



ADHD in Adolescents: Differences Between Boys and Girls

Understanding Gender to Promote Inclusion, Equity and Effective Support



WHY GENDER MATTERS

ADHD does not look the same in boys and girls. Research shows important gender-related differences in how symptoms present, how they are perceived, and the impact on daily life. Recognizing these differences is essential for accurate diagnosis and effective support.

INTRODUCTION

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that continues into adolescence for many individuals. However, the way ADHD presents can differ significantly between boys and girls, influencing identification, experiences, and outcomes.



Neurodevelopmental condition



Different presentation



Different recognition



Different impact

KEY GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ADHD DURING ADOLESCENCE

BOYS	VS	GIRLS
 SYMPTOM PRESENTATION • More externalizing symptoms (hyperactivity, impulsivity) • More noticeable disruptive behavior • Often action-oriented	SYMPTOMS 	 SYMPTOM PRESENTATION • More internalizing symptoms (inattention, daydreaming) • More subtle and less disruptive • Often thought-oriented
 DIAGNOSIS • More likely to be identified and diagnosed • Symptoms often recognized in early childhood	DIAGNOSIS 	 DIAGNOSIS • More likely to be underidentified or diagnosed later in adolescence • Symptoms often overlooked or mistaken for anxiety, depression, or low motivation
 BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL • May disrupt class, talk out of turn, have difficulty waiting • More likely to receive disciplinary actions	SCHOOL BEHAVIOR 	 BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL • May appear quiet, withdrawn, or "lost in thought" • Struggle with organization and attention • Less likely to receive disciplinary actions
 ACADEMIC IMPACT • Inconsistent performance due to impulsivity and distractibility • Homework often incomplete or forgotten	ACADEMIC IMPACT 	 ACADEMIC IMPACT • Inconsistent performance due to inattention • Perfectionism may mask difficulties • Homework often incomplete or done last minute
 SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES • Higher risk of peer rejection • More external conflicts • May show frustration outwardly	SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL 	 SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES • Higher risk of internalizing problems (anxiety, low self-esteem, depression) • More likely to withdraw socially • May internalize frustration
 LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (Without Support) • Higher risk of substance use • Problematic driving behavior • Academic underachievement	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES 	 LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (Without Support) • Higher risk of mood and anxiety disorders • Low self-esteem • Academic underachievement



- Girls with ADHD are at higher risk of being underdiagnosed and undertreated.
- Gender stereotypes may contribute to misinterpretation of symptoms.
- Tailored assessment and gender-sensitive approaches are essential.
- Educators, parents and clinicians need awareness and training on gender differences in ADHD.

SUPPORTING ALL ADOLESCENTS WITH ADHD



Early and comprehensive assessment



Gender-sensitive understanding and support



Inclusive school practices and accommodations



Family involvement and education



Promote self-esteem, resilience and emotional well-being

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE



ADHD in adolescents is not the same for boys and girls. Recognizing and respecting these differences is the first step toward equity and inclusion.



ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

This study explores the design and evaluation of ADHD interventions in multicultural, co-taught secondary classrooms in Greece, with a focus on inclusion, collaboration and equity.



RESEARCH CONTEXT

- Secondary Education
- Inclusive Classrooms (ZEP Schools)
- Co-teaching Practices
- Multicultural Contexts

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