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Creating a Workplace that Embraces Neurodiversity

Ronnie Jia
Illinois State University, ronniejia@gmail.com

Heather H. Jia
Illinois State University, hhjia@ilstu.edu

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TREO

Technology, Research, Education, Opinion

Creating a Workplace that Embraces Neurodiversity

Ronnie Jia, ronniejia@gmail.com; Heather Jia, hhjia@ilstu.edu

Neurodiversity refers to the normal, natural neurological differences in the human genome regarding attention, learning, mood, sociability, and other mental functions. The term was coined to counter the negative overtones in the clinical diagnosis of “autistic spectrum disorder” (Jia et al., 2022). When one hears the word “autism,” characters such as the Raymond in the movie *Rain Man* or Sheldon in the show *Big Bang Theory* often come to mind. These portrayals of autistic persons are often exaggerated for dramatic or comedic effect.

Though the clinical diagnosis of autism is binary (positive/negative), autistic traits are continuously distributed throughout the whole population, and one can be “a bit autistic” (Happé & Frith, 2020, p. 223). As a result, the term “autistic tendency” has been introduced to clearly indicate its nature as a continuous variable related to individual differences, rather than diagnostic status (Jia et al., 2022). At the collective level, such neurological differences across individuals manifest as neurodiversity.

Autism has long been called an “open secret” of the IT profession in the popular press (Mayor, 2008), and autistic tendency has been established as an antecedent of intrinsic interest in IT (Jia et al., 2022). It has also been shown to shape patterns of attentional resources, such as cognitive absorption and interruption overload during technology use (Jia et al., 2023).

This TREO talk aims to seek feedback on our program of research that explores the implications of neurodiversity and autistic tendency for the IT community – how it shapes employee job satisfaction, well-being, and more broadly, how individual autistic traits may amalgamate to IT professional identity and occupational culture at the community level. Such awareness and understanding will contribute to a workplace that embraces neurodiversity.

References

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