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Gender differences in social communication during the CASS protocol

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder diagnosed in males approximately four times as often as females (Maenner et.al, 2020). It has been hypothesized that females engage in more camouflaging of symptoms to include better social communication during simple social exchange. This project was conducted to determine if there are significant behavioral differences between males and females diagnosed with ASD during a friendly social interaction. The Contextual Assessment of Social Skills (CASS) protocol was used to test hypothesized behavioral differences, and the Interested condition was used to simulate a friendly social encounter. The sample included 91 participants with confirmed diagnosis of ASD (60 males, 31 females). Independent sample t-tests were used to examine Vocal Expression, Gestures, and Positive Affect with the hypothesis that females would have overall higher scores. The results confirmed females with ASD show better Positive Affect $t(89) = -2.373$, $p = 0.02$, and Vocal Expression $t(88) = -2.105$, $p = 0.038$; however, Gestures $t(89) = -0.639$, $p = 0.526$ was not significantly different between groups. The findings show that females demonstrate more prosocial behaviors in simple social interactions. Results corroborate previous research demonstrating that females more frequently use camouflaging in social situations (Corbett et al., 2020).

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