

Into Perspectives: An Exploration of Alexithymia Levels and Narrative Point-of-View in Shaping Theory of Mind After Short Story Reading

Dan Tohidi¹, Esmail Sadipour¹ & Khatereh Borhani²

¹ Allameh Tabataba'i University, ² Shahid Beheshti University



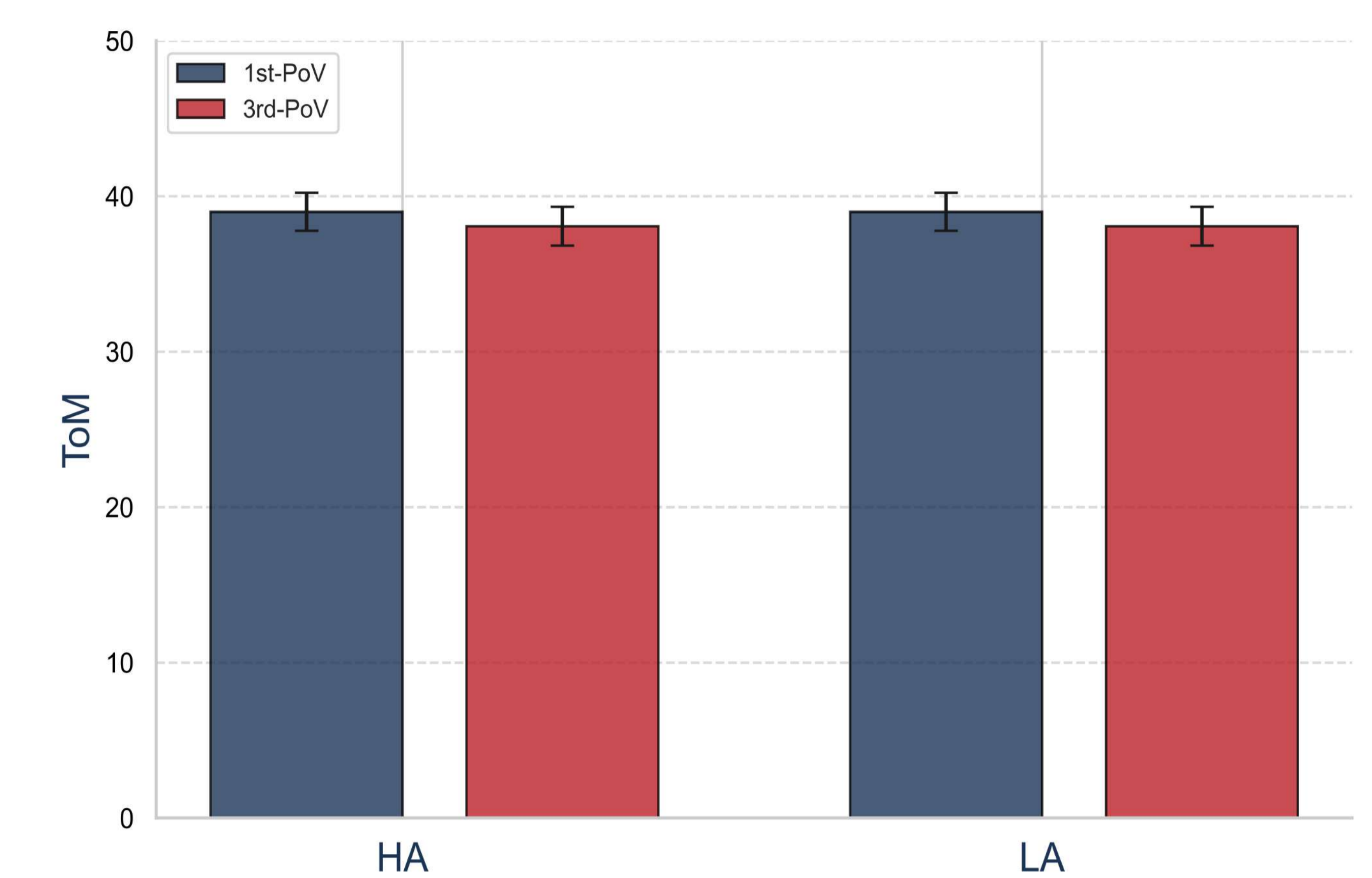
Introduction & Research Aim

Conclusion

Results

- Numerous studies highlight fiction's impact on readers' cognitive and socio-emotional capacities (e.g., Mumper & Gerrig, 2017; Wimmer et al., 2024).
- However, existing investigations often overlook readers' emotional profiles, crucial for understanding the holistic effects of fiction (but, see Samur et al., 2021).
- This study explores the immediate influences of varying alexithymia levels and narrative point-of-view on story engagement and theory of mind ability.
- By examining these factors, the research aims to contribute insights into the intricate interplay between emotional profiles, narrative perspectives, and the reader's cognitive and socio-emotional responses to fiction.

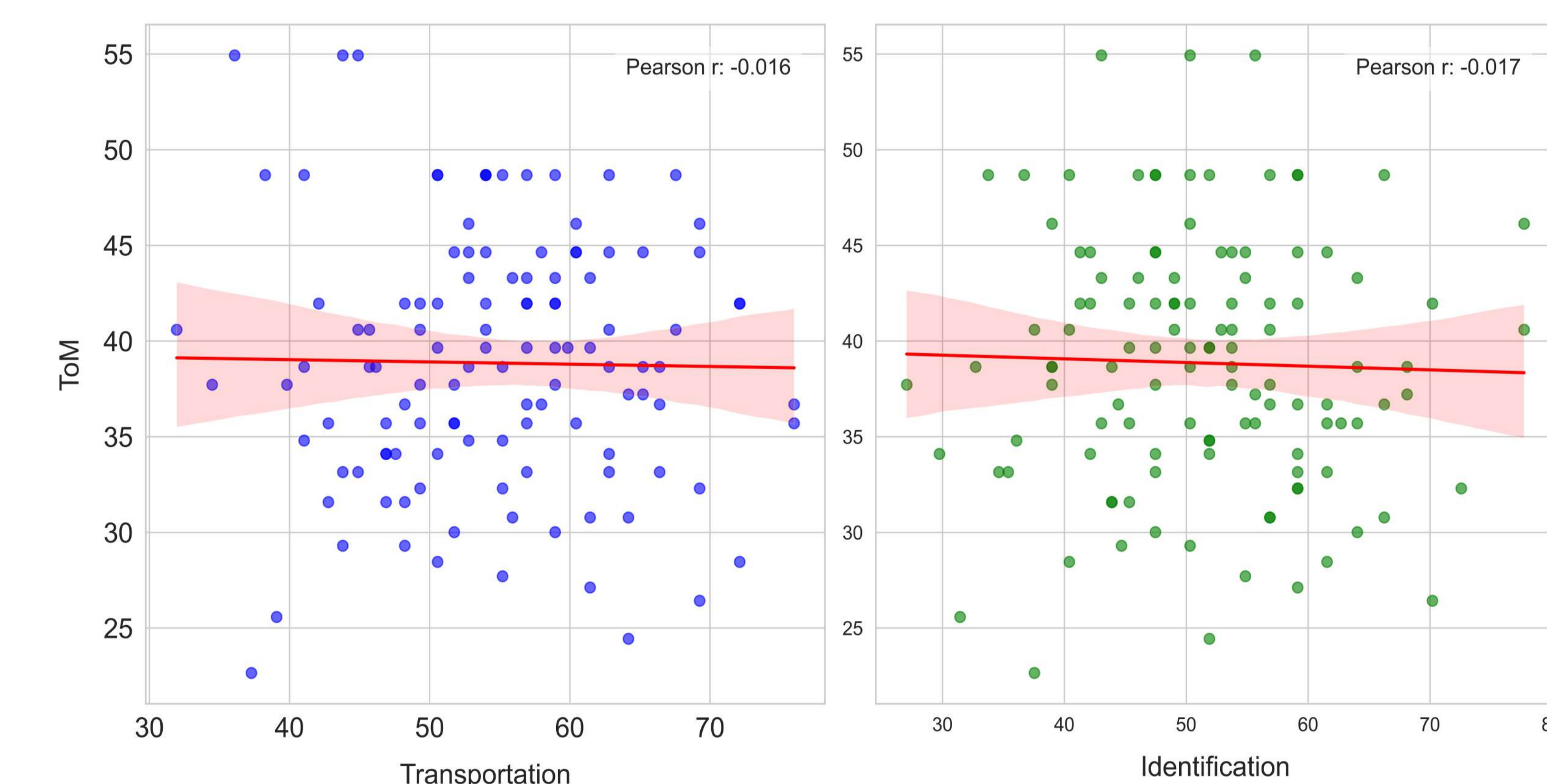
Our data suggest that neither alexithymia levels, PoV, nor their interaction, nor the covariates (RMET and Beck scores), significantly impact socio-cognitive abilities.



Mixed-effects ANOVA shows no significant main effects of Alexithymia ($F_{1, 115} = 0.386, p > .05$), PoV ($F_{1, 115} = 0.826, p > .05$), or their interaction ($F_{1, 115} = 0.024, p > .05$).

Method & Materials & Procedure

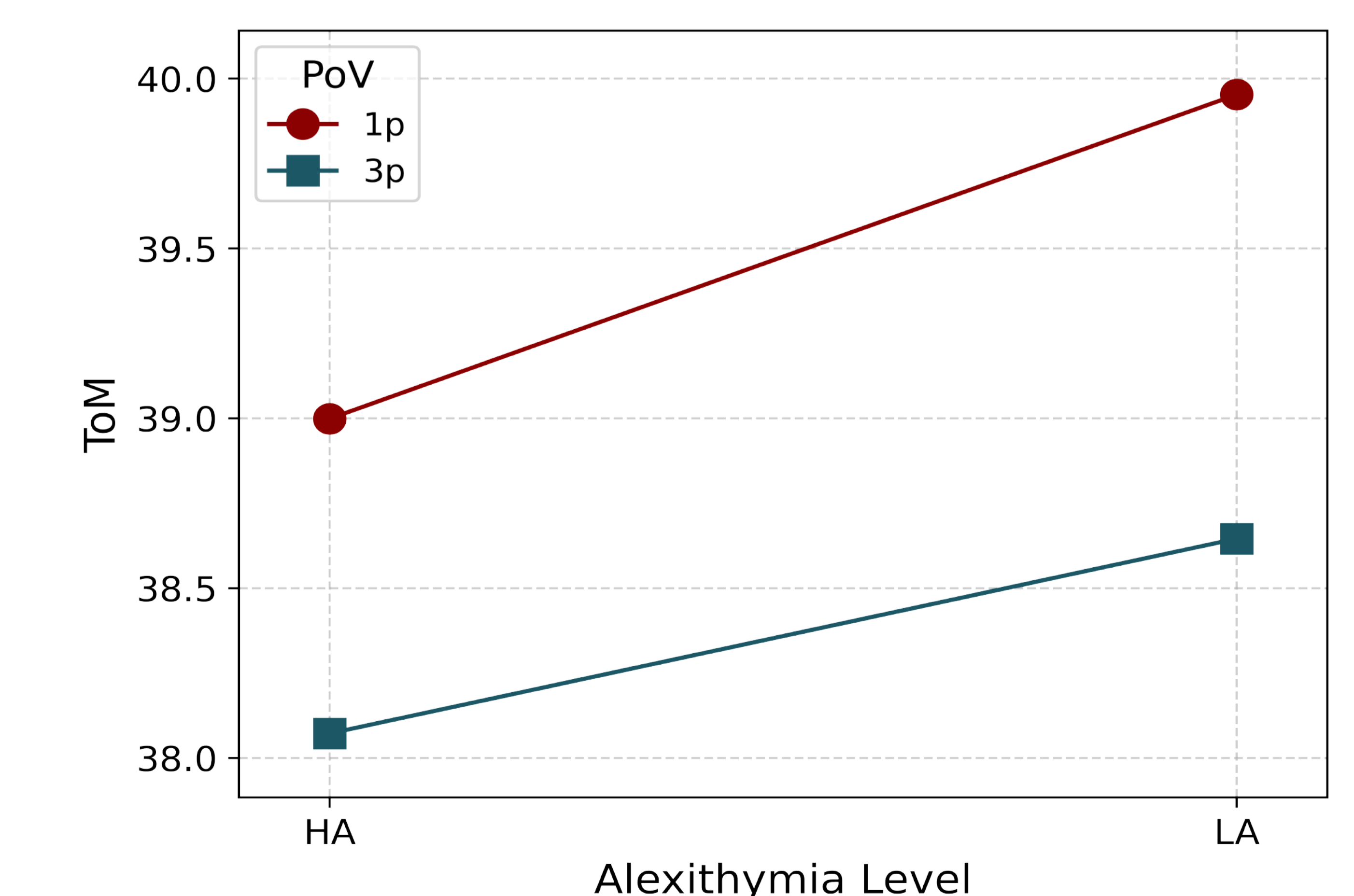
no significant correlation between ToM scores and either Transportation or Identification, as indicated by the near-zero Pearson r values.



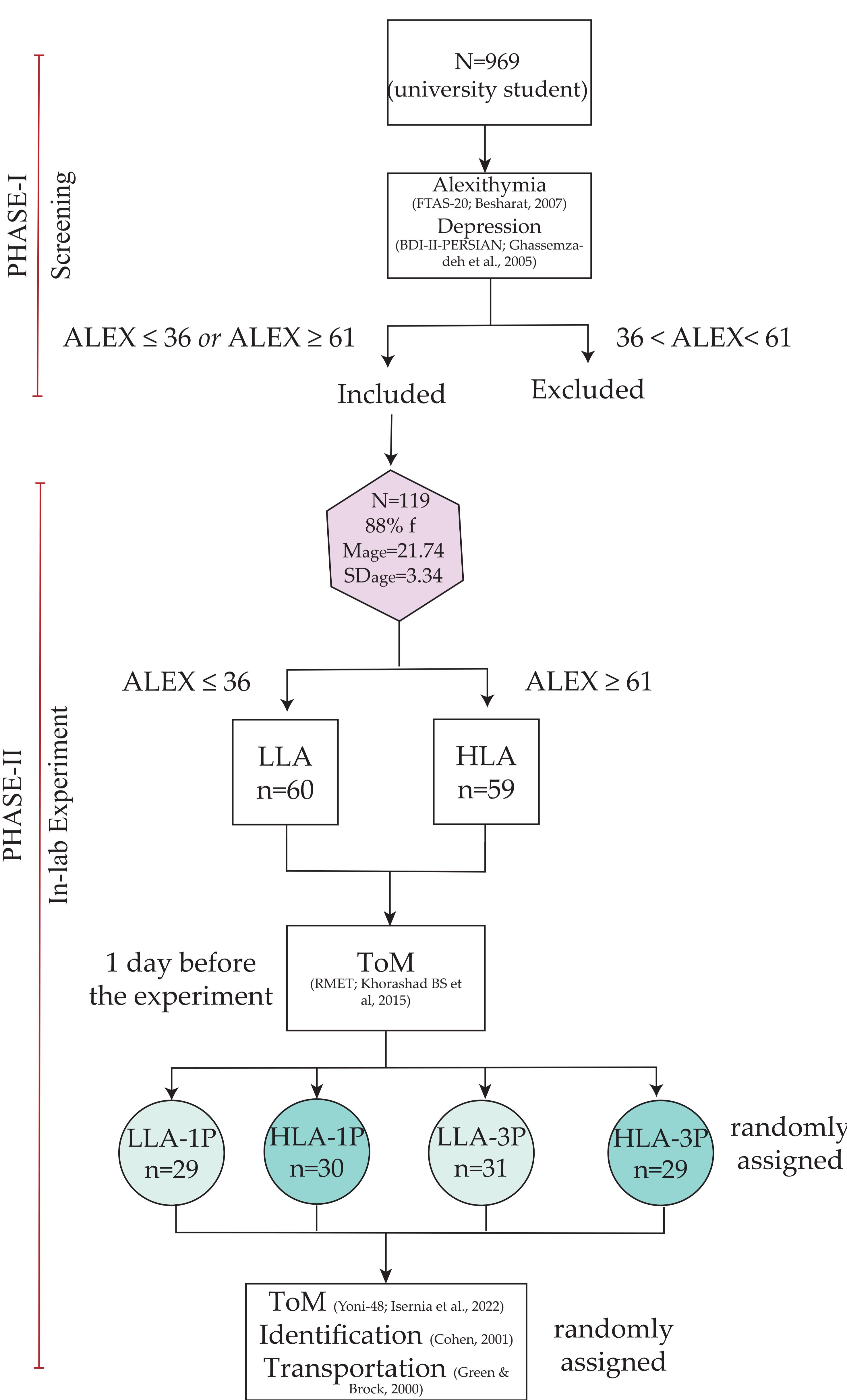
No significant correlations were found between ToM scores and either Transportation ($r = -.016, p > .05$) or Identification ($r = -.017, p > .05$).

Suggestions: Future research should use larger sample sizes and extend reading durations to assess the effects of prolonged exposure to fiction.

Limitations: Small sample size and high proportion of female participants may introduce gender bias.



Two-way ANCOVA indicates interaction between ToM and PoV, moderated by Alexithymia Level, adjusting for RMET and Beck scores. No significant effects of Alexithymia ($F_{1,112} = 0.291, p > .05$), PoV ($F_{1,112} = 1.552, p > .05$), their interaction ($F_{1,112} = 0.040, p > .05$), RMET ($F_{1,112} = 2.349, p > .05$), or BeckScore ($F_{1,112} = 1.510, p > .05$) were found.



References

Besharat, M. A. (2007). Reliability and factorial validity of a Farsi version of the 20-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale with a sample of Iranian students. *Psychological Reports, 101*(1), 209–220. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.101.1.209-220>

Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass communication & society, 4*(3), 245–264. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327825mcs0403_01

Ghassemzadeh, H., Mojtabi, R., Karanghadri, N., & Ebrahimkhani, N. (2005). Psychometric properties of a Persian-language version of the Beck Depression Inventory—Second edition: BDI-II-PERSIAN. *Depress Anxiety, 21*(4), 185–192. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.20070>

Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(5), 701–721. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701>

Isernia, S., Rossetto, F., Shamay-Tsoory, S., Marchetti, A., & Baglio, F. (2022). Standardization and normative data of the 48-item Yoni short version for the assessment of theory of mind in typical and atypical conditions. *Front Aging Neurosci, 14*, 1048599. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnagi.2022.1048599>

Khorashad, B. S., Baron-Cohen, S., Roshan, G. M., Kazemian, M., Khazai, L., Aghili, Z., Taleci, A., & Adkhamizadeh, M. (2015). The "Reading the Mind in the Eyes" Test: Investigation of Psychometric Properties and Test-Retest Reliability of the Persian Version. *J Autism Dev Disord, 45*(9), 2651–2666. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-015-2427-4>

Mumper, M. L., & Gerrig, R. J. (2017). Leisure reading and social cognition: A meta-analysis. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 11*(1), 109–120. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000089>

Samur, D., Tops, M., Slaats-Willem, R., & Koolle, S. L. (2021). Getting lost in a story: how narrative engagement emerges from narrative perspective and individual differences in alexithymia. *Cognition and Emotion, 35*(3), 576–588. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2020.1732876>

Wimmer, L., Currie, G., Friend, S., Wittwer, J., & Ferguson, H. J. (2024). Cognitive effects and correlates of reading fiction: Two preregistered multilevel meta-analyses. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 153*(6), 1464–1488. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001583>