

Prevalence of ADHD and ADHD Symptomatology among Undergraduate Students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

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Introduction

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder marked by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that often persists into adulthood, impairing academic performance and daily functioning. Many students remain undiagnosed due to stigma, limited mental health resources, and scarce region-specific research. This highlights the need for targeted interventions and localized studies to enhance student support systems.

Objectives

- To determine the proportion of students with ADHD and possible undiagnosed ADHD using WHO Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS-v1.1).
- To analyze ADHD symptomatology across the different faculties at the UWI.
- To determine the proportion of students who use ADHD medication with and without a diagnosis of ADHD.

Methodology

Study Design & Setting

A **cross-sectional** descriptive study at UWI, St. Augustine, among registered **undergraduate** students across **seven** faculties for the academic year 2024/2025.

Population & Sampling

374 participants were recruited using **convenience** sampling through faculty mailing lists, social media, and other student networks.

Ethics & Data Analysis

Ethics approval was obtained from the Campus Research Ethics Committee (CREC). Data was analysed in SPSS using **descriptive statistics**, chi-square tests, and an ANOVA ($p < 0.05$).

Data Collection

An **anonymous online** Google Forms questionnaire which comprised demographics, ADHD diagnosis and medication use, and the WHO Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale.

Results

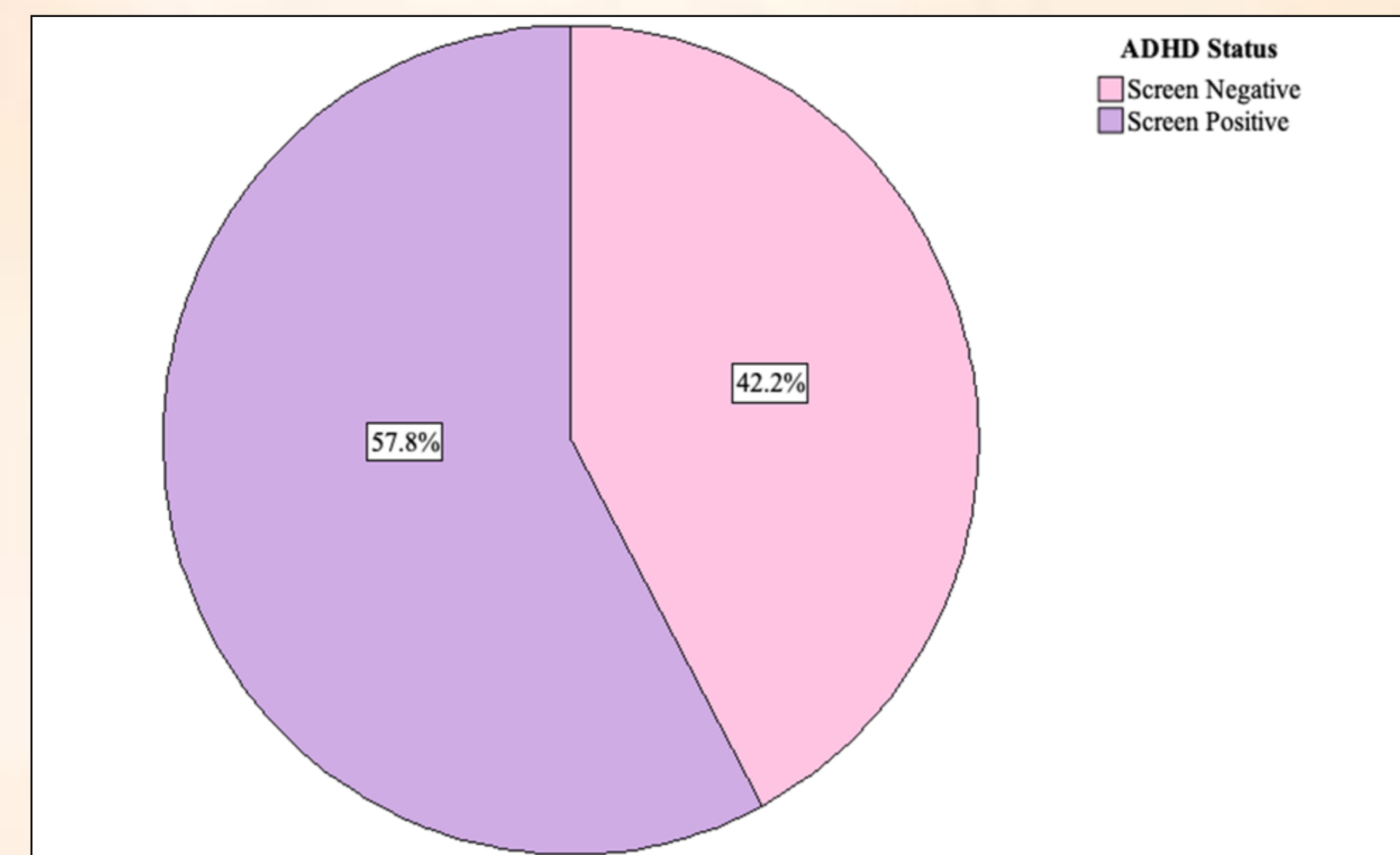


Figure 1. Pie chart showing overall ADHD status among undergraduate students ($n = 374$) at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. 57.8% screened positive while 42.2% screened negative for ADHD using the WHO ASRS v1.

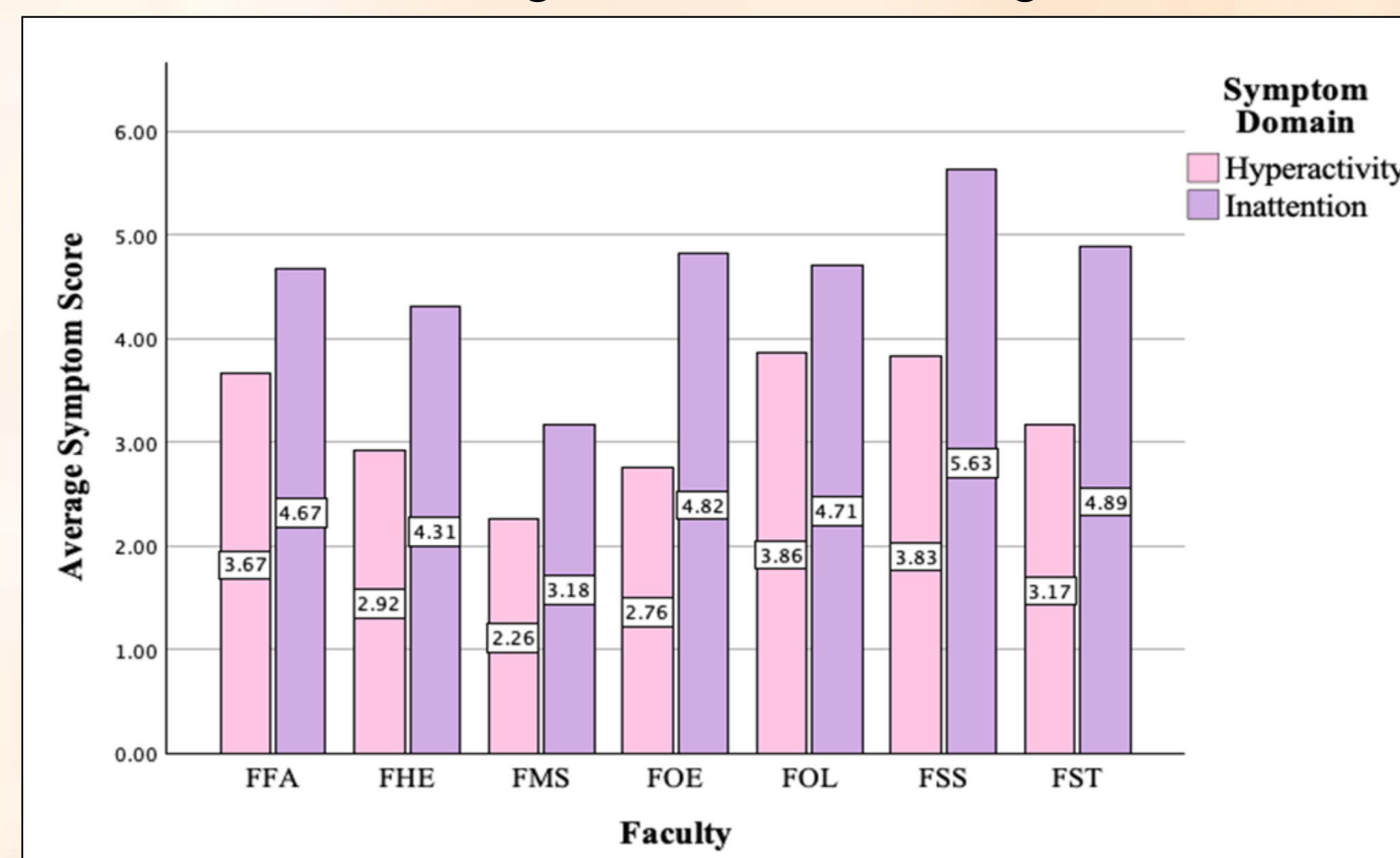


Figure 2. Clustered bar chart displaying average ADHD symptom scores by faculty ($n = 374$) among undergraduates at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, 2025. Scores are stratified by inattention and hyperactivity domains.

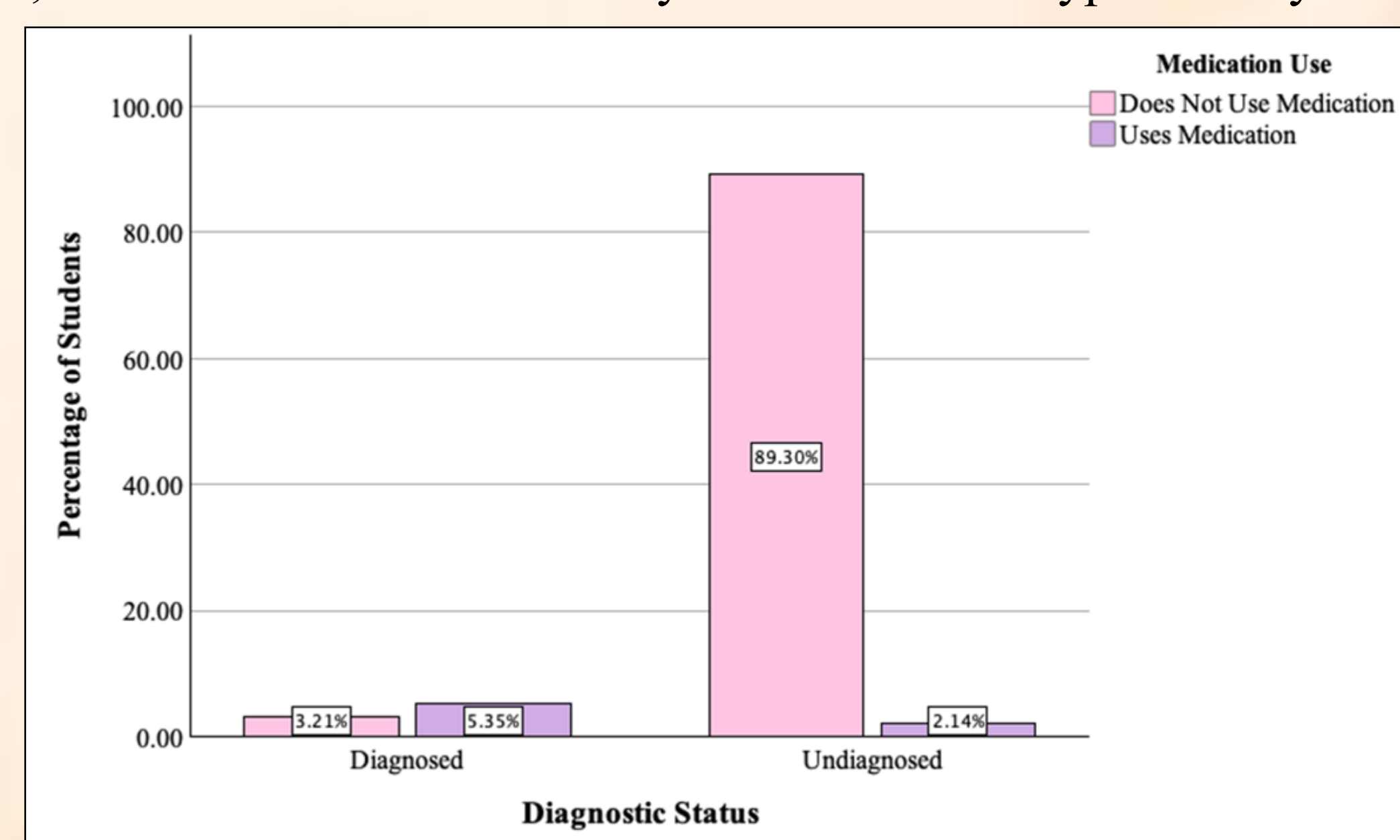


Figure 3. Bar graph showing the proportion of participants reporting current ADHD medication use, stratified by formal ADHD diagnosis status among undergraduates at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine ($n = 374$), 2025.

Discussion

Among 374 undergraduate participants, **8.6% ($n = 32$)** reported a formal ADHD diagnosis, while **57.8% ($n = 216$)** screened positive on the ARSS, indicating substantial possible underdiagnosis. Of those diagnosed, **62.5%** reported comorbid conditions, primarily anxiety and depression. Symptom severity differed by faculty: **FSS (9.46)** and **FOL (8.57)** recorded the highest average scores, while **FMS (5.45)** reported the lowest (ANOVA and Chi-square, $p < 0.05$). Medication use was strongly linked to diagnosis, with **most diagnosed students receiving treatment**. These findings underscore widespread possible underdiagnosis, faculty-specific variations, high symptom burden, and the need for targeted screening and support programs to improve student well-being.

Conclusion

Over half of participants screened positive for ADHD, yet few had a formal diagnosis. Symptomatology was highest in Social Sciences & Law and lowest in Medical Sciences. A small number of undiagnosed students reported medication use, raising concerns of self-medication or misuse. These findings highlight gaps in ADHD identification and management, emphasizing the need for targeted screening, early detection, and accessible support to enhance student academic performance and well being.

References

1. Students Admitted to University Who Fail: Hidden Disabilities Affecting Performance [Internet]. West Indian Med J. 2025 [cited 2025 Mar 25]. Available from: <https://www.mona.uwi.edu/fms/wimj/article/1032>

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