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Women & ADHD

Alexa Curtis
alexac03@uw.edu

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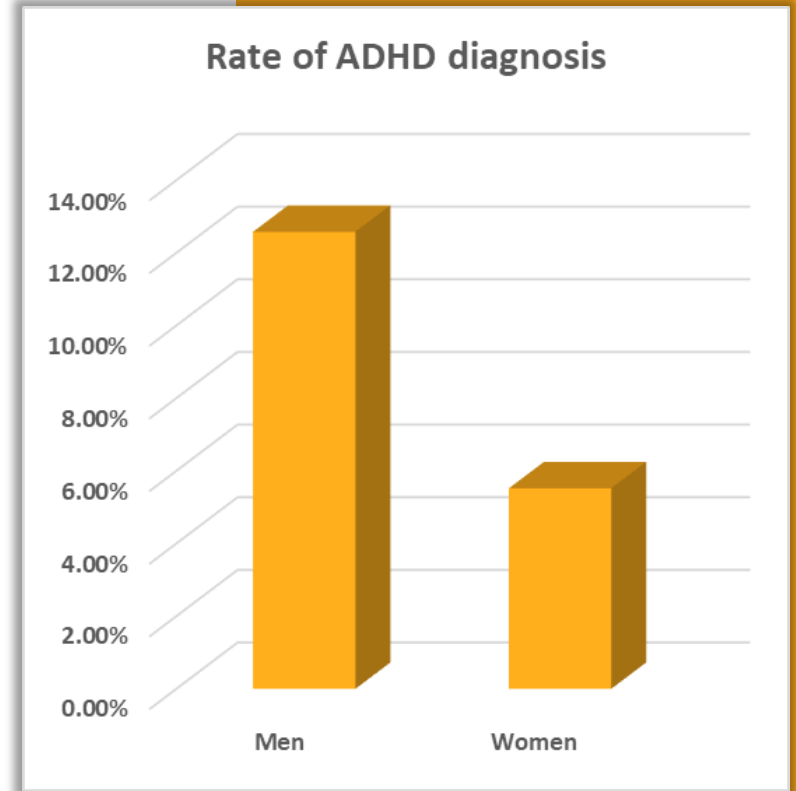
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Women & ADHD

Background Info

Although research suggests ADHD is almost equal between men and women ⁽³⁾, men receive more diagnosis than women ⁽¹⁾. Also, ADHD commonly presents differently in men and women which is a contributing factor to this difference in diagnosis.



Source: (1)



82% of teachers

believed that attention deficit disorder is more prevalent in boys

50%-75%

of cases of ADHD in girls are missed

Girls with ADHD are **4x**

More likely to attempt suicide & self harm

Socialization

Girl's socialization is different than guys. Societies rules for gender it is extremely persuasive in affecting how people act. The social pressures on girls to act a certain way is extremely intense, so from an early age many learn how to compensate and hide their difficulties. This socialization causes the symptoms of ADHD to manifest differently in women.

POTENTIAL SIGNS OF ADHD IN GIRLS

Spends too much time doing assignments



Look at the amount of time girls with ADHD are willing to put in more hours studying to compensate for their difficulties leading to better grades. Then males with ADHD who tend to just accept bad grades.

Friendship Troubles



Girls are socialized against being aggressive well boys are not. So when girls have a hard time making friendships or getting along it is less obvious because boys will do things like fight or yell. With girls you have to watch and listen to what they say to see if they're having troubles building friendships which is a sign of ADHD.

Extremely Talkative



Girls with ADHD tend to not be hyperactive in the way most people think like not being able to sit still or moving around too much. We don't see this in girls because they are socialized to not take up as much space. Their hyperactivity tends to manifest in talking nonstop which ends up getting dismissed being talkative is a female stereotype.

Disorganization



Disorganization and messiness are symptoms of ADHD that often get ignored or overlooked. This is a great one to look for in girls because it is easy to see unlike many of the other traits because it's much harder to hide disorganization.

Examples of Female Socialization



Women are socialized to not take up space literally and figuratively. girls are taught that they are supposed to stay as small as possible And not draw attention to themselves. The hyperactivity that is associated with ADHD goes against back girls tend to find ways to compensate for that. The hyperactivity show in other ways for girls



“Girls are taught to be passive, nice, accommodating and nurturing”(6). Yelling and fighting are seen as masculine, Which means when a female tries to do this easier belittled or punished in some way. So female aggression often comes out as passive aggression. Passive aggression is a lot less noticeable and can be missed or overlooked.



Women are given less slack than men. when a woman fails it is perceived as a lack of ability versus when a man failed at something it's perceived as a lack of effort. This is why girls do much better in school than men they put in more effort because a low grade is an attack and their ability and intellect. So even neurodivergent girls put in significant amount of effort to achieve good grades and often do better than the average neurotypical boy.

SOME DIFFERENCES IN ADHD EXPRESSION IN GIRLS

LOWER LEVELS OF HYPERACTIVITY



GREATER LEVELS OF INTELLECTUAL IMPAIRMENT

LOWER LEVELS OF PEER AGGRESSION



The differences in gender are significant because most of the research in and around neurodivergence is focused on males. Hyperactivity, aggression, poor grades are common traits in ADHD boys & are key traits teachers and doctors look for when giving an ADHD referral. These traits are less common in all girls in general and I very common in no typical young boys. please bring the baseline or why boys get overdiagnoses with ADHD while girls are significantly underdiagnosed.

The Gender Biased

The real root of the problem is the gender bias in medical research. The difference in symptoms wouldn't matter if the research the knowledge around ADHD was not mainly focused on men. We as women have pretty much always been seen as just lesser versions of men. We have been excluded from conducting research and being included in medical trials

In a study of the impact of ADHD in the lives of adolescent girls between the ages of 14 and 18.



A participant shared the story of when she went to speak to her general practitioner about the possibility of having ADHD, the doctor told her that **Girls 'can't have' ADHD**

Historically, women have been incredibly underrepresented in clinical trials.



Health research was done on men and the results were assumed to apply to women

The textbooks being used to teach are old and contain male-bias information



Doctors tend to ignore/downplay women's concern

From the beginning of medical research women have been ignore. in recent decades we've seen pushes towards fighting against the gender bias and including women in research and studying the differences between us in the medical field. while we have these recent pushes, they are not included in the textbooks and information that we used to teach. general sexism sneaks its way into their two women are often ignored when it comes to their pain and suffering. it is dismissed as them being overly emotional, hormones or they are exaggerating because that's "just what women do". Statements like these are normalized in general society and doctors are not immune to the sexism ingrained into them in and outside of work.





**Simplified flow
chart of the
impact not
receiving a
diagnosis**



Conclusion

The diagnosis can greatly improve girl's life. ADHD can lead to impulsive and risky behaviors; this can lead people into dangerous situations & bodily or mentally on them harm. Knowledge is power, it gives her the chance to know what's different about her and how to compensate or work around it. We need to start including and listening to women to combats the gender bias in ADHD diagnosis.

Benefits of an ADHD Diagnosis

With a ADHD Diagnosis	Without a ADHD Diagnosis
Work Productivity Loss 29%	Work Productivity Loss 49%
Activity Level Impairment 37%	Activity Level Impairment 53%
Higher Self-Esteem 	Lower Self-Esteem 
Higher Quality of Life 	Lower Quality of Life 

Citations

(1) Ramtekkar, U. P., Reiersen, A. M., Todorov, A. A., & Todd, R. D. (2010). Sex and age differences in attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder symptoms and diagnoses: implications for DSM-V and ICD-11. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 49(3), 217–28.e283

- This research paper with a great source for raw data and a great jumping off point to other Journal articles to explain the data and what it means.

(2) Gaub M, Carlson CL. Gender differences in ADHD: a meta-analysis and critical review. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 1997 Aug;36(8):1036-45. doi: 10.1097/00004583-199708000-00011. Erratum in: *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 1997 Dec;36(12):1783. PMID: 9256583.

- I use this to see what experts in the field have to say about the differences between ADHD boys and ADHD girls and to explain what the data in a previous Journal article shows.

(3) Collingwood, J. (2018, October 08). ADHD and Gender. Retrieved December 07, 2020, from <https://psychcentral.com/lib/adhd-and-gender/>

- Has a stat about teachers associating ADHD with boys that I used and goes into the specific about ADHD and my girls have a hard time getting a diagnosis.

(4) Adams, C. (2007). Girls and ADHD: Are You Missing the Signs? Retrieved December 07, 2020, from <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/girls-and-adhd-are-you-missing-signs/>

- Has a really important stat that 50 to 75% of girls with ADHD don't get diagnosed and signs to look for in girls

(5) Eunice Sigler Medically reviewed by Michele Novotni, Sigler, E., & Novotni, M. (2020, October 05). ADHD Looks Different in Women. Here's How - and Why. Retrieved December 07, 2020, from <https://www.additudemag.com/add-in-women/>

- I use this for almost everything this website is full of information but specifically this article about it in women is extremely informative provides information on symptoms white girls don't get diagnosed and everything in between.

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- (7) Lam, B. (2016, August 17). The Socialization of Women and the Gender Gap. Retrieved December 07, 2020, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2016/08/the-socialization-of-women/495200/>
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- This article is about research that show why women are outpacing men in school.
- (9) Baker, N. (2014, July 09). Teachers feel 'unprepared' for ADHD students in the classroom, according to study. Retrieved December 07, 2020, from <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-20274740.html>
- This article included a story about a girl who was told that she couldn't have ADHD because of her gender which shows some other gender bias in this field.
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- This article talks about the gender bias in the medical field as a whole and the history of it.
- (11) Hoff, C. (2019, August 14). Taking on Gender Bias in Clinical Trials. Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://nwhn.org/taking-on-gender-bias-in-clinical-trials/>
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- This is about how the gender bias affects women and the history of it in medicine.

Citations

(13) Frank, M., Psy.D. (2019, November 06). Myth: Only boys have ADHD. Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://adhdawarenessmonth.org/myth-only-boys-have-adhd/>

- This article gave me more information about the gender differences in ADHD and the myth that's it's a boy issue.

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