Autism Traits and Well-Being in Adults Receiving a Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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Introduction

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is typically diagnosed in childhood.
- However some individuals do not receive a diagnosis until adulthood.
- Research has suggested that young adults with ASD have lower well-being than typically developing peers.
- Little is know whether well-being changes across the lifespan or if it is impacted by receiving a diagnosis ASD.
- This study investigates stability of ASD traits post diagnosis and whether late diagnosis affects well-being.

Hypotheses

- Autism Quotient (AQ) scores will remain stable over time.
- Associations between AQ scores and age will be explored
- Late adult diagnoses of ASD will be associated with lower self-rated well-being scores.
- Age will be associated with lower well-being and sleep quality

Methods

- **Participants:** 36 individuals diagnosed with ASD in adulthood. Aged between 18-63 (Mean age 33) when first diagnosed. One participant was removed as an outlier.
- 27 Male; 9 female
- Followed up between 4- 80 months after diagnosis.

Table 1: Age and follow-up information

	Mean Age	Range
Initial assessment	33.03 (10.83)	18 - 63
Follow Up	36.08 (10.27)	19 - 65
Follow up time in months	35.61 (22.94)	4 - 80

- **Self-report Measures:**
- ASD measures: Autism-Spectrum Quotient (AQ). Taken at baseline and follow up.
- Well-being measures: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), World Health Organisation Quality Of Life (WHOQol). Taken at follow up only.
- Sleep measures: Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) Taken at follow up only.

Results: Gender differences

- No significant difference in AQ scores.
- No significant differences in WEMWBS
- No significant difference in PSQI
- No significant differences in WHOQoL

Results: Change between baseline and follow-up AQ

- No significant difference in AQ scores between the two time points. ASD traits remained stable.

Results: Correlations with Age

Table 2: Correlations with age at both times points.

	Age at First Assessment	Age at Follow-up
AQ	$r = .345, p = .039*$	$r = .354, p = .034*$
WEMWBS	$r = -.457, p = .005**$	$r = -.490, p = .002*$
WHOQol	$r = -.357, p = .038*$	$r = -.378, p = .028*$
PSQI	$r = .218, p = .274$	$r = .274, p = .167$

*p<.05, **p<.01

Results

- AQ showed a significant positive correlation with both age at first assessment and age at current study.
- Both well-being measures were correlated negatively with age at both time points

Figure 1: Scatterplots of age associations.
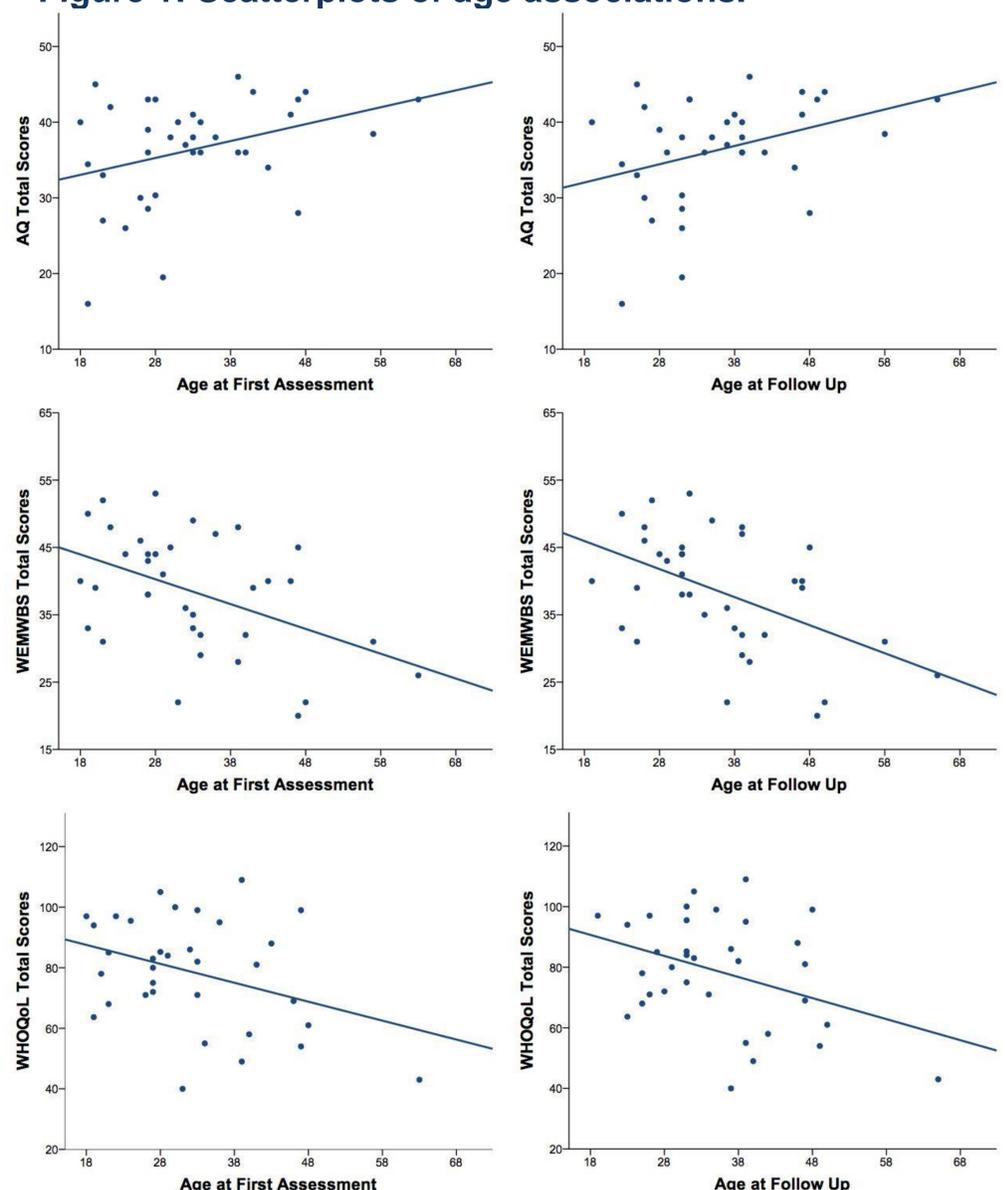
Conclusion

- ASD traits are positively correlated with age in late-diagnosed individuals.
- Well-being does not change post-diagnosis
- Late diagnosis appears to be having a detrimental effect on individuals' well-being.
- No significant associations between sleep quality and age were observed
- No gender differences were noted
- Further questions to be explored: Do poorer AQ scores with older age reflect -
    - cognitive changes?
    - lack of intervention/support?