Diagnostic Delays in ADHD Among Adult Female Outpatients: Study Protocol for A Mixed-Methods

Nur Ajirah Abdul Manaf [1*], Siti Irma Fadhilah Ismail[2], Kit Aun Tan[2]

[1]Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia
[2]Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia
*Correspondence: ajirah@upm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Background:

ADHD prevalence varies by age and gender, with women often receiving diagnoses later due to less overt symptoms and higher comorbidity rates, contributing to persistent gender disparities. These challenges are further exacerbated by societal norms, gender biases, and a historical focus on male presentations in ADHD research. To address this gap, this mixed methods study will examine the relationship between demographic, clinical, and systemic factors and delays in ADHD diagnosis among female outpatients in a public psychiatry department in Malaysia.

Project details:

This study will employ a mixed-method approach and will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 will use a quantitative design to examine demographic (age, education, marital status, and employment), clinical (initial symptoms, physician's specialty, and diagnosis), and systemic factors (diagnostic criteria, and ADHD training availability) that influence ADHD diagnosis. Phase 2 will use a qualitative design to identify barriers to diagnosis and treatment access for women.

Outcomes:

This study is projected to yield two major findings. In Phase 1, the quantitative analysis may identify significant associations between specific demographic, clinical, and systemic factors and delays in ADHD diagnosis among female outpatients, highlighting the need for tailored diagnostic protocols to reduce these delays. In Phase 2, the qualitative analysis may uncover key barriers to ADHD diagnosis and treatment access specific to women. These insights would inform targeted interventions to enhance early detection and support for women with ADHD.

Conclusion:

This study has the potential to improve understanding of factors influencing ADHD diagnosis and management among female outpatients, a group often underdiagnosed. The findings aim to enhance early recognition and treatment of ADHD, improve patient outcomes and healthcare quality, and inform healthcare practices and policies in Malaysia.

Keywords: Adult ADHD, Women, Delayed diagnosis, Disparities

Biodata:

Nur Ajirah Binti Abdul Manaf is a Clinical Psychologist with nearly a decade of experience, keen interest in neurodevelopmental disorders, and utilizing psychoanalysis and psychodynamic approaches. She is actively involved in clinical supervision and mentoring future psychologists in Malaysia, and she is dedicated to advancing the mental health field in the country.