

Physical and Mental Well-Being of Women in Neurodiverse Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Although the global awareness of autism continues to show signs of growth, little empirical research has been done on the way in which autistic traits impact romantic relationships. The existing body of knowledge points at a severe state of distress in women who are in couple relationships with men, diagnosed or suspected to be on the autism spectrum. It also indicates that most professionals are not trained and lack the experience to recognize or diagnose high-functioning autism in adults. Hence, they fail to provide efficient help for neurodiverse couples and women in neurodiverse relationships. Unfortunately, the existing knowledge is mainly based on non-scholarly literature and as such, is not given serious consideration by clinicians and the scientific community. Aiming to raise the awareness of this important topic and to advance its treatment, I conducted a quantitative study exploring the physical and mental well-being of women in neurodiverse relationships. To the best of my knowledge, it is the first empirical research focusing on this topic. The research population included 648 women in three groups: 228 women (35.2%) whose partners were formally diagnosed with autism; 203 women (31.3%) who suspected their partners to be on the autism spectrum; 217 women (33.5%) in the control group, with neurotypical partners. Data collection was performed through six online self-report questionnaires. The findings strongly indicate that women in neurodiverse relationships qualify their physical and mental health as worse than women in neurotypical relationships. Another important finding was the lack of difference between women whose partners were formally diagnosed and women who suspected their partners to be on the autism spectrum. The current research has significant clinical and practical implications concerning the need to enrich the knowledge and expertise of health care professionals. In her proposed virtual presentation, she will describe the research, share the findings, and discuss the conclusions and implications of her study results. She believes that increasing the alertness of healthcare professionals to the characteristic complaints of women in neurodiverse relationships may greatly contribute to their potential for providing appropriate support and assistance for this population of women and for neurodiverse couples.

Keywords: Autism, Global awareness, Autism spectrum

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