

## ABSTRACT

The present study is to test for theory of mind (ToM) deficit hypothesis and empathy in children with social impairment and to explore the relation of empathy to ToM. Three groups of children: the autistic group (n=21) and the aggressive group (n=16) were matched with the control - normal developing children with age (mean age=7½) and non-verbal I.Q. (Mean performance=103). The autistic and the aggressive group were consisted of children who were given a clinical diagnosis of autism or disruptive disorder respectively.

The standard and the advanced ToM tasks as well as the index of empathy were administered to each child individually. Result suggested that compared to the control and the aggressive group, children with autism showed significantly lower passing rates in both the standard and the advanced ToM tasks, except one task. Besides, it is suggested that ToM is independent to Empathy. The finding was discussed in relation to the dual component of empathy.