

**A Person-Centered Workplace Intervention**

Research in Progress

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**Abstract**

The research-in-progress proposes a new conceptual framework for person-centered workplaces based on neuroinclusion, positive psychology 2.0, and person-centered approaches. The intervention aims to help practitioners create inclusive and flourishing work environments for all employees, especially the neurodivergent ones. The research builds on Joseph's (2021) discussion of how person-centered theory can explain growth after adversity and how social environment influences personality development. The research also Carl Roger's Person-Centered Approach theories. The research hopes to develop a comprehensive and practical framework for person-centered workplace processes that align with the principles of positive psychology 2.0 and person-centered theory.

*Keywords:* person-centered approach, neurodiversity, positive psychology, flourishing, workplace

### **A Person-Centered Workplace Framework**

The current research-in-progress aims to create a conceptual framework using a training intervention for neuroinclusion that benefits all members of an organization and, therefore, will be more attractive for adoption by organizations. This intervention is called Person-Centered Workplace Certificate created by grit & flow™. Neuroinclusion is a complex phenomenon both dependent on the institutional and individual members implementation of processes, policies, and behavior change to increase the creation of environments supporting neurodivergent candidates and employees. The existing theories of Held's (2004) tyranny of the positive attitude and Carl Roger's (1961) person-centered theory, coupled with Joseph's (2021) discussion on positive psychology and a person-centered approach calling on the dependency on the social environment for change. The conceptual framework engages the characteristics of Positive Psychology 2.0, which balances out positive psychology by acknowledging both positive and negative aspects and the dynamic interactions between these (Wong, 2011). Using multiple theories may prove to increase in studying the effectiveness of this intervention but also provide a causal mechanism when interpreting findings (Monsen, 2018). The research aims to develop a comprehensive framework for person-centered workplace interventions to guide practitioners in their efforts to guide organizations on the creation of inclusive workplaces where all employees flourish, and the organization thrives.

### **Problem and Hypothesis**

The problem to be addressed through this framework is the systemic change in practices, policies, and procedures that will both prove substantial benefits to an organization's Key Performance Indications (KPIs), while creating neuroinclusive workplaces where individuals with neurodivergent traits can gain and retain successful and meaningful employment. It is

hypothesized that the intervention will increase KPIs for an organization related to hiring and retention.

Hypothesis to test:

- Hypothesis 1: A cohort (workgroup) adoption of person-centered workplace intervention for processes, policies and behaviors increase hiring and retention success for neurodivergent candidates and employees.
- Hypothesis 2: A cohort (workgroup) adoption of person-centered workplace intervention for processes, policies and behaviors increase hiring and retention success for all candidates and employees.
- Hypothesis 3: An organizational adoption of person-centered workplace intervention for processes, policies and behaviors will increase hiring and retention success for neurodivergent candidates and employees.
- Hypothesis 4: An organizational adoption of person-centered workplace intervention for processes, policies and behaviors will increase hiring and retention success for all candidates and employees.

### **Support for a Person-Centered Approach**

Currently, research is lacking in guiding the systemic changes required to meet the growing needs of neurodivergent and intersectional populations in the workplace. Various diversity initiatives do not address the complete, multi-dimensional person (Strand, 2017), resulting in short-lived efforts and diversity fatigue (Jameson, 2024). A person-centered approach to workplace inclusion can organize effective change processes in psychosocial interventions, focusing interventions on workplace culture, processes, communication, and

organizational norms context, using techniques applied in neuroinclusion research, workplace inclusion practices, and intersectionality to revisit organizational processes and behaviors.

The intervention uses a person-centered approach, positive psychology 2.0, in conjunction with applying neuroinclusion best practices, is a more generalized effort to make systemic behavior and policy change in organizations more broadly adapted, resulting in a shift in organizational norms. These shifts will benefit the neurodivergent population through the normalization of hiring best practices (Davies et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2021; Whelpley & May, 2023), the removal of the need for formal disclosure to receive accommodations/adjustments (Lindsay et al., 2021; Reed et al., 2017), and providing communication and mentorship based on the individuals needs in the context of the current workplace environment (Hutson & Hutson, 2023).

As it relates to neuroinclusion, Joseph's (2021) approach mirrors the need for systemic change when he writes, "The person-centered psychologists to understand that if people are to change, it is not the person that we must try to change but their social environment" (p. 1). The social environment greatly influences neuroinclusion. When a social environment is neuroinclusive, there is a reduction in camouflaging and masking behaviors employed to fit the social environment (Fombonne, 2020) and 'put on his/her best normal' (Hull et al., 2017). Joseph adds, "Carl Rogers's person-centered theory of personality development should be applied to understanding how people grow following adversity" (p. 1). The neurodivergent population has faced adversity in employment, as explicitly shown by the unemployment numbers and the variety of research concluded or in progress to find solutions (Wen et al., 2024). Lastly, Ciarrochi et al. (2022, p. 1) align by calling for interventions that "should start with the person,

not the protocol." A systemic change is needed for workplace inclusion for neurodivergent workers.

The grit & flow™ Person-Centered Workplace Certificate provides both written and practical working sessions on topics and situations in the workplace that have been found through consulting experiences and research, to create barriers to successful gaining of meaningful and well-matched employment and retention of employment. This intervention focuses on tenets associated with inclusive leadership, universal design, accommodations, holistic supports, and communication in the workplace. The intervention has currently been beta tested with two different cohorts with early results demonstrating a consistent change in behavior among participants which is slowly trickling into change in processes and policies.

### **Research Method**

The conceptual framework will be developed using a Problem-Intervention-Outcome (PIO) design as shown in Figure 1. A deductive approach is planned for the first phase of the framework using a Problem-Intervention-Outcome Meta-Model project design (PIO MM) prospective design, followed by an inductive approach once data is collected post intervention data analysis. The deductive process will use quantitative analysis of pre and post key performance indicators for hiring and retention before and after implementation of person-centered practices. The refinement of the framework will use an inductive approach through the subsequent qualitative interviews on various interventions derived from the framework. Both the qualitative and quantitative data interpretation will contribute to refinement of the conceptual framework for practitioners to move forward on projects and implementations to increase the successful employment of neurodivergent people.

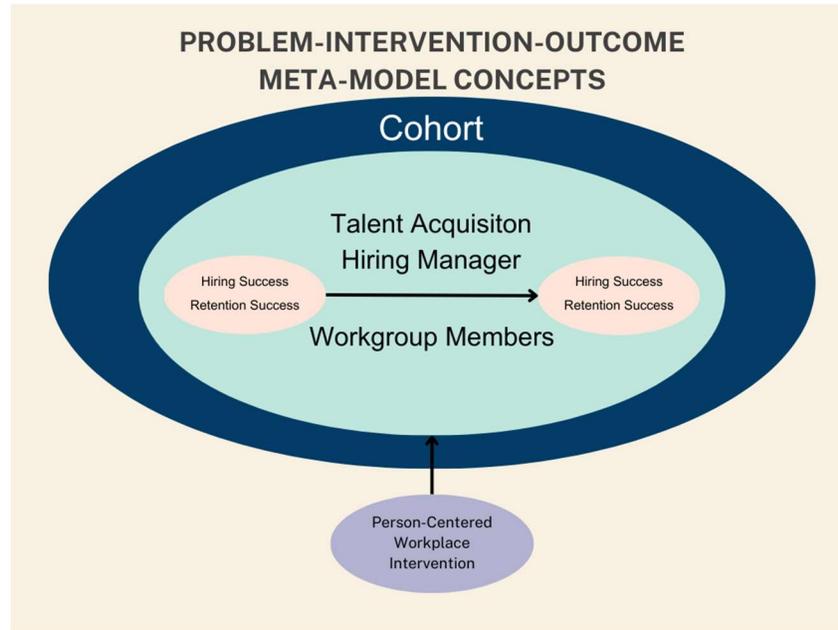


Figure 1: The proposed PIO MM Concepts

Positive relationships are anticipated between person-centered workplace approaches within the organization and the retention and retention of workplace members. Two variables will be used for measuring the outcome of the intervention, hiring success and retention success. Figures 2 and 3 are early research identifiers of measurements utilized by talent acquisition and management in organizations.

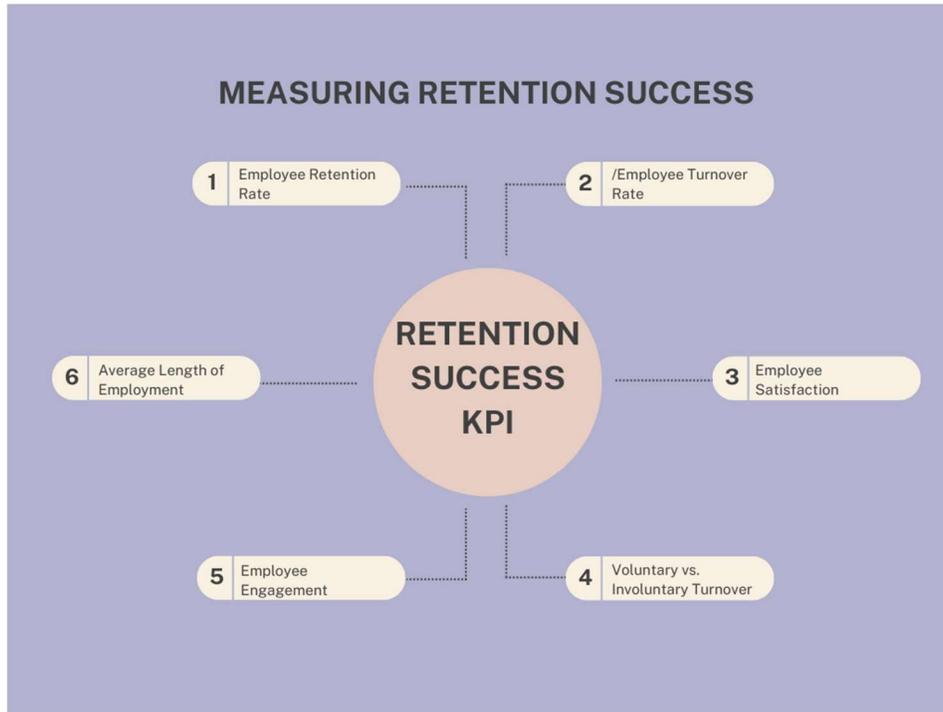


Figure 2: Initial thoughts on measuring hiring success metrics.



Figure 3: Initial thoughts on measuring retention success metrics.

The author predicts a greater adoption of the intervention when the practitioners' applications benefit the complete organization and all intersections of individual contributors. Person-centered approaches have increased student goal orientation and obtainment (Wormington & Linnenbrick-Garcia, 2017) and workforce-ready people with developmental disabilities (Mechetti & Garcia, 2003). Additionally, researchers Crocetti et al. (2014) found that using a person-centered approach to job identity had a specific impact on job outcomes such as burnout, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Expanding to apply positive psychology concepts can increase the focus on individuals' strengths, virtues, and self-determination of all organizational stakeholders (Froman, 2010), supporting the predicted relationships.

### **Neurodiversity Research Conference Purpose**

This research aims to establish guidance on creating workplaces where all employees can thrive, including those who identify as neurodivergent. The research-in-process is presented to the Neurodiversity Research Conference with three purposes. First, the author hopes to receive feedback on the approach to construct the conceptual framework and theories proposed as foundational. Second, a discussion on similar or conflicting studies that conference participants may have exposure to is encouraged to be shared. Lastly, suggestions for journal submissions and early-version peer reviews will be asked.

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