

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of ASD is of at least 2:1-3:1, suggesting biological questions regarding the different presentation and symptomatology in females and males. Moreover, research findings report **gender dimorphic differences include memory, cognitive flexibility, verbal fluency, and social-communication** (Halladay, Bishop, Constantino, Daniels, Koenig, Palmer, Messinger, Pelphrey, Sanders, Singer, Taylor, Szatmari, 2015).

The current literature review analyzed the autism female phenotype as well as gender differences in the female ASD presentation to identify current gaps in the literature and suggest future research directions.

METHODS

- A systematic search of the literature was conducted between January and March 2022 using the keywords: ASD, females, restrictive/repetitive behaviors, special interest, female autism phenotype.
- The search included five databases (1) Scienedirect, (2) Medline, (3) PsycARTICLES, (4) Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, and (5) PsychINFO.
- Inclusion criteria consisted of peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2011-2022 that analyzed the autistic female phenotype and gender differences in the female autistic presentation.
- Exclusion criteria consisted of papers that were not published in English, not peer-reviewed, published before 2011, and did not specifically address the autistic female presentation as part of their abstract or subject keywords.



Camouflaging is a complex adaptive mechanism used to compensate for symptomatology presented in ASD.

It is seen more in females than males, and contributes to misdiagnosis, late diagnosis and underdiagnosis.



DISCUSSION

The female autism phenotype theory argues that current diagnostic criteria misses autistic females who present differently ^[15].

Gender differences in the ASD presentation in females include more camouflaging, less restrictive repetitive behaviors and less difficulties with socialization ^[15].

Restrictive interests around dolls or babies in females might be misinterpreted as pretend play (Halladay et al., 2015).

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research on instruments better adapted or inclusive to help identify the female phenotype ^{[11][9][14][24]}, subtle gender differences ^[138], and gender bias in the recognition of ASD within a binary gender framework ^[25] is needed.

Future research should consider the development and role of camouflaging behaviors and its possible presentation in other psychopathologies ^{[11][15]}.

Research on the role of age/gender, hormone status ^[19] as well as autistic-specific mechanisms underlying Eating Disorders ^[4] will help inform the presentation of ASD in females.

LIMITATIONS

Lack of alexithymia assessment, which is the inability to describe one's own emotional state.

Lack of group comparison research with neurotypical females

Small sample sizes

