

Development of Theory of Mind in Mentally Retarded Students and its Relation with the Number of the Siblings

**Abdollahzadeh Rafi M.(M.Sc.)¹, Bahrami H.(Ph.D.)², Mirzamani M.(Ph.D.)³, Salehi M.(Ph.D.)⁴, Hasanzadeh Avval M.(M.*

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- 1- *M.Sc. of Psychology & Exceptional Children Education*
- 2- *Ph.D. of Educational Psychology, Professor of University of Social Welfare & Rehabilitation sciences, Tehran, Iran*
- 3- *Ph.D. of clinical psychology, Professor of University of Social Welfare & Rehabilitation sciences, Tehran, Iran*
- 4- *Biostatistician, Assistant Professor of Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran*
- 5- *M.Sc. of Psychology & Exceptional Children Education*

***Correspondent Author Address:**
Exceptional Children Department,
University of Social Welfare &
Rehabilitation sciences, Koodakyar
Alley, Daneshjoo Blv., Evin, Tehran,
Iran.

***Tel:** +98 21 22180042

***E-mail:** rafi.mehdi@gmail.com

Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study was to investigate development of the theory of mind (TOM) of mentally retarded students and its relationship with the number of siblings.

Materials & Methods: This descriptive study was in correlation type determination, the total number of 8-14 years old mentally retarded students (59 people) who were studying in 1st to 5th degree of primary school in Mee'aad education center of Torbat-e Heidarieh (the only male education center of Torbat-e Heidarieh) in academic year 2008-09 participated. To collect data of theory of mind (TOM) Unexpected-content task and 38-item test of theory of mind were used. In order to analyze data, ANOVA, Scheffe, Pearson correlation coefficient and Chi- square were carried out.

Results: The first and second level of the evolution theory of mind of the mentally retarded students ascending to 12 years ($P<0.001$) and then fixed ($P=0.87$). But that theory of mind development which was measured by Unexpected-content task, was ascending ($P=0.02$). Also, the number of siblings was not statistically significantly correlated with theory of mind development of mentally retarded students ($P=0.52$).

Conclusion: Theory of mind development of mental retarded students varies based on that type of task being used to assess. In total, the claim of Theory-Theory approach, that says theory of mind development is on the basis of necessary processes, could be accepted. Also those theories which are based on cultural-social approaches calming that experience with other people causes development of mind understanding need to be more examined.

Keywords: Theory of mind / Mentally retarded / Student / Siblings