021, p. 4), these social groups are distinguished by dimensionalities: "Any dimension (or category) whereby people share a specific manifestation of that dimension with one another, or, conversely, whereby people differ from one another in terms of a specific manifestation of the dimension." Therefore, we adopt a definition of diversity that incorporates the notion of minoritized groups involving dimensions such as gender, race, disability, and, particularly, neurominorities.

When investigating the dimensionalities of diversity, Yadav and Lenka (2020) found the prevalence of studies that consider age, gender, and race. The study by Fonseca, Matitz, and Chaerki (2022) points out that gender, ethnic, and LGBTQIAPN+ diversities have been the most discussed dimensions in international literature. According to the results of Brazilian research on diversity, Fraga et al. (2022) indicate that the dimensions of gender, sexuality, and disability have the highest incidence in scientific publications, also pointing out, in smaller numbers, studies that investigate ethnic-racial, cultural,

and generational aspects. Recently, researchers such as LeFevre-Levy et al. (2023) and Fraga et al. (2022) have highlighted the need for theoretical and empirical research that investigates neurominorities as an expression of diversity in DE&I studies (Doyle & McDowall, 2021).

In addition to dimensionalities, understanding DE&I also involves comprehending intersectionality (Cukier, Gagnon, & Latif, 2019; Daya & April, 2017; Köllen, 2021), investigating the interrelationship between dimensions of inequality, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, LGBTQIAPN+, disability, among others, that manifest in social and organizational contexts (Cukier, Gagnon, & Latif, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2021; Köllen, 2021). Currently, intersectionality is a practical and critical perspective that reveals the multiple forms of oppression resulting from the combination of different dimensions (Collins & Bilge, 2021), understanding how power structures manifest in social life and produce oppression, making it invisible and marginalizing certain identities (Cukier, Gagnon, & Latif, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2021).

Intersectionality investigates, for example, the lens of the race marker on the experiences of Black academics. These individuals are more invisible in the area of management, from job search to promotion and stability in the job market (Miller, Wesley, Bell, & Avery, 2020) – an example of how White men have more job opportunities than Black men due to historical and class issues. Furthermore, there are frequent studies on the pay gap between Black people, exploring the influence on productivity in the organizational context of employees (Buttner & Lowe, 2017). This exemplifies that, currently, White people from higher social classes tend to receive higher salaries than Black men, highlighting a persistent legacy of Eurocentrism that continues to impact current social practices. In the context of neurominorities, studies can relate the issues of each neurodivergence to other dimensions of diversity.

Considering the complexities regarding the representation of human diversity, organizations have shown interest in inclusion and engaging in egalitarian employability practices and internal processes for minoritized groups (Adamson et al., 2020). However, some groups, such as neurominorities, are still more invisible than others; hence, management and organizations need to understand the relationship between neurodiversity and DE&I to create strategies that mitigate this invisibilization. Inclusion is the degree to which an individual feels part of the organization's processes through the information and resources to which they have access, as well as the form of involvement with managers, colleagues, and their influence on decision-making processes (Ferdman, 2017; Bernstein et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is a process outlined at macro, meso, and micro levels established by values, policies, and practices, such as norms, group climates, attitudes, and individual behavior (Ferdman, 2017).

Inclusion also aims to incorporate diversity into organizational systems, promoting employee engagement to minimize barriers preventing participation in the company's processes. The objective is for them to feel like they belong and can fully explore their capabilities and talents (Adamson et al., 2020), maximizing the benefits of diversity, promoting and fostering rights, access, and employment privileges, as well as promotion for all members of the organization (Combs, Miloseciv, & Bilimoria, 2019).

Numerous research avenues are outlined when considering neurominorities as part of minoritized groups within organizations. Viewing neurominorities as a dimension of DE&I enables exploration from both economic and critical perspectives. This approach facilitates understanding the intersectionalities between neurominorities and other pertinent dimensions like race, gender, and disability. These intersections shed light on issues related to accessing resources crucial for inclusion, such as social class, education, and comorbidities associated with neurological conditions. For instance, one might delve into the correlation between autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), bipolar disorder, and other conditions. However, this topic is not novel despite its relevance and finds its roots in interdisciplinary scientific fields. Thus, contextualizing the concept of neurodiversity becomes imperative to fully realize its interconnections with DE&I.

NEURODIVERSITY AS A FIELD UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Credited largely to sociologist Judy Singer (1998) in the 1990s, the term "neurodiversity" has become a central concept for understanding the natural variability of human cognition present in individuals (Singer, 2016). Its origins can be traced back to the impassioned advocacy of the autistic community worldwide in their quest for rights and the battle against discrimination. It is intimately intertwined with the development of the social model of disability, a perspective championed by scholars and various social actors at the time, in contrast to the prevailing medical model (Barnes, 2019; Chapman, 2021; Doyle & McDowall, 2021; Dwyer, 2022; Ortega, 2009). To grasp these differences, Dwyer (2022) delineates three prevailing approaches to comprehending neurodiversity in theory and practice.

The first, defined as the medical model, perceives disabilities, cognitive disorders, and deficits as pathologies to be remedied through treatments. In this view, neurominorities such as autistic individuals are subjected to medical interventions aimed at aligning their behavior with societal norms (Kapp, Gillespie-Lynch, Sherman, & Hutman, 2013; Dwyer, 2022).

Conversely, the social model of disability regards neurodivergences as inherent aspects of human diversity, akin to racial, gender, and LGBTQIAPN+ diversity, among others. From this standpoint, perceived limitations and deficiencies stem from societal barriers that often hinder the inclusion of neuroatypical individuals in various social contexts. For instance, many human resources departments are ill-equipped to accommodate neurodivergent candidates during recruitment and selection processes, resulting in social exclusion related to employability in several countries (Barnes, 2019; Doyle & McDowall, 2021; Dwyer, 2022).

While the medical model focuses on individual limitations, the social model attributes responsibility for these barriers to society. To bridge this dichotomy, authors such as Dwyer (2022), Singer (2016), and Chapman (2021) have proposed a conception that seeks to reconcile both views. They argue that "a neurodiverse approach, operating in a middle ground between the extremes of the medical and social models, would be more practical and less controversial" (Dwyer 2022, p. 76). Therefore, neurodiversity acknowledges the interaction between an individual's characteristics and the environment in which they live, fostering the development of adaptive skills while advocating for the reshaping of society and environments to promote the inclusion of neurominorities.

As the terms "neurodiversity" and "neurodiverse people" encompass all individuals, the introduction of new vocabulary begins to represent social groups and identities facing disadvantages and discrimination in society. Expressions such as "neurominorities," "neurodivergent," and "neuroatypical" are becoming integral to public and academic discourse, referring to individuals and social groups whose brain functioning deviates from the norm and who encounter barriers in society due to this condition (Doyle & McDowall, 2021). Though consensus on such groups is lacking, people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and Tourette syndrome are considered neuroatypical (Doyle, 2020; Doyle & McDowall, 2021), among other conditions less prevalent in scientific literature, such as bipolar disorder (BD) and schizophrenia (Baker, 2011; Chapman, 2020).

With the advancement of scientific research on neurodiversity, the concept becomes increasingly diffuse and lacks consensus (Dwyer, 2022), permeating various academic fields, including disability studies (Ortega, 2009; Robertson, 2010), medicine (Doyle, 2020; Jaarsma & Welin, 2012), psychology (Chapman, 2021; Chellappa, 2023), education (Armstrong, 2017; Clouder et al., 2020), sociology (Leveto, 2018; Casanova & Widman, 2021), among others. In international journals within the organizational context, it has been observed that the term gained greater prominence from 2019 onward, particularly in studies of organizational psychology and human relations. However, this literature is still emerging and is not directly related to studies on DE&I (Khan et al., 2022; Krzeminska, Austin, Bruyère, & Hedley, 2019).

In the Brazilian context, an examination of SciELO and Spell databases reveals limited literature on the subject, with the term "neurodiversity" found only in articles by Ortega (2008; 2009). In these works, the author discusses the origin of the neurodiversity movement on the global stage and offers pertinent reflections relevant to the Brazilian reality. There are also some studies in the Google Scholar database, but all fall outside the field of DE&I. Consequently, while research on neurodiversity has gained prominence in interdisciplinary literature, there remains a significant gap in connecting the concept of neurodiversity with

DE&I, underscoring the necessity for future investigations spanning multiple research fields, as evidenced in editors' special calls for papers (BAM, 2023). Thus, this essay addresses these gaps by proposing a research agenda integrating neurodiversity into DE&I discussions.

AN AGENDA FOR NEURODIVERSITY RESEARCH IN DE&I

The potential relationships between DE&I and neurodiversity unveil both challenges and opportunities in theory and organizational practices. Integrating neurodiversity into the DE&I agenda paves the way for novel pathways informed by economic or critical perspectives, facilitating an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach. Practically, the growing interest in integrating neurominorities into the organizational environment and the job market offers insights into best practices, limitations, and challenges faced by organizations of varying sizes. Within this context, we propose a research agenda for exploring neurodiversity in DE&I based on four central research propositions, each encapsulating a suite of significant questions for future studies, as elaborated in Table 1 at the conclusion of this work.

Major corporations like IBM, Google, and SAP have embraced the inclusion of neuroatypical individuals as a pivotal component of their organizational diversity strategies, resulting in enhanced team performance and tangible competitive advantages (Austin & Pisano, 2017). A neurodiverse team has been associated with positive individual and organizational outcomes, as evidenced by Khan et al. (2022). Their research reveals that, at an individual level, the varied support provided by inclusion fosters feelings of belonging, commitment, and loyalty within work teams. On an organizational scale, the diverse skill set inherent in a neurodiverse team correlates with innovation and serves as a wellspring of competitive advantages, such as heightened productivity, retention, and financial performance (Khan et al., 2022).

According to Doyle (2020), neuroatypical individuals possess not only challenges but also common skills that equip them to excel in organizational roles. For instance, individuals with ADHD demonstrate aptitudes in visual-spatial reasoning and creative thinking, while autistic individuals exhibit meticulous attention to detail, coupled with exceptional abilities in areas such as art, music, and computing (Doyle, 2020). Thus, neurodiversity can be examined through the lens of the economic perspective of DE&I (P1).

Conversely, a business or scientific approach to success cases may entail certain risks (Silver, Nittroue, & Hebl, 2023). Foremost among these is the acknowledgment that inclusion necessitates adaptations and incurs high implementation costs, potentially leading to unmet expectations regarding financial gains. Secondly, there is the risk of neuroatypical individuals being perceived negatively when inclusion is considered merely as a monetization strategy, suggesting that the organization's motives are profit-driven rather than rooted in social justice. Thirdly, focusing solely on the positive attributes and unique talents of neurodivergent individuals may result in their marginalization, shifting the focus away from inclusion and organizational accessibility and unfairly burdening them with the responsibility for profitability without demanding true commitment to neurodiversity from organizations (Silver, Nittroue, & Hebl, 2023).

In this context, a critical examination of the inclusion of neurodivergent individuals can prompt inquiries into the barriers inherent in the recruitment and selection processes, workplace discrimination and prejudice, alongside crucial power dynamics that underpin the nexus between neurodiversity and DE&I. There is a pressing need for studies that scrutinize power imbalances involving neurominorities and their distinct traits as indicators of inequality within organizational frameworks (Botha & Gillespie-Lynch, 2022). For instance, such studies might delve into the experiences of autistic individuals across various support levels, social classes, and educational backgrounds. Moreover, research could explore how markers of neurodivergence intersect with issues such as salary parity, benefits, representation in leadership roles, and the broader domains of inclusion and belonging, offering support to develop affirmative actions in organizations. Hence, neurodiversity can be examined through a critical and intersectional perspective, enriching DE&I studies (P2).

Beyond organizational confines, neurominorities encounter barriers in the job market that transcend the internal DE&I initiatives of companies (Leopoldino, 2017; Leopoldino & Costa-Coelho, 2017). Typically, such management efforts are confined to a small subset of large corporations, limiting market opportunities for this minority group. As noted by Deloitte (2022), only 5% of

companies have a dedicated initiative for neurodiversity, making genuine acceptance and inclusion of neurominorities a rare occurrence. Consequently, neurodivergent individuals, when navigating the job market, contend with myriad organizations lacking DE&I practices and are unaware of how to integrate this group effectively.

The job market presents neurodivergent individuals with low-quality job prospects, prejudice, discrimination, and a dearth of vocational training and professional development opportunities, as highlighted in a survey by Leopoldino and Costa-Coelho (2017). While the job market involves analysis at a distinct level from the preceding propositions, the relationship between neurodiversity and the job market can be explored from both an economic perspective (P1) and a critical and intersectional perspective (P2). Within this framework, numerous questions arise regarding neurodiversity and the job market. Thus, neurodiversity can be examined through the lens of DE&I in the job market (P3).

Lastly, in scientific research, both neurodiversity literature and studies in DE&I operate on expansive agendas, fostering interdisciplinary inquiries that span diverse fields and theoretical frameworks, including sociology, psychology, management, critical studies, education, among others (Armstrong, 2017; Casanova & Widman, 2021; Chapman, 2021; Doyle, 2020; Dwyer, 2022; Fraga et al., 2022; Ortega, 2009; Robertson, 2010). Within this context, the potential synergies between DE&I-related knowledge and neurodiversity open avenues for the development of complex thinking in science, as characterized by Edgar Morin. Complex thinking endeavors to comprehend reality holistically, acknowledging the complexity arising from multiple perspectives that coalesce in understanding the phenomena under investigation (Morin, 2007).

These inquiries pave the way for future academic contributions to impact the field of management and business and transcend disciplinary boundaries, potentially influencing various theories related to management and other areas of study. Thus, neurodiversity is emblematic of studies emanating from diverse scientific fields that contribute to the interdisciplinarity of DE&I (P4).

Drawing upon the preceding propositions, we underscore key issues in Table 1 pertinent to the neurodiversity and DE&I agenda.

Table 1
A research agenda for neurodiversity in the context of DE&I

P1: Neurodiversity can be investigated in light of the economic perspective of DE&I
• How can DE&I practices be adapted and improved to include neurodivergent people in organizations?
• What adaptations and organizational support are most beneficial for the inclusion and success of neurodivergent people in the workplace?
• What can including neurominorities bring to individuals, groups, and organizational processes?
• How can companies measure and evaluate the impact of including neurodivergent people in their DE&I strategies?
• How are organizations managing neurodiversity in the context of corporate sustainability (ESG) and DE&I?
P2: Neurodiversity can be investigated in light of the critical perspective of DE&I
• How do prejudice and discrimination occur toward neurodivergent people in the organizational context?
• What have been the corporate discourses regarding the expected results on neurodiversity in DE&I agendas? How do they differ from your practices?
• What are the main challenges faced by neurodivergent people in the different processes of organizations?
• What social and organizational stigmas prevent neurodivergent people from being included in the workplace? How can they be overcome?
• What criticisms can be made of organizations that seek to include neurodivergent people?
P2.1. Neurodiversity can be investigated from the perspective of intersectionality, contributing to critical studies in DE&I
• What are the main power asymmetries of neurodivergent people, relating them to other social markers (dimensionalities)?
• What are the main efforts of organizations to maintain equal relationships between neurodiversity and other dimensions of diversity?
• How can organizations implement affirmative actions to increase the representation of neurominorities, considering the different dimensionalities involved?
• How does the intersectionality between neurodiversity and other dimensions of diversity, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation, influence the experiences and challenges neurodivergent people face in organizations?
• How do companies prepare to include neurominorities in the intersectional DE&I agenda?

(Continue)

P3. Neurodiversity can be investigated from the perspective of DE&I in the job market
• What are the barriers faced by neurodivergent people when looking for jobs? How can they be transposed? What is the role of society and organizations in this context? • What types of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes do neurodivergent people suffer in the job market? • What are the employment alternatives for neurodivergent people besides formal employment in large companies? • What socio-professional skills do neurodivergent people need to increase their employability? How can society and organizations support such initiatives? • How can companies without DE&I management include neurodivergent people?
P4. Neurodiversity is characterized by studies from different scientific fields that contribute to interdisciplinarity and DE&I
• How can neurodiversity contribute to DE&I literature from inter and interdisciplinary fields? • How can different theories connect at the intersection of neurodiversity and DE&I? • How important is complex thinking for interdisciplinarity between neurodiversity and DE&I? • How can DE&I literature contribute to other fields of knowledge that deal with neurominorities? • What is the impact of the intersection between neurodiversity and DE&I on organizational practices?

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2024).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This theoretical essay emphasizes the importance of neurodiversity as a significant framework within the DE&I literature in organizations. Neurodiversity is a key concept that recognizes the natural variability in the functioning of the human brain and the diversity of cognitive and behavioral abilities among neurominorities, thereby highlighting the inclusion challenges faced by this minority group in both society and organizations. Despite being underestimated in existing literature and organizational practices related to DE&I, we propose a research agenda integrating these two fields of knowledge.

Future studies examining aspects of neurodiversity considering the different economic and critical philosophical bases of the DE&I will benefit from a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between these fields. Moreover, it is essential to explore elements such as intersectionality, the job market, and interdisciplinarity between various fields of knowledge. This research seeks to stimulate the scientific debate and investigate different inclusion practices that reinforce processes, policies, organizational culture, and attitudes capable of reshaping perceptions of neurominorities, managers, leaders, and other social actors.

We view neurodiversity as a crucial dimension to be explored in DE&I studies and to be integrated into organizations' strategies and practices. We believe that by addressing neurodiversity, we can significantly contribute to a more inclusive understanding of the complexities of human diversity within both organizational contexts and society at large, thereby opening new perspectives and horizons of debate to comprehend this phenomenon.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study was published in the article itself.

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