

UNLOCKING COGNITIVE DIVERSITY: A KNOWLEDGE-BASED VIEW ON NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Meutia Karunia Dewi^{*1}, Claudius Budi Santoso², Sari Sitalaksmi³

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

*Email corresponding author: meutiakaruniadewi@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstract

This conceptual paper advances the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) by integrating insights from cognitive science, neurodiversity studies, and strategic management. It argues that neurodiversity—particularly the presence of varied cognitive styles associated with neurological conditions such as autism, dyslexia, and ADHD—offers strategic value in knowledge-intensive contexts. While previous research has often framed neurodivergent individuals through a lens of inclusion or accommodation, this paper repositions cognitive diversity as a productive input in organizational knowledge creation. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature, the proposed model illustrates how neurodiverse cognitive traits contribute to the articulation of tacit knowledge, enrich sensemaking processes, and expand a firm's dynamic capabilities. The paper also critiques the limitations of traditional KBV frameworks that overlook the cognitive and social dimensions of knowledge generation. Practical implications are discussed, including the need for inclusive knowledge systems that unlock the full potential of neurodivergent employees. The paper concludes with recommendations for future research exploring the interplay between cognitive variation, collaboration, and innovation.

Keywords: Knowledge-Based View, Neurodiversity, Knowledge-Intensive Firms, Cognitive Diversity, Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

The shift from industrial economies to knowledge economies has fundamentally transformed the nature of work, organizational structures, and the value placed on human capital. In a knowledge-based economy, competitive advantage increasingly derives not from physical assets or raw labor, but from intangible assets such as innovation capabilities, learning culture, and especially knowledge creation and sharing (R. J. Grant, 2024). This evolution has necessitated significant changes in how workplaces are organized and managed.

The transformation of modern organizations is most vividly observed in the rise of knowledge-intensive firms (KIFs)—entities that prioritize the generation, integration, and application of knowledge as their core source of value creation. Unlike traditional firms that emphasize efficiency, repetition, and control, KIFs depend on a highly skilled workforce whose value lies in their cognitive flexibility, creative potential, and ability to solve non-routine problems (Alvesson, 2004). This evolution necessitates a departure from rigid hierarchies toward collaborative, cognitively diverse, and inclusive work environments (Hedlund, 1994). As shown in the referenced material, KIFs increasingly embrace innovation-driven systems, facilitated by cross-disciplinary coordination (Garrick & Clegg, 2000). Such systems recognize that diverse thinking patterns are essential assets in environments where value is produced through ideation and problem-solving, not simply execution.

This shift is further reinforced by an increasing overlap between learning and working. In KIFs, employees are expected to learn continuously, and work processes are deliberately designed to stimulate mutual learning, experimentation, and iterative knowledge development (Kessels, 2001).

As such, learning is not preparatory but performative¹—an ongoing strategic function rather than a discrete event. Firms that succeed in this model actively recognize and manages different kinds of knowledge and skills that exist within the organization, creating dynamic systems of value creation through inclusive participation (Svensson, 2009). These transformations demand inclusive environments that not only attract diverse talents but also integrate varied cognitive styles into organizational knowledge flows.

As digital technologies rapidly reshape business environments, firms increasingly rely on workforces capable of continuous learning and cognitive adaptability. Yet traditional human resource models—often structured around neurotypical norms²—frequently fail to recognize the potential contributions of neurodivergent individuals, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors that require diverse cognitive strengths (Austin & Pisano, 2017; Leonard & Sensiper, 1998; Walkowiak, 2021). Both Carrero et al. (2019) and Walkowiak (2021) emphasize that neurodivergent individuals, particularly those on the autism spectrum, often demonstrate unique cognitive strengths such as deep focus, rule-based reasoning, and pattern recognition—traits that align well with the demands of fields like data analysis, cybersecurity, and software engineering. Similarly, Doyle (2020) highlights that individuals with autism, ADHD, or dyslexia bring cognitive assets that can significantly enhance innovation, precision, and analytical depth.

This imperative becomes even more pressing in light of the accelerating global digital talent shortage. According to IDC (International Data Corporation) projects, by 2026, over 90% of organizations worldwide will face a significant lack of digitally skilled professionals. This talent gap could result in an estimated \$5.5 trillion in losses due to delayed product launches, reduced competitiveness, and missed business opportunities (IDC, 2024). While many firms respond by upskilling or automating, a critical but underutilized talent reservoir persists: neurodivergent individuals. Despite comprising an estimated 15–20% of the global population, they remain significantly underrepresented in the workforce due to entrenched hiring biases and inflexible workplace norms (Abed et al., 2024; Ali et al., 2024; Davies et al., 2023; Doyle, 2020). Inclusive hiring initiatives by companies such as Microsoft, SAP, and Deloitte demonstrate the dual potential of addressing workforce gaps while driving innovation by leveraging neurodivergent cognitive assets (Austin & Pisano, 2017; Austin & Sonne, 2014; Hennekam & Follmer, 2024).

Nonetheless, neurodiversity is still predominantly framed as a human resource concern, focused on compliance or social responsibility (Bernstein et al., 2020; Burnett & Aguinis, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024), rather than a strategic advantage. This narrow framing overlooks its strategic potential in knowledge-intensive environments, where diverse thinking enhances innovation and tacit knowledge sharing. By continuing to approach neurodiversity primarily as a matter of “support” or “accommodation,” firms risk underutilizing a potential source of tacit knowledge and creative capacity (Kersten et al., 2024). Accordingly, there is a need to reframe neurodiversity as a source of strategic knowledge capital. This aligns with the foundational premises of the Knowledge-Based View, which positions knowledge as a critical driver of long-term competitive advantage (Grant, 1996).

This paper introduces a new perspective that positions neurodiversity not merely as a matter of workforce inclusion but as an underutilized source of cognitive capital, within the framework of the Knowledge-Based View (KBV). By connecting the core assumptions of KBV, which emphasize knowledge as a key source of competitive advantage (Grant, 1996), with contemporary insights on neurodiversity, the paper proposes a novel conceptual model. This strategic reorientation underscores the need for inclusive practices that are not only ethical but also vital to thriving in a cognitively demanding, digitally evolving economy.

¹ The phrase “learning is not preparatory but performative” means that learning is not just preparation for future tasks, but an active, ongoing part of doing the work itself.

²Standards of behavior, ways of thinking, and social interactions that are considered common or 'normal' in society, usually based on how the majority of people's brain function.

To elaborate on this notion, the remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature on the Knowledge-Based View (KBV), cognitive diversity, and neurodiversity, highlighting their conceptual intersections and current limitations in the field. This is followed by the development of a conceptual model that explains how neurodiverse cognitive inputs can be transformed into dynamic organizational capabilities through inclusive knowledge systems. The discussion section evaluates the model's theoretical contributions and practical implications, while also addressing its limitations and suggesting directions for future research. Finally, the paper concludes by summarizing the key insights and underscoring the broader relevance of reframing neurodiversity as a strategic asset in knowledge-intensive contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To deepen the conceptual foundations of this paper, the following section provides a structured review of relevant theoretical perspectives. Building on the premise that neurodiversity represents an underutilized yet strategic form of knowledge capital, the literature review begins by revisiting the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the firm, which offers a foundational lens for understanding how organizations create and sustain competitive advantage through knowledge. The second subsection introduces the evolving discourse on neurodiversity in organizational contexts, highlighting how it reframes cognitive variation as a source of innovation. Finally, the review synthesizes these strands through the concept of cognitive diversity, positioning it as a conceptual bridge that connects neurocognitive traits to knowledge integration and organizational adaptability.

Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the Firm

The Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the firm is an extension of the Resource-Based View (RBV), which argues that knowledge—rather than physical assets or labor—is the most strategically significant resource for gaining and sustaining competitive advantage (Grant, 1996). KBV posits that firms exist primarily to create, store, transfer, and apply knowledge, and that their ability to manage these processes effectively determines their long-term success. This view assumes that knowledge is heterogeneously distributed among individuals and is embedded not only in documents and systems but also in routines, culture, and human cognition (Kogut & Zander, 1992). Unlike tangible resources, knowledge is complex, path-dependent, and often difficult to replicate—making it a central source of organizational differentiation. As such, firms that build capabilities for coordinating, integrating, and renewing knowledge are better positioned to innovate and remain competitive in dynamic environments (Cooper et al., 2023).

From the KBV perspective, knowledge is considered a strategic asset because it is valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable—criteria that make it capable of generating sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996). KBV emphasizes that the strategic value of knowledge stems not only from its possession, but from a firm's ability to create, recombine, and apply it effectively (Bogner & Bansal, 2007). In rapidly changing and innovation-driven environments, firms that can access and mobilize unique knowledge are more likely to adapt and outperform competitors. Firms must also continuously update and adapt their knowledge base to stay competitive, underscoring the dynamic nature of knowledge (Cooper et al., 2023). Importantly, this view does not reduce knowledge to static content, but treats it as a living, evolving capability shaped by learning, interaction, and experience. This includes both codified knowledge and personalized, experience-based knowledge that is embedded in people's expertise (Polanyi, 1966). Hence, competitive advantage arises not only from *what* the firm knows, but also from *how* effectively it can use and grow that knowledge.

A critical dimension of KBV is the emphasis on tacit knowledge—knowledge that is deeply personal, experience-based, and hard to articulate or transfer (Polanyi, 1962). Tacit knowledge often resides in individuals and emerges through practice, reflection, and social interaction. Cognitive diversity—differences in how individuals perceive, process, and solve problems—is seen as vital to

accessing varied forms of tacit knowledge and enhancing organizational learning (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998). Consequently, *human capital* becomes a central asset, as each employee carries unique cognitive schemas, skills, and insights that collectively form the firm's intellectual infrastructure. Firms that value and integrate diverse cognitive inputs are more likely to develop robust knowledge systems, drive innovation, and build adaptive capabilities.

Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Neurodiversity is a concept that acknowledges natural variations in human cognition, behavior, and learning styles as part of the broader spectrum of human diversity. Coined by Judy Singer in the late 1990s, the term challenges traditional deficit-based models of neurological difference by reframing conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyspraxia, and Tourette syndrome as variations rather than impairments (Doyle & McDowall, 2022; Singer, 1999). Singer introduced the term “neurodiversity” by drawing an analogy with “biodiversity,” emphasizing that cognitive variation is a natural and valuable part of the human species.

From this perspective, individuals who are neurodivergent may process information, perceive their environment, or engage in social interactions differently from neurotypical norms (Doyle, 2020). These differences, however, may also reflect distinct cognitive strengths that offer unique value in specific contexts (Kersten et al., 2024). The neurodiversity paradigm emphasizes neurological pluralism, where no single cognitive style is considered superior. Ecological Model of Mental Functioning further argues that each individual's unique cognitive profile can meaningfully contribute to their surrounding ecosystem (Chapman, 2021). This perspective aligns with the evolving demands of the knowledge economy, which increasingly values innovation, problem-solving, and cognitive flexibility.

Despite growing awareness and high prevalence, neurodivergent individuals remain significantly underrepresented in the labor market (Doyle, 2020; Doyle & McDowall, 2022). Numerous studies highlight that neurodivergent individuals experience disproportionately higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, as well as lower job retention (D. R. Austin & Pisano, 2017; Branicki et al., 2024; Patton, 2019; Scott et al., 2017). Work environments and recruitment systems are often designed around neurotypical norms, inadvertently excluding or disadvantaging neurodivergent candidates and employees (D. R. Austin & Pisano, 2017; Högstädt et al., 2023). Stigma contributes to exclusion, as many employers lack the awareness, training, or confidence needed to effectively engage neurodivergent talent (Stockreiter et al., 2024). Moreover, even positive stereotyping can be detrimental, as it risks reducing individuals to narrow functional roles or leading to the underutilization of their broader potential (Kersten et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, early studies have begun to demonstrate that neurodivergent individuals can offer unique contributions to organizational performance, especially in sectors requiring precision, pattern recognition, and non-linear thinking. For instance, autistic individuals have been shown to excel in roles involving data analytics, software testing, cybersecurity, and quality control, where sustained focus, attention to detail, and rule-based reasoning are critical (Austin & Sonne, 2014; Walkowiak, 2021). These strengths are often described as performative abilities—skills that emerge contextually through work engagement and are difficult to measure through standard hiring tools (Walkowiak, 2021). In addition, individuals with ADHD may bring strengths in creative ideation and high-energy problem-solving, while those with dyslexia often demonstrate visual-spatial reasoning and holistic thinking (Doyle, 2020; Logan, 2009). These cognitive strengths vary across individuals and must be understood in relation to social, task, and organizational contexts (Chapman, 2023).

It is important to recognize that neurodivergent employees often exhibit a spiky cognitive profile—marked by exceptional strengths in some areas alongside notable challenges—which calls for context-specific understanding rather than generalized assumptions (Doyle, 2020; Kersten et al., 2024). While they may excel in creativity, pattern recognition, or memory, many also face difficulties with time management, executive functioning, or workplace communication. To unlock their full

potential, organizations must move beyond isolated accommodations and embed neurodiversity into talent strategy, inclusive job design, and a psychologically safe culture (Doyle & McDowall, 2022). Organization must treat it not as a side initiative but as a driver of innovation and adaptability in the knowledge economy (Austin & Sonne, 2014; Bernstein et al., 2020). Table 1 provides an overview of the key strengths and challenges that neurodivergent employees may experience in the workplace.

Table 1. Strengths and Challenges in the Workplace for Neurodivergent Employees (Doyle, 2020)

Neurodivergent Category	Challenges	Strengths
ADHD	• Time management • Concentration, attention and self-regulation difficulties • Insomnia, depression, injury and absence • Maintaining employment • Difficulty with team work	• Creative thinking • Visual-spatial reasoning ability • Hyper-focus, passion and courage
Autism	• Time management • Concentration and coping with more than one task • Social and communication difficulties • Need for routine	• Memory ability and other 'specialist individual skills' (e.g., reading, drawing, music, computation) • Innovative thinking and detail observation • High verbal comprehension ability
DCD (Developmental Coordination Disorder) or Dyspraxia	• Difficulties with driving, self-care, organization, communication, and self-esteem • Processing speed and working memory • Persistence of motor difficulties in operating equipment	• High verbal comprehension ability
Dyslexia	• Literacy, memory, organization, communication, and self-esteem • Memory, organizational skills, time management, stress management, literacy • Workplace participation (mental functions & social interaction) • Cognitive functioning and social self-esteem • Higher incidence of worklessness and incarceration	• Entrepreneurialism • Creativity and cognitive control • Visual reasoning • Practical skills, visual-spatial skills, and story-telling ability

Cognitive Diversity as a Bridge Concept

Cognitive diversity is increasingly recognized as a critical dimension of organizational functioning, yet it remains a complex and multifaceted concept. As Mello and Rentsch (2015) highlight, no single definition fully captures its breadth, which includes thinking styles, value orientations, and mental models. Within their classification framework, neurodiversity is considered

a form of *trait-like cognitive diversity*—referring to stable cognitive characteristics that emerge early in development and are not easily altered by short-term experiences or environmental factors. These traits are often rooted in dispositional or biological factors, such as genetics or neurological development, influencing how individuals perceive, process, and respond to information, and ultimately shaping their engagement with knowledge over time.

This perspective aligns with Leonard and Sensiper’s (1998) view of cognition as a social and collaborative process rather than an isolated individual activity. They argue that cognitive diversity plays a vital role in facilitating the articulation of tacit knowledge. Since individuals interpret experiences differently based on their cognitive styles, diverse perspectives are needed to uncover the full depth of knowledge embedded in a group. People with different ways of thinking can challenge each other’s assumptions, ask unexpected questions, or offer alternative interpretations—all of which help transform tacit knowledge into actionable insight. Moreover, teams composed of individuals with varied cognitive lenses are more likely to generate novel ideas, as they are not constrained by a single dominant mode of knowing.

At the theoretical core of the Knowledge-Based View (KBV), Grant (2024) argues that diverse knowledge becomes strategically valuable only when organizations establish effective mechanisms for its integration. These mechanisms include shared routines, a common language, and cross-functional coordination systems that enable the synthesis of heterogeneous inputs. This reflects a similar view as Chapman’s Ecological model, which emphasizes that function—defined as one’s contribution to the sustainability of an ecosystem—is inherently relational and contextual. However, Chapman (2021) and Bernstein et al. (2020) also cautions that cognitive diversity can positively impact teams, organizations, or communities only when the surrounding environment fosters collaboration. Thus, to unlock the potential of cognitive diversity, organizations must move beyond symbolic inclusion and actively build structures and cultures that enable meaningful knowledge integration.

Nevertheless, discussions around the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) often overlook the cognitive processes involved in making sense of complex environments. Stoian et al. (2024) criticize this narrow perspective and advocate for a more comprehensive understanding of knowledge that includes both cognitive and social dimensions. They argue that sensemaking—the process of interpreting and assigning meaning to ambiguous information—is inherently cognitive and relies on the inclusion of multiple perspectives. In this context, cognitive diversity becomes essential for organizational adaptability in environments characterized by uncertainty.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

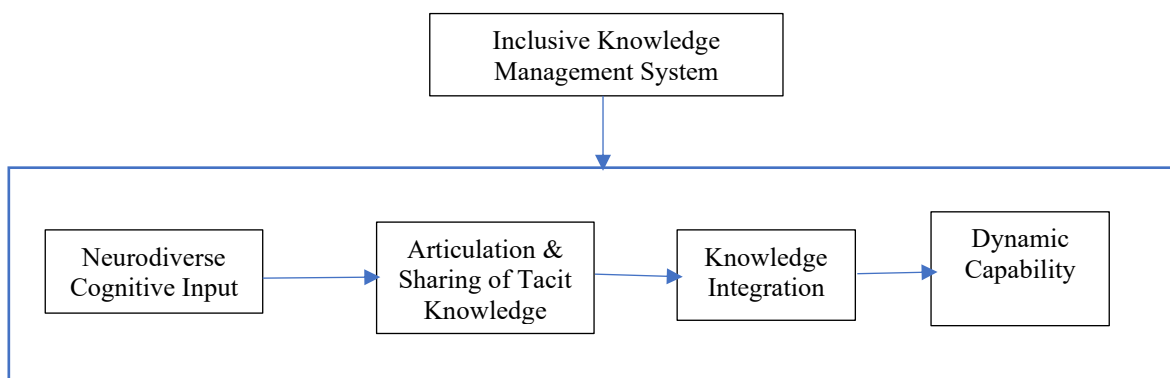


Figure 1. Neurodiversity-Driven Capability Model in Knowledge-Based Organizations

This study proposes an integrative conceptual model to explain how neurodiverse cognitive input can serve as a source of organizational advantage within the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) framework. Grounded in the understanding that knowledge is a core strategic resource, the model outlines how cognitive diversity—encompassing both neurotypical³ and neurodivergent individuals—can be transformed into dynamic organizational capabilities. Central to this process is the articulation and sharing of tacit knowledge, facilitated by inclusive knowledge management systems that enable integration and collaborative sensemaking. The framework reflects an effort to bridge cognitive theory, inclusion studies, and strategic knowledge management by viewing neurodiversity not only as a social advocacy, but as a critical input to knowledge generation and utilization.

Preposition 1: Neurodiverse Cognitive Input as a Catalyst for Tacit Knowledge Articulation

The model begins with the recognition of neurodiverse cognitive input as a unique resource in knowledge-intensive environments. Neurodivergent individuals—such as those with autism, ADHD, or dyslexia—and their neurotypical counterparts, when working together in teams, can generate distinct perspectives and innovative solutions. Through such collaboration, they may challenge each other's assumptions, pose unexpected questions, and offer alternative interpretations. When organizations effectively recognize and support these diverse cognitive profiles, they unlock access to novel insights and unconventional reasoning strategies.

However, the strategic value of such cognitive input is only realized when it is articulated and shared within the organization. As Leonard and Sensiper (1998a) argue, tacit knowledge—knowledge that is deeply embedded in individual experience and difficult to formalize—plays a vital role in innovation and organizational learning. Diverse cognitive characteristics facilitate the surfacing of this tacit knowledge by enabling varied perspectives, metaphors, and interpretations that help bring implicit understandings into the collective domain. Neurodivergent individuals, in particular, can serve as catalysts in this process by disrupting habitual assumptions and introducing alternative cognitive frames that challenge prevailing norms. Articulation is thus not a passive process but one that requires social interaction, mutual recognition, and collaborative interpretation.

In this light, neurodiversity should be understood not merely as a source of alternative viewpoints, but as a catalytic force that facilitates the articulation of tacit knowledge embedded in unique cognitive styles. Neurodivergent individuals—owing to atypical information processing and pattern recognition abilities—can reveal insights that often remain inaccessible in cognitively homogeneous teams (Austin & Pisano, 2017; Doyle, 2020). These individuals contribute distinct perspectives that help surface knowledge typically left unspoken or unformalized.

However, as Chapman (2023) argues, the strategic value of such cognitive variation can only be realized when organizations provide ecosystems that actively support its expression and exchange. This view is in line with Von Krogh et al. (2000) and Leonard & Sensiper, (1998), who argue that articulation flourishes in psychologically safe environments where individuals feel empowered to share unconventional insights without fear of judgment or exclusion. Therefore, building inclusive mechanisms that recognize, legitimize, and amplify neurodiverse contributions is essential for unlocking the full potential of tacit knowledge in knowledge-intensive work environments.

Preposition 2: Articulation as a Precondition for Knowledge Integration in Organizations

The relationship between the articulation of tacit knowledge and its integration into organizational systems is both causal and sequential. Tacit knowledge that deeply embedded in individual experience and often unspoken, must first be surfaced through articulation before it can be shared and utilized collectively (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998; Polanyi, 1966). This articulation process involves transforming individual insights into communicable forms through dialogue, storytelling, or

³ A neurotypical individual is someone whose developmental patterns and neurological functions are considered 'common' or 'standard' according to societal norms.

metaphor, thereby making them accessible for collective interpretation and knowledge integration (Nonaka et al., 1996). Once articulated, this knowledge becomes available for integration—defined as the organization's ability to synthesize distributed insights into coherent frameworks that guide decision-making and action (Grant, 1996).

Without articulation, knowledge remains isolated in individuals; without integration, even articulated knowledge fails to shape shared organizational understanding. Therefore, knowledge integration depends on an iterative and interpretive process wherein diverse inputs are not only expressed but meaningfully combined. Importantly, this integration is only feasible within systems that support divergent thinking. As Leonard & Sensiper, (1998) emphasize, diverse thinking styles alone are insufficient. The organization must intentionally cultivate settings in which these differences are recognized and productively integrated. Otherwise, divergence may lead to fragmentation, chaos and conflict (Chapman, 2021). Thus, inclusive knowledge systems are not optional, but foundational for enabling the articulation–integration sequence to yield dynamic organizational benefits.

Proposition 3: Knowledge Integration as a Driver of Dynamic Capability

At its culmination, the model suggests that knowledge integration serves as a critical mechanism through which organizations develop dynamic capabilities. Dynamic capabilities refer to a firm's ability to sense opportunities, seize them, and transform or reconfigure internal and external resources in response to rapidly changing environments (Teece et al., 1997). Knowledge integration directly contributes to this adaptability by transforming dispersed cognitive inputs into coherent action frameworks that guide strategic decisions (Grant, 1996). When diverse forms of tacit and explicit knowledge are effectively combined, organizations are better positioned to identify emerging trends, anticipate shifts in the market, and coordinate agile responses. This integration is not merely a technical function, but a socially embedded process involving interpretation, collaboration, and ongoing learning (Von Krogh et al., 2000). It allows firms to move beyond fragmented insights and instead develop cohesive, shared understandings that underpin innovation, problem-solving, and strategic renewal.

Importantly, the capacity to develop dynamic capability depends not only on the amount of knowledge integrated, but also on how equitably that knowledge is surfaced and valued during the integration process. Leonard and Sensiper (1998) emphasize that barriers to knowledge generation and sharing—such as organizational hierarchies, status differences, or rigid communication norms—can suppress valuable insights. In non-inclusive environments, knowledge expressed by those in marginalized or lower-status positions may be undervalued or ignored, regardless of its actual strategic relevance. Such exclusion undermines the effectiveness of integration, distorts the collective understanding, and hampers the organization's ability to sense and respond to change. If integration is not accompanied by inclusive norms that recognize diverse perspectives and remove structural disincentives for sharing, the full potential of dynamic capability cannot be realized. Thus, inclusive knowledge management is not merely a support function but a strategic enabler that ensures integration processes remain open, representative, and aligned with the broader goal of organizational adaptability.

Proposition 4: The Enabling Role of Inclusive Knowledge Management Systems

Alavi and Leidner (2001) provide one of the foundational definitions of Knowledge Management Systems (KMS), describing them as systems that systematically support the processes of knowledge creation, storage/retrieval, transfer, and application within organizations. In this paper, the term *inclusive knowledge management systems* (IKMS) is introduced to highlight the enabling role of such systems in translating neurodiverse cognitive input into dynamic organizational capabilities. This concept aligns with the work of Von Krogh et al. (2000) who emphasize the importance of creating an enabling context characterized by psychological safety to facilitate knowledge creation and transform it into organizational value. They argue that knowledge creation

should be inclusive, involving all members of the organization—from executives to frontline employees—within an environment that encourages broad participation and diverse contributions. In this way, IKMS are not merely technical infrastructures but socially embedded systems that foster equitable knowledge engagement across organizational levels.

By facilitating communication norms that embrace divergent cognitive styles and structuring workflows to accommodate varied knowledge expressions, Inclusive Knowledge Management Systems (IKMS) enable the surfacing and synthesis of tacit knowledge that would otherwise remain latent. Although IKMS have not yet been firmly conceptualized in existing literature, the idea resonates with Leonard and Sensiper's (1998) emphasis on the importance of creating environments that encourage experimentation, accommodate different thinking styles, and support productive failure. Crucially, these systems not only facilitate knowledge sharing but also support knowledge legitimacy—ensuring that insights from neurodivergent individuals are not only heard but also trusted and acted upon. In this sense, IKMS function as a catalyst for cognitive-to-capability transformation, enabling the model's sequential stages to unfold cohesively across different levels of the organization.

Without inclusive systems in place, even cognitively rich contributions from neurodivergent individuals may fail to develop into organizational capabilities. When certain voices are marginalized, interpretations remain siloed, or non-normative expressions are undervalued, valuable knowledge can be overlooked or suppressed. In such environments, the absence of institutionalized norms that actively promote inclusion may reduce neurodiversity efforts to symbolic gestures rather than genuine strategic initiatives. Therefore, inclusive knowledge systems should not be seen as supplementary components, but as foundational infrastructures. They are essential to ensuring that neurodiversity is meaningfully integrated and effectively leveraged as a source of competitive advantage in knowledge-intensive organizations. Together, all propositions in this paper underscore that the successful transformation of cognitive diversity into dynamic capabilities depends not only on the presence of individual differences but also on the structural and relational mechanisms.

DISCUSSION

This study proposes a conceptual model that integrates neurodiversity into the knowledge-based view (KBV) of the firm, positioning it as a valuable lens for understanding how cognitive variation contributes to organizational knowledge creation, innovation, and adaptability. By moving beyond traditional perspectives that treat neurodiversity merely as a human resource or inclusion issue, the model offers a strategic framework that links cognitive diversity to dynamic capabilities. The discussion that follows evaluates the theoretical insights of the model, explores its practical implications, reflects on its limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

The model contributes to KBV by emphasizing that knowledge is not merely a transferable resource, but is shaped by the cognitive characteristics of the individuals who produce, interpret, and apply it. In doing so, it echoes calls by scholars such as Stoian et al. (2024) to broaden KBV frameworks beyond mechanistic views of knowledge transfer toward more socially and cognitively embedded processes. Drawing on Leonard and Sensiper's (1998) view, it also positions cognitive diversity as a critical enabler of tacit knowledge articulation, especially in complex and uncertain environments. Moreover, integrating Grant's (1996) knowledge integration logic with Chapman's (2021) ecological-functional model reinforces the idea that cognitive variety only becomes valuable within ecosystems that support coordination, collaboration, and shared sensemaking.

The model highlights the need for organizations to move beyond surface-level inclusion initiatives and adopt structural mechanisms that accommodate and integrate spiky cognitive profiles of neurodivergent employees. This includes investing in inclusive communication systems, knowledge-sharing routines tailored to varied cognitive preferences, and leadership practices that encourage psychological safety and collaborations. For managers, the implication is clear: neurodiversity is not a niche HR concern but a strategic enabler of innovation and adaptability,

particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors. Designing work systems that recognize and respond to neurocognitive differences can enhance organizational resilience and expand the firm's interpretive and problem-solving repertoire.

While conceptually robust, the model remains theoretical and awaits empirical testing. It assumes that organizations are willing and capable of building inclusive knowledge systems, which may not always be the case due to institutional inertia, bias, or resource constraints. Moreover, the model does not yet account for variations across industry contexts, organizational maturity, or cultural settings, which may affect how neurodiversity is perceived and operationalized. It also risks overgeneralizing neurodivergent strengths without sufficiently addressing the uneven challenges that individuals face in non-accommodative environments.

Future research should empirically examine how neurodiverse teams engage in knowledge creation and integration across different industries and organizational sizes. Longitudinal case studies could explore how inclusive knowledge practices evolve over time and how they affect innovation performance. It would also be valuable to investigate the role of leadership, technology, and digital collaboration tools in enabling or hindering neurodiverse knowledge contribution. Moreover, interdisciplinary studies that link cognitive neuroscience, organizational behavior, and strategic management could offer deeper insights into how cognitive variation interacts with knowledge dynamics in complex ecosystems.

CONCLUSION

This paper reframes neurodiversity as a strategic resource within the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the firm, emphasizing its potential to enhance organizational knowledge creation, innovation, and adaptability. Drawing on interdisciplinary insights, it proposes an integrative model in which neurodiverse cognitive input facilitates the articulation and sharing of tacit knowledge, supports the integration of dispersed insight, enabled by inclusive knowledge systems and culminating in dynamic capabilities. By situating cognitive diversity as a bridge between individual cognition and collective organizational learning, the model challenges narrow HR-driven approaches and calls for structural and cultural inclusion mechanisms that embed neurodiversity into strategic processes. Ultimately, this study extends the Knowledge-Based View by emphasizing that in knowledge-driven settings, competitive advantage arises not only from access to diverse knowledge but also from underlying cognitive diversity. However, to translate such diverse cognitive input into dynamic capabilities, organizations must cultivate an enabling context—one that supports the interpretation, integration, and application of knowledge into effective action.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abed, M. G., Abed, L. G., & Shackelford, T. K. (2024). A Qualitative, Small-Sample Study of Employment Challenges for People with Disabilities in Saudi Arabia. *Healthcare (Switzerland)*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12030346>
- Alavi, M., & Leidner, D. E. (2001). Review: Knowledge Management and Knowledge Management Systems: Conceptual Foundations and Research Issues. In *Source: MIS Quarterly* (Vol. 25, Issue 1).
- Ali, M., Grabarski, M. K., & Baker, M. (2024). An exploratory study of benefits and challenges of neurodivergent employees: roles of knowing neurodivergents and neurodiversity practices. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 43(2), 243–267. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-03-2023-0092>
- Alvesson, M. (2004). Knowledge Work and Knowledge-Intensive Firms. *Knowledge Work and Knowledge-Intensive Firms*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OSO/9780199259342.001.0001>
- Austin, D. R., & Pisano, G. P. (2017). Neurodiversity Is a Competitive Advantage. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2017/05/neurodiversity-as-a-competitive-advantage>

- Austin, R. D., & Sonne, T. (2014). The Dandelion Principle: Redesigning Work for the Innovation Economy. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-dandelion-principle-redesigning-work-for-the-innovation-economy/>
- Barney, J. (1991). Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120.
- Bernstein, R. S., Bulger, M., Salipante, P., & Weisinger, J. Y. (2020). From Diversity to Inclusion to Equity: A Theory of Generative Interactions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 167(3), 395–410. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04180-1>
- Bogner, W. C., & Bansal, P. (2007). *Knowledge Management as the Basis of Sustained High Performance*.
- Branicki, L. J., Brammer, S., Brosnan, M., Lazaro, A. G., Lattanzio, S., & Newnes, L. (2024). Factors shaping the employment outcomes of neurodivergent and neurotypical people: Exploring the role of flexible and homeworking practices. *Human Resource Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/HRM.22243>
- Burnett, L., & Aguinis, H. (2024). How to prevent and minimize DEI backfire. *Business Horizons*, 67(2), 173–182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2023.11.001>
- Carrero, J., Krzeminska, A., & Härtel, C. E. J. (2019). The DXC technology work experience program: Disability-inclusive recruitment and selection in action. *Journal of Management and Organization*, 25(4), 535–542. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2019.23>
- Chapman, R. (2021). Neurodiversity and the Social Ecology of Mental Functions. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(6), 1360–1372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620959833>
- Chapman, R. (2023). A Critique of Critical Psychiatry. *Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology*, 30(2), 103–119. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.2023.a899938>
- Cooper, S. C., Pereira, V., Vrontis, D., & Liu, Y. (2023). Extending the resource and knowledge based view: Insights from new contexts of analysis. In *Journal of Business Research* (Vol. 156). Elsevier Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113523>
- Davies, J., Heasman, B., Livesey, A., Walker, A., Pellicano, E., & Remington, A. (2023). Access to employment: A comparison of autistic, neurodivergent and neurotypical adults' experiences of hiring processes in the United Kingdom. *Autism*, 27(6), 1746–1763. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221145377>
- Doyle, N. (2020). Neurodiversity at work: A biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults. In *British Medical Bulletin* (Vol. 135, Issue 1, pp. 108–125). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bmb/ldaa021>
- Doyle, N., & McDowall, A. (2022). Diamond in the rough? An “empty review” of research into “neurodiversity” and a road map for developing the inclusion agenda. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 41(3), 352–382. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-06-2020-0172>
- Garrick, J., & Clegg, S. (2000). Knowledge work and the new demands of learning. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 4(4), 279–286. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13673270010379821>
- Grant, R. J. (2024). Impacts Of Diversity in Suicide Assessment, Treatment, And Prevention for Children And Adolescents: Autistic and Neurodivergent Children and Adolescents. In *Assessing and Treating Suicidal Thinking and Behaviors in Children and Adolescents: A Play Therapy Guide for Mental Health Professionals in Clinical and School-Based Settings*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003358565-17>
- Grant, R. M. (1996). Toward a knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17(S2), 109–122. <https://doi.org/10.1002/SMJ.4250171110>
- Hedlund, G. (1994). A Model of Knowledge Management and the N-Form Corporation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 15(Special Issue: Strategy: Search for New Paradigms (Summer, 1994)).
- Hennekam, S., & Follmer, K. (2024). Neurodiversity and HRM: a practice-based review and research agenda. In *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*. Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2023-0424>

- Högstedt, E., Igelström, K., Korhonen, L., Käcker, P., Marteinsdottir, I., & Björk, M. (2023). 'It's like it is designed to keep me stressed'—Working sustainably with ADHD or autism. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 30(8), 1280–1291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11038128.2022.2143420>
- International Data Corporation. (2024, May 14). *IT Skills Shortage Expected to Impact Nine out of Ten Organizations by 2026 with a Cost of \$5.5 Trillion in Delays, Quality Issues and Revenue Loss, According to IDC*. <https://my.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS52128824>
- Kersten, A., Scholz, F., van, M., Krabbenborg, M., & Smeets, L. (2024). A Strengths-Based Human Resource Management Approach to Neurodiversity: A Multi-Actor Qualitative Study. *Human Resource Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22261>
- Kessels, J. W. M. (2001). Learning in organisations: a corporate curriculum for the knowledge economy. In *Futures* (Vol. 33). www.elsevier.com/locate/futures
- Kogut, B., & Zander, U. (1992). Knowledge of the firm. Combinative capabilities, and the replication of technology. *Knowledge in Organisations*, 3(3), 383–397. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.3.3.383>
- Leonard, D., & Sensiper, S. (1998a). The role of tacit knowledge in group innovation. *California Management Review*, 3, 112–132. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41165946>
- Leonard, D., & Sensiper, S. (1998b). The role of tacit knowledge in group innovation. *California Management Review*, 3, 112–132. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41165946>
- Logan, J. (2009). Dyslexic entrepreneurs: The incidence; their coping strategies and their business skills. *Dyslexia*, 15(4), 328–346. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.388>
- Mello, A. L., & Rentsch, J. R. (2015). Cognitive Diversity in Teams: A Multidisciplinary Review. *Small Group Research*, 46(6), 623–658. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496415602558>
- Nguyen, L. A., Evan, R., Chaudhuri, S., Hagen, M., & Williams, D. (2024). Inclusion in the workplace: an integrative literature review. In *European Journal of Training and Development* (Vol. 48, Issues 3–4, pp. 334–356). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-10-2022-0104>
- Nonaka, Ikujiro, Takeuchi, H., & Umemoto, K. (1996). A theory of organizational knowledge creation. In *Int. J. Technology Management, Special Issue on Unlearning and Learning for Technological Innovation* (Vol. 11).
- Patton, E. (2019). Autism, attributions and accommodations: Overcoming barriers and integrating a neurodiverse workforce. In *Personnel Review* (Vol. 48, Issue 4, pp. 915–934). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-04-2018-0116>
- Polanyi, M. (1962). *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post Critical Philosophy* (Corrected edition). Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Polanyi, M. (1966). *The Tacit Dimension*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Scott, M., Jacob, A., Hendrie, D., Parsons, R., Girdler, S., Falkmer, T., & Falkmer, M. (2017). Employers' perception of the costs and the benefits of hiring individuals with autism spectrum disorder in open employment in Australia. *PLoS ONE*, 12(5). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0177607>
- Singer, J. (1999). "Why can't you be normal for once in your life?" From a "problem with no name" to the emergence of a new category of difference. In M. Corker & S. French (Eds.), *Disability discourse*. Open University Press.
- Stockreiter, D., Reuss, F., Holzgreve, F., Germann, U., Oremek, G., Ohlendorf, D., & Wanke, E. M. (2024). Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) at the workplace. *Zentralblatt Fur Arbeitsmedizin, Arbeitsschutz Und Ergonomie*, 74(5), 234–240. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40664-024-00534-3>
- Stoian, M. C., Tardios, J. A., & Samdanis, M. (2024). The knowledge-based view in international business: A systematic review of the literature and future research directions. *International Business Review*, 33(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2023.102239>
- Svensson, L. (2009). Learning environments of employees in knowledge-intensive company units. In *International Perspectives on Competence in the Workplace: Implications for Research, Policy*

- and Practice* (pp. 159–181). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8754-7_9
- Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(7), 509–533. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(199708\)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199708)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z)
- Von Krogh, G., Ichijo, K., & Nonaka, I. (2000). Enabling Knowledge Creation: How to Unlock the Mystery of Tacit Knowledge and Release the Power of Innovation. *Enabling Knowledge Creation: How to Unlock the Mystery of Tacit Knowledge and Release the Power of Innovation*, 1–302. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ACPROF:OSO/9780195126167.001.0001>
- Walkowiak, E. (2021). Neurodiversity of the workforce and digital transformation: The case of inclusion of autistic workers at the workplace. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.120739>