

Impairments in decoding facial and vocal emotional expressions in high functioning autistic adults and adolescents

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Abstract:

The present investigation shows that gender of stimuli, age, and emotional categories affects the ability of adults and adolescent with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) to decode facial and vocal emotional expressions. A total of 60 subjects participated to the research: 15 ASC and 15 control adolescents aged between 10-14 years; and 15 ASC and 15 control young adults aged between 20-24 years. Their tasks consisted in decoding: a) 24 adults and 24 children contemporary facial emotional expressions of happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust; and b) 20 adult's vocal emotional expressions of the same abovementioned emotions (except disgust). Significant differences were observed between ASC and typically developed peers. The data suggest that gender, type (voices or faces) of stimuli, and participants' age affect the emotion recognition process making difficult the definition of a common and shared pattern of emotional expression's recognition compliance among autistic and control groups. These results suggest that efficient and effective e-health

subjective needs to offer personalized assistance and support.

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I. Introduction

The implementation of socially and emotionally believable ICT (Information Communication Technologies) interfaces brought the promise to enhance quality of life in society, particularly for vulnerable people, i.e., people suffering of physical and social disorders. However, to achieve this promise it is necessary to inform the implementation on the analytics of these disorders, in order to develop effective algorithms, models and computational paradigms. Autism is among these disorders and the current investigation aims to provide such analytics. Autism spectrum conditions (ASC) manifest themselves mainly with disorders of Sign in to Continue Reading social interaction, communication and understanding of ideas and feelings (DSM V, 2013). The symptoms are associated, in an extremely variable way, to disorders in language, motor skills, cognition (generally mental retardation) and emotions' labeling and coding. According to the current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V, 2013), ASCs are neurodevelopmental disorders, whose seriousness can be severe, medium, or mild (high functioning ASCs). Each of these levels manifests different behavioral, social, and emotional impairments.

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