

# The Psychological Contract and Neurodivergent Employees: A Cross-Cultural Framework for Understanding Organizational Obligations and Fairness

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## Abstract

This conceptual paper addresses the critical gap in understanding how cultural dimensions influence psychological contract experiences of neurodivergent employees, proposing a novel theoretical framework that integrates cross-cultural management principles with neurodiversity research to examine organizational obligations and fairness perceptions. The study employs a discursive approach, synthesizing literature from psychological contract theory, neurodiversity research, and cross-cultural organizational behavior through comparative analysis of existing theories to identify research gaps in understanding neurodivergent employees' workplace experiences across cultural contexts. The analysis reveals significant theoretical gaps regarding how cultural values moderate the relationship between neurodivergent characteristics and psychological contract expectations, leading to the development of an integrated Cross-Cultural Neurodivergent Psychological Contract (CNPC) Framework that considers cultural dimensions, neurodivergent-specific factors, and organizational fairness mechanisms as key determinants of contract fulfillment. This research pioneers the first comprehensive theoretical framework examining psychological contracts for neurodivergent employees through a cross-cultural lens, introducing the CNPC Framework that bridges neurodiversity research with cross-cultural organizational behavior theory. While the conceptual nature requires empirical validation across multiple cultural contexts and diverse neurodivergent populations through longitudinal studies, the framework provides immediate guidance for multinational organizations developing culturally-sensitive neurodiversity initiatives and informs human resource policies for supporting neurodivergent talent across global contexts. The research contributes to creating inclusive workplaces that recognize both neurodivergent needs and cultural diversity, potentially improving employment outcomes for neurodivergent individuals worldwide while respecting cultural values.

## Keywords

Psychological Contract, Neurodivergent Employees, Cross-cultural Management, Organizational Justice, Cultural Dimensions, Inclusive Human Resource Management

## 1. Introduction

The global workforce is seeing a paradigm shift in the recognition of neurodiversity as a source of human capital. Yet, neurodivergent people continue to suffer job discrimination across cultures. Neurodivergence, representing an umbrella term that may include autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and other neurological differences, is present in 15-20% of the population worldwide [1]. Despite increased recognition of what neurodiversity may have to offer organizational innovation and problem-solving, employment rates for neurodivergent individuals remain substantially lower than their neurotypical counterparts across various cultural contexts.

In human resource, employee relations theories refer to the implicit assumptions between employers and employees about their mutual obligations [2]. However, most studies have been centered on neurotypical clients, thus creating a theoretical lacuna or may leave unresolved-the question of how neurodivergent individuals experience and interpret such unwritten accords within the workplace. This gap can further be accentuated in intercultural studies, wherein legal values and norms intervene significantly in shaping workplace expectations and perceptions of fairness.

The diverse individualisms of a culture have a great influence on organizational behavior, communication patterns, and employment relations [3]. However, the intersecting cultural factors with neurodivergent experiences remain somewhat unaffected by study. On the one hand, neurodivergent employees are bound to consider organizational obligations, fairness, and ways of support in different ways according to their neurological peculiarities; yet, on the other hand, culture and cultural peculiarities have a lot to do with the matter, making the question quite complex, an area overlooked by existing theories.

This conceptual paper aims to fill these critical gaps by developing an integrative, multidimensional framework, which merges psychological contract theory with neurodiversity and cross-cultural management principles. The proposed Cross-Cultural Neurodivergent Psychological Contract (CNPC) Framework allows an extraordinary set of theoretical insights into how different cultural contexts frame workplace experience for neurodivergent individuals-providing a

theoretical basis on which future empirical research, as well as practical application, can evolve in international organizational settings.

This research holds great significance beyond the realm of academic contribution, with implications for multinational organizations seeking to promote inclusive workplaces that embrace neurodivergence and diversity in culture. As globalization comes to shape the visual texture of a modern workplace, it becomes necessary to understand the effects of cultural factors on neurodivergent employees' psychological contracts so that diversity and inclusion strategies can be fostered across cultural borders.

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Development**

### **2.1 Psychological Contract Theory: Foundations and Evolution**

The emphasis on expectations was originally overemphasized before. However, modifications in psychological contract theory have taken into consideration the expectations and obligations latent in employment relationships [4]. These contracts are those of the transactional type—that is, which emphasizes short-term specific exchanges—or of the relational type, which refers to long-term socio-emotional commitments assumed by the parties.

Recent research about psychological contracts has expanded itself outside of traditional frameworks, so now more diverse employees and organizations are taken into consideration. García-Selva et al. [2] validated the contemporary psychological contract measurement tools, to stress the need for more sophisticated approaches to a very complex kind of employment relationship. Yet again, as with the research in most psychological contract studies, they focus on those employed that are predominantly neurotypical, thereby leaving major gaps toward understanding how a neurodivergent person undergoes, perceives, and interprets these kinds of tacit arrangements.

Forming a psychological contract involves complex cognitive functions of perception, interpretation, and expectation-building. For neurodivergent persons, these processes could differ sharply from neurotypical ones owing to their unique social cognition, communication preferences, and information processing styles. Such an approach in classical psychological contract theory, in fact, excludes neurological differences, ensuring the need for a theory that this study aims to contribute to.

### **2.2 Neurodivergence in Organizational Contexts**

Contemporary research on neurodivergent employees has been showing both challenges and opportunities arising from neurodiversity in workplace settings. Ali et al. [1] conducted exploratory studies concerning advantages and disadvantages for neurodivergent employees, realizing that organizations which had an active awareness of neurodiversity yielded better outcomes for their neurodivergent staff in terms of engagement and turnover intentions.

Over the years, organizational situations have posed several challenges to neurodivergent employees in different organizations. Nair et al. [5] investigated the workspace between neurodivergent individuals and work organizations, highlighting systemic issues such as lack of support systems; communication barriers; and limited understanding on the part of organizational leaders and colleagues of the neurodivergent needs. The idea of strengths-based approaches for neurodiversity has become popular in recent studies. Kersten et al. [6] studied human resource management approaches that support the strengths of neurodiverse as opposed to merely focusing on accommodation needs. Their multi-actor qualitative study found that organizations practicing a strengths-based approach experienced better outcomes for neurodivergent employees and organizational performance alike.

Technological inclusion forms another emerging area of neurodiversity research. Khan et al. [7] investigated how social media and digital technologies may be used to empower neurodivergent alt-workers and thus suggested ways in which technological solutions may enhance inclusion. Nevertheless, their research was mostly set in Western organizational settings, thereby posing the need to look through cross-cultural lenses on neurodiversity initiatives.

### **2.3 Cross-Cultural Dimensions in Organizational Behavior**

Such cross-cultural research has determined that work relationships, communication styles, and the feeling of fairness are heavily influenced by cultural values. Dimensions pertaining to culture, such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation, tend to create different settings in employment relationships in varying societies.

Set against the backdrop of a complex interplay of cultural factors that affect diversity and inclusion initiatives, the studies by Gottardello et al. [3] closely observed neurodiversity and ethnicity, showing how neurodivergent ethnic minority employees endure the double aggravation of their neurological differences and cultural identity. Their findings evidence that the cultural background largely moderates workplace experiences for neurodivergent individuals, thereby signaling a dire need for concerted attempts to construct comprehensive theoretical frameworks to address these intersections. The perception of organizational justice, which constitutes the belief in fairness toward an individual in workplace-related issues, widely differs among cultural systems. What constitutes fair treatment and adequate support and reasonable accommodations may vary substantially between cultures, creating a thoroughly knotty issue for multinational organizations in trying to support neurodivergent employees across the broad cultural spectrum.

## 2.4 Gaps in Current Research

The review of the literature indicates several major gaps that this research attempts to fill:

**Theoretical Integration Gap:** No existing research, as far as the writer knows, has thoroughly integrated psychological contract theory with neurodiversity research and cross-cultural management considerations, constituting a glaring theoretical gap.

**Cross-Cultural Neurodiversity Gap:** The few studies try to ascertain whether cultural factors affect neurodivergent workplace experiences, while most of them are being conducted primarily with a Western bias.

**Psychological Contract Specificity Gap:** The psychological contract literature does not delve into neurological differences acting as variables impacting these processes of contract formation, interpretation, and fulfillment.

**Practical Framework Gap:** The literature does not propose yet an integrative framework for informing organizational practice to support neurodivergent employees in different culturally contingent settings.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Conceptual Framework Development Approach

This research employs a conceptual framework development methodology, synthesizing existing theoretical knowledge to create new theoretical constructs. It involves analyzing literature systematically, spanning diverse disciplines such as organizational psychology, cross-cultural management, and neurodiversity research, to indicate theoretical gaps and develop integrative frameworks.

The methodology adheres to conceptual research protocols, emphasizing theoretical rigor and logic while asserting practical relevance. The process of developing the framework involves the identification of theoretical key elements, establishing relationships between constructs, and developing propositions testable in future empirical work.

### 3.2 Theoretical Synthesis Method

The research proceeds by using theoretical synthesis method to integrate insights from otherwise disparate literature streams for coherent theoretical conceptualizations. In other words, it finds commonalities and differences across theoretical domains, fixes conceptual bridges between otherwise disconnected areas of research, and develops new theoretical propositions.

In synthesis, means and opposite views are combined from various cultural contexts given that these theoretically related views may change according to organizational contexts and value systems. This cultural sensitivity would maintain the relevance of the new synthesis across diverse worldwide settings.

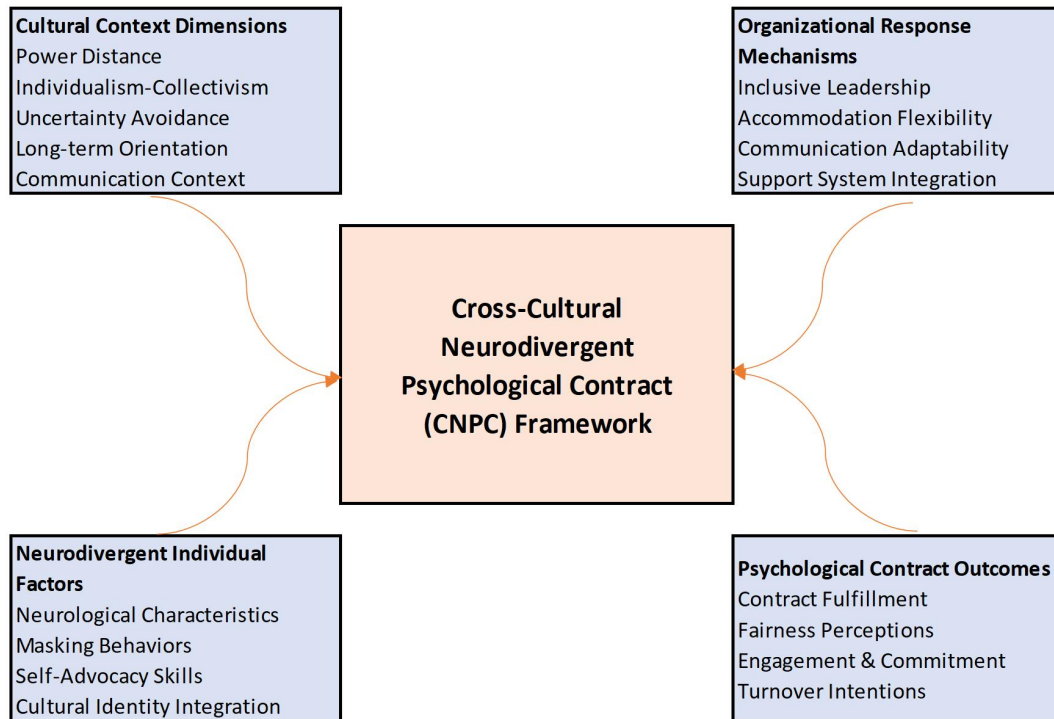
### 3.3 Framework Validation Approach

Although this conceptual paper is not intended for empirical validation, the methodology proposes a variety of theoretical validation approaches that test the framework for its coherence, completeness, and practical applicability. Validation consists in testing: consistency with existing theoretical knowledge; enough development to prevent contradictions or gaps; and logical soundness and theoretical justification of the proposed relationships.

## 4. Results: The Cross-Cultural Neurodivergent Psychological Contract Framework

### 4.1 Framework Overview

Whereas, the Cross-Cultural Neurodivergent Psychological Contract Framework offers a proposed innovative theory-based model that brings together cultural dimensions, characteristics of neurodivergence, and organizational factors toward explaining psychological contract experiences for neurodivergent employees across varying cultural contexts. These are the theoretical gaps that the framework aims to cover by way of offering an all-inclusive model to understand how cultural and neurological factors interact to shape employment relationships.



**Figure 1.** Cross-Cultural Neurodivergent Psychological Contract Framework Overview

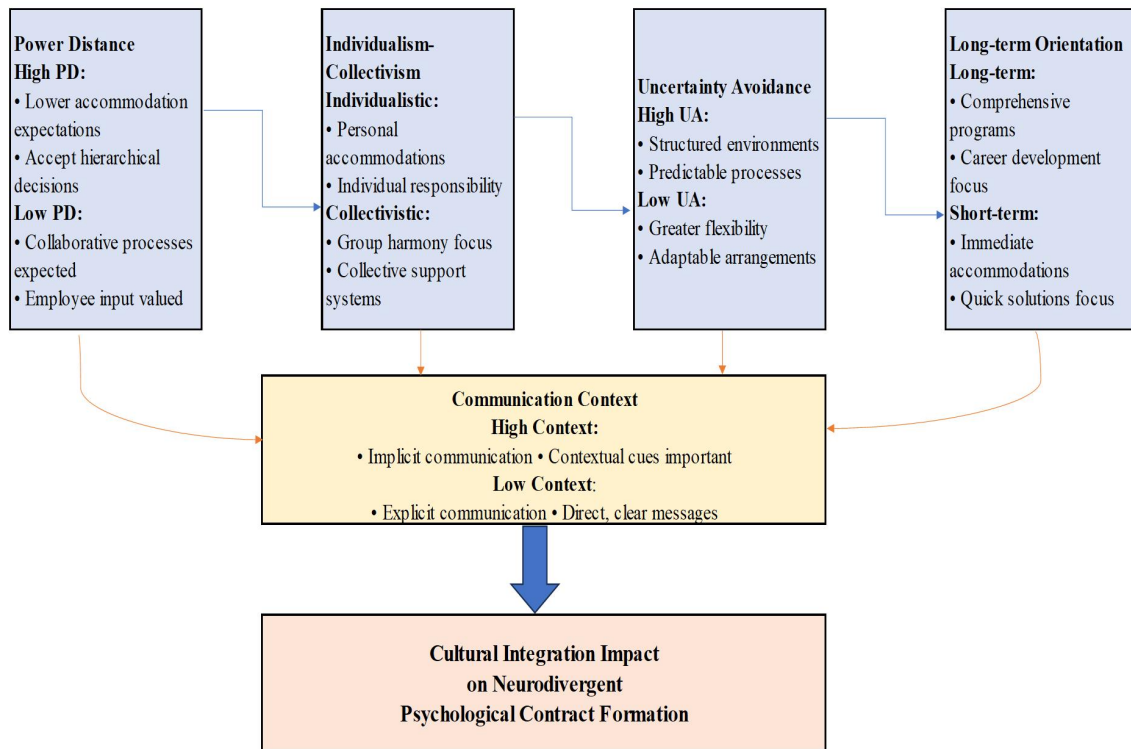
The four primary components of the framework are these: Cultural Context Dimensions, Neurodivergent Individual Factors, Organizational Response Mechanisms, and Psychological Contract Outcomes. The components interact dynamically, giving rise to various psychological contract experiences that are dependent on both culture and neurodivergence, as comprehensively depicted in Figure 1. The framework's integrated nature shows the convergence of several theoretical areas to present a complete understanding of neurodivergent workers' experiences in the work environment across cultures.

#### 4.2 Cultural Context Dimensions

The scheme depicts five cultural dimensions that impact neurodivergent psychological contract experiences, as systematically illustrated in Figure 2. This picture-box illustrates the intricate synergy between cultural orientations and neurodivergent expectations in the workplace:

**Power Distance Orientation:** In cultures that have a high-power distance, neurodivergent workers might have lower expectations for organizational accommodations and support, taking these hierarchical decisions in-stage arrangements. Low power-distance cultures may permit the accommodations process to be more collaborative and inclusive of worker input in support decisions.

**Individualism-Collectivism Spectrum:** Whereas individualistic cultures may stress personal accommodation and individual responsibility in dealing with neurodivergent characteristics, on the other hand, collectivistic cultures may emphasize group harmony, thereby providing collective support mechanisms for neurodivergent employees.



**Figure 2.** Cultural Dimensions Impact on Neurodivergent Psychological Contracts

**Uncertainty Avoidance Levels:** With a very high uncertainty-avoidance culture, a very structured and predictable environment can be created that may be good for certain neurodivergent employees while limiting flexibility. Consider cultures with low uncertainty avoidance; they would be more flexible but possibly ambiguous to challenge certain neurodivergent individuals.

**Long-term Orientation:** Cultures with a long-term orientation focus on developing robust neurodiversity programs and the career development of neurodivergent employees, whereas short-term orientations concentrate on immediate accommodations.

**Communication Context:** High-context communication with very much being communicated implicitly can cause difficulty for some neurodivergents, whereas low-context cultures provide an explicit communication channel that facilitates a greater understanding for neurodivergents.

Figure 2 illuminates the connection of these dimensions to expectations and support for neurodivergent employees, therewith suggesting the need for organizational responses that are culturally adapted.

### 4.3 Neurodivergent Individual Factors

Several individual factors influence psychological contract experiences that the framework recognizes:

**Neurological Characteristics:** Certain neurodivergent conditions (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc.) create specific strengths and challenges that shape some expectations in the workplace and the kind of support one might need.

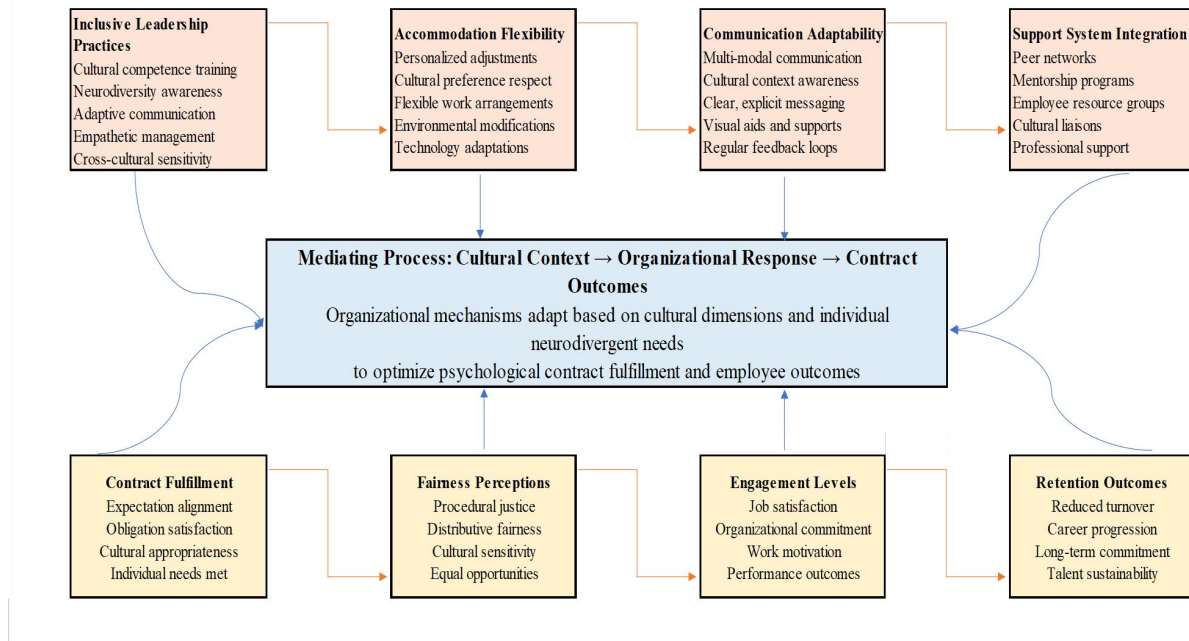
**Masking Behaviors:** The extent to which neurodivergent individuals indulge in masking or camouflaging behaviors alters their expectations from and experiences of a psychological contract [8].

**Self-Advocacy Skills:** Differences between individuals in the ability of self-advocacy affect how neurodivergent employees state their needs and negotiate psychological contracts.

**Cultural Identity Integration:** The way an individual integrates her neurodivergent identity with her cultural identity determines workplace expectations and experiences.

### 4.4 Organizational Response Mechanisms

Organizational Factors determined by the framework mediate the cultural context-psychological contract outcomes relationship in more detail as presented in Figure 3 below. The figure illustrates the critical mediating role that responses from organizations have when relating cultural contexts and individual neurodivergent traits to concrete workplace outcomes:



**Figure 3.** Organizational Response Mechanisms in Cross-Cultural Neurodiversity Context

**Inclusive leadership practices:** Leadership approaches that consider neurodivergent employees with care while respecting pertinent cultural values [8]. These approaches require leaders to develop cultural competence in tandem with neurodiversity awareness.

**Accommodation Flexibility:** Organizational capability to offer various accommodation alternatives that meet neurodivergent needs, as well as cultural preferences. This flux should consider cultural differences in the acceptance and implementation of accommodations.

**Communication Adaptability:** The organizational capability to carry out communication styles that suit cyber purposes in the way neurodivergent and conventional cultural communication norms intersect with neurodivergent communication needs.

**Support System Integration:** How formal and informal support systems are integrated by organizations for neurodivergent employees within cultural contexts. Figure 3 depicts how these mechanisms coalesce into standardized responses that straddle the width of cultural understanding and neurodivergent support.

The visual design in Figure 3 stresses the fine balance needed when attending to multiple mechanisms simultaneously rather than in separation with any one given mechanism being informed by both cultural and neurodivergent accounts.

#### 4.5 Psychological Contract Outcomes

The framework proposes several outcome variables that result from the interaction of cultural, individual, and organizational factors:

**Contract Fulfillment Perceptions:** How well neurodivergent employees perceive that organizations meet their implicit expectations within cultural contexts.

**Fairness and Justice Perceptions:** Evaluations of organizational fairness in providing support and opportunities for neurodivergent employees across cultural settings.

**Engagement and Commitment Levels:** Emotional and behavioral responses to psychological contract experiences, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment [9].

**Turnover Intentions:** Intentions to leave organizations based on psychological contract experiences, with relevance for neurodivergent talent retention [10].

### 5. Discussion

#### 5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The CNPC Framework makes several significant theoretical contributions to organizational behavior and human resource management literature, as synthesized across all three figures. Figure 1 demonstrates the framework's comprehensive integration of previously disconnected theoretical domains, while Figures 2 and 3 provide detailed elaboration of specific framework components and their interactions.

First, it represents the first comprehensive integration of psychological contract theory with neurodiversity research, addressing a critical gap in understanding employment relationships for neurodivergent individuals. The framework components illustrated in Figure 1 show how multiple theoretical perspectives converge to create a unified understanding of these complex relationships.

Second, the framework introduces cross-cultural perspectives to neurodiversity research, recognizing that cultural contexts significantly influence how neurodivergent individuals experience workplace relationships. Figure 2 specifically demonstrates how cultural dimensions create varying contexts for psychological contract formation, addressing the Western bias present in much neurodiversity research and providing foundations for global applications.

Third, the framework contributes to psychological contract theory by demonstrating how neurological differences may influence contract formation, interpretation, and fulfillment processes. Figure 3 illustrates how organizational responses must be culturally informed and neurodiversity-aware to effectively mediate psychological contract relationships. This expansion of psychological contract theory acknowledges the diversity of cognitive and social processing styles that characterize human populations.

## 5.2 Practical Implications

The framework provides several practical implications for organizational practice, as demonstrated through the integrated model presented across Figures 1, 2, and 3:

**Human Resource Policy Development:** Organizations can use the framework to develop culturally-sensitive neurodiversity policies that address both neurological differences and cultural values. Figure 2 provides specific guidance on how different cultural orientations require adapted approaches to recruitment, selection, onboarding, and performance management practices.

**Leadership Development:** The framework informs leadership development programs that prepare managers to support neurodivergent employees across different cultural contexts, emphasizing the importance of cultural competence in neurodiversity management. Figure 3 specifically outlines the inclusive leadership practices necessary for effective cross-cultural neurodiversity support.

**Organizational Assessment:** Organizations can use the framework, particularly the comprehensive model shown in Figure 1, to assess their current capacity for supporting neurodivergent employees across cultural contexts, identifying areas for improvement and development across all four framework components.

**Global Strategy Development:** Multinational organizations can use the framework to develop coherent global neurodiversity strategies that maintain consistency while allowing for cultural adaptation. The visual representations in all three figures provide practical guidance for implementing culturally-sensitive neurodiversity initiatives while maintaining organizational coherence.

## 5.3 Research Propositions

Based on the theoretical framework, several research propositions emerge for future empirical testing:

**Proposition 1:** Cultural dimensions moderate the relationship between neurodivergent characteristics and psychological contract expectations, with different cultural contexts creating varying patterns of expectation formation.

**Proposition 2:** Organizational response mechanisms mediate the relationship between cultural context and psychological contract outcomes for neurodivergent employees.

**Proposition 3:** The intersection of neurodivergent identity and cultural identity creates unique psychological contract experiences that differ from those of neurotypical employees within the same cultural contexts.

**Proposition 4:** Neurodivergent employees in high power distance cultures will have lower expectations for organizational accommodation compared to those in low power distance cultures.

**Proposition 5:** Collectivistic cultures will emphasize group-based support systems for neurodivergent employees, while individualistic cultures will focus on individual accommodations.

## 5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This conceptual research has several limitations that future research should address. First, the framework requires empirical validation across multiple cultural contexts and neurodivergent populations. Longitudinal studies examining how psychological contracts evolve over time would provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of these relationships [11].

Second, the framework may be not embracing all relevant cultural dimensions or neurodivergent characteristics. Future studies might pursue other factors that affect psychological contract experiences for neurodivergent employees.

Thirdly, because the framework was more oriented toward organizational contexts, future work could ask how these same principles play out in other contexts, such as those of educational institutions or healthcare organizations [12].

Future methodological considerations will include developing culturally-appropriate measurement instruments, ensuring representative samples across different cultural contexts, and using mixed-method approaches that will capture quantitative relationships and qualitative experiences [13].

## 6. Conclusion

This conceptual paper has developed a comprehensive and holistic theoretical lens through which to look at psychological contract experiences of neurodivergent employees across cultural contexts. The CNPC Framework thereby becomes one of the very first systematic integrations of psychological contract theory, neurodiversity research, and cross-cultural management. The related theories have been visually synthesized through three complementary figures in this research.

Together, they form an array of visual extracts that theoretically reinforce the framework by expanding psychological contract theory onto neurodivergent populations, bringing cross-cultural perspectives into neurodiversity research, and providing operational guidelines for organizations that want to support neurodivergent employees across contexts.

This framework makes theoretical contributions in extending psychological contract theory to accommodate neurodivergent populations, adding cross-cultural considerations to neurodiversity research, and providing a practical framework supporting organizations in their endeavors to accommodate neurodivergent employees globally. Proposed are theoretical relations, as populating the three figures, which may serve future empirical research and offer immediate guiding value for organizational practice.

It provides practical applications for human resource management, leadership development, organizational diagnosis, and global strategy development. As organizations have begun to appreciate the value of neurodiversity, it becomes essential to understand how cultures differentially influence neurodivergent employees' psychological contracts. Such understanding would allow for the construction of workplaces inclusive beyond cultural levels.

Future research should focus on empirically validating the proposed theoretical relationships depicted in the framework figures, developing culturally-appropriate measurement instruments, and examining the effectiveness of different organizational interventions across cultural contexts [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19]. Such research will contribute to creating more inclusive workplaces that recognize and value both neurodiversity and cultural diversity.

What makes this research significant is its capacity to revamp the organizational approach to neurodiversity-by universal, one-size-fits-all type-theorized, and decomposed into culture-specific practice in favor of outcome maximization for both neurodivergent employees and organizations. Integrating psychological contract theory with neurodiversity and cross-cultural research, the framework opens the way for an inclusive global workplace, from the perspective of both neurological and cultural diversity.

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