

Analysis of Female Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Abstract

The present study aimed to assist in diagnostic clarity for females with autism. The researcher hypothesized that females with autism engage in rigid repetitive behaviors (RRBs) differently based on age. A secondary purpose to the study was to identify what RRBs females engaged in. The researcher collected previous testing data at a neuropsychological clinic from 25 participants ages 6-52. Qualitative analysis found females with ASD engaged in six RRB types including repetitive behaviors, socially restrictive behaviors, stereotyped speech, resistance to/difficulty with transitions, compulsions/rituals, and circumscribed interests. Socially restrictive behaviors and circumscribed interests were most frequently endorsed. Quantitatively, a Mann Whitney U test determined statistical significance in the number of RRBs presented by age. Qualitatively, the child/adolescent grouping presented with more external and total RRBs despite having one less participant than the adult age grouping. An outcome of the present study was the creation of an RRB checklist which assisted in triangulating the data. This measure was used in neuropsychological testing to note the RRBs present during assessment. Statistical analysis of a Spearman Correlation revealed that the responses given by neuropsychologist on the RRB Checklist were correlated to self-report responses on the Autism/Empathy Quotient. Additionally, while not correlated to the ADI-R independently, when combining all parent/self-report data (ADI-R, Autism/ Empathy Quotient) were correlated to neuropsychologist responses on the RRB Checklist. This lends itself to helping to better validate the measure and will be grounds for future research.

Keywords: autism spectrum disorder, camouflaging, diagnostic clarity, female, rigid repetitive behaviors