

# A COMPARISON STUDY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS BETWEEN TYPICALLY DEVELOPING PRESCHOOL GREEK CHILDREN AND CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

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## Objective

Social pragmatic communication deficits are defined in the social use of nonverbal and verbal communication. {4}. It is generally acknowledged that neurotypical children instinctively develop social-pragmatic skills. In contrast, the key feature of autism is social-pragmatic deficits. The aim of this study was to identify social communication skills among typically developed preschool Greek children and compare those skills with the ones of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

## Participants

Age (months)	Typical children	ASD children
48-53 months	61	11
54-59 months	62	9
60-71 months	61	23

The *sample* was selected from public and private schools of urban, semi-urban and rural areas and was divided into three age groups.

Exclusion criteria for typically developed children:

- ❖ Children with suspected signs of autism
- ❖ Children with abnormal language development

## Methods & Materials

### Phase I: Assessment of Pragmatic Language and Social Communication: (Hyter & Applegate, 2012)

During the first phase, questionnaires were completed by the teachers and the parents based on their observations of the child's pragmatic language and social communication skills.

- ❖ APLSC Parental Questionnaire
- ❖ APLSC Teachers' Questionnaire

The questions were rated on a scale of 0-5 (0=not observed, 5=almost always) and assessed social-pragmatic abilities.

### Phase II: Evaluation with standardized screening tools

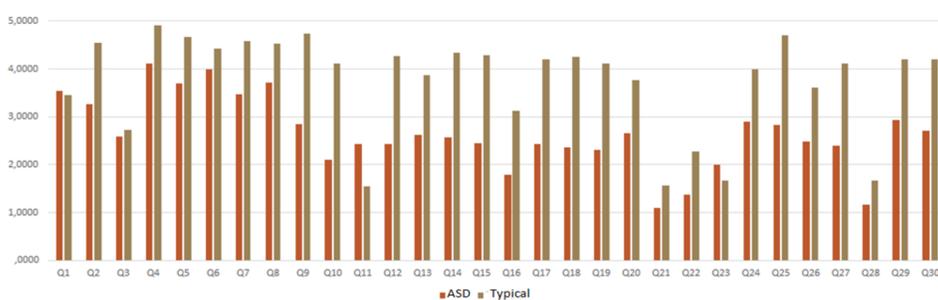
Afterwards, the children were individually assessed with standardized screening tools that examined their language development. Another questionnaire excluded children from the typical group with suspected signs of autism.

- ❖ AQ10 (Child Version)-Autism Spectrum Quotient
- ❖ Word finding vocabulary test-Greek Version
- ❖ Action Picture test-Greek Version

Method comparisons and analysis were carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

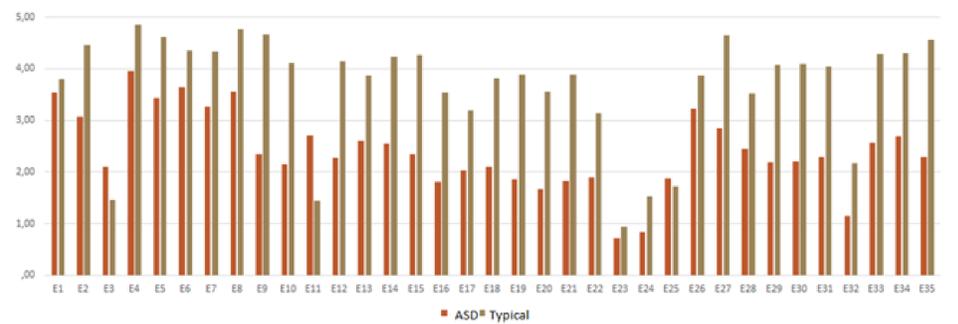
## Results

APLSC Parental Questionnaire



According to the parental questionnaire, there are statistically significant differences  $p < 0.05$  regarding the social-pragmatic performance of the two groups.

APLSC Teachers' Questionnaire



According to the teachers' questionnaire, there are statistically significant differences  $p < 0.05$  regarding the social-pragmatic performance of the two groups.

## Conclusions

- ❖ The APLSC scores indicate that typically developed children, between 4 and 6 years old, have developed to large extent their social-pragmatic skills.
- ❖ The APLSC results show a significant deviation among the ASD children, especially during (a) social interaction with peers, (b) social cognition, (c) symbolic play and (d) conversation skills.
- ❖ Earlier research has shown similar reports of preschool children with ASD with main difficulties concerning (a) initiating social interaction with peers, (b) social engagement and (d) responsiveness {7}
- ❖ The APLSC responses by teachers and parents were similar and were able to point out a significant differentiation between the social-communication skills of the two groups.
- ❖ The Parents' and Teachers' pragmatic language and social communication questionnaires (APLSC) are part of a larger assessment battery developed by Hyter and Applegate (2012), which can contribute to the differential diagnosis of developmental disorders.

## References

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