

Hypo-arousal or hyperarousal? The mechanisms underlying social information processing in autism

Date: 26 January 2024 (Fri)

Time: 10:00-11:30

Venue: Tin Ka Ping Lecture Hall, Faculty of Education (E33-G021)

Language: English

Registration: Online Registration (<https://go.um.edu.mo/x2235w4p> or )

Enquiries: Mr. Brendan LEI (Email: FED_Event@um.edu.mo / Tel: 8822-4210)

Speaker:

Prof. Li YI received her bachelor's degree from Department of Psychology, Peking University in 2003. Then she got her master's and Ph.D. degrees majoring in Developmental Psychology from Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Duke University. She worked as an Assistant Professor and then an Associate Professor at Department of Psychology, Sun Yat-sen University from 2009-2015. In 2015, she joined the School of Psychological and Cognitive Sciences, Peking University. Her research interest mainly focuses on the socio-cognitive development of children with ASD. Most of her research efforts have been put on understanding the social and cognitive abnormalities in autism, and the visual attention as well as face processing in young infants and toddlers at risk for autism. She is also working on developing novel techniques based on objective measures for the early detection and intervention of autism.

Abstract:

Autistic children tend to show divergent social information processing, and controversies exist regarding the mechanisms underlying this processing. In this talk, Prof. Yi will summarize and categorize the current theories and evidence related to hypo- and hyperarousal accounts of social information processing in autism. The hypo-arousal account proposes reduced motivation or sensitivity to process social information and is supported by behavioral, eye-tracking, and neuroimaging studies. Recent evidence has challenged this account, highlighting the role of eye gaze in interpreting hypo-brain activation. The hyperarousal account posits that social context could evoke anxiety and discomfort in autistic children, which could interfere with their social information processing and result in social avoidance. Most research in this field has studied children and adolescents, but some studies have included adults since autism is a lifelong condition. Prof. Yi will highlight the importance of considering the heterogeneity of arousal patterns in autistic children when developing individualized supporting protocols.