
Evaluate the study by Baron-Cohen et al. (eyes test) in terms of **two** strengths and **two** weaknesses. At least **one** of your evaluation points must be about **ethics**.

Answer-

One strength of this study was the use of a highly standardised test - the Eyes Test. The Eyes Test consists of 36 pairs of eyes in photographs that have to be viewed by each respondent and a choice has to be made out of exactly 4 alternatives of which emotion is portrayed in the pair of eyes given. This same test had to be answered by all four groups of participants in the study - the AS/HFA group as well as the 3 control groups. This is a strength because performance on the Eyes Test and ultimately the theory of mind of all 4 groups was consistently measured. This increases the reliability of the findings of the study that the AS/HFA group performed the worst on the Eyes test. It also makes the study more replicable for any researcher who wants to conduct a similar study in future.

Another strength of this study was the piloting of the Eyes test while finalising the items for its revised version. Eight judges - four males and four females were asked to review the 40 items prepared for the test by Baron-Cohen and Wheelright. A criterion was set such that a minimum of 5 judges had to agree to a target response choice for being the correct response to a given item. Also, not more than 2 judges had to pick a foil. Similarly, the data for groups 2 and 3 was combined such that 50% of participants had to select a target response choice as the correct response and not more than 25% had to select a foil. Items which did not meet these criteria were initially revised and if deemed totally unfit, were eliminated, reducing the total number of items to 36. This is a strength because it establishes the Eyes Test to be a valid measure of recognition of emotions depicted in photographs. This increases the validity of the findings of the study.

One weakness of the study was that the ethical guideline of 'protection from harm' was possibly broken. The main group of participants - the AS/HFA patients might have felt emotionally distressed while answering the Eyes Test. They were suffering from a condition which makes it difficult for them to empathise with others and process emotions. While answering the test, they had to look at photographs depicting various emotions, think about those emotions deeply and then correctly identify the emotion given. This is a weakness because these participants may have felt very stressed throughout while answering the test and also probably felt bad or ashamed about not being able to answer many items correctly. This reduces the ethical validity of the study.

One more weakness of the study was that the nature of the Eyes Test was very unrealistic. In real life, when people try to recognise the emotions of others, they do not observe only their eyes. Rather, they make note of all their facial features, their body language, their tone of expression, etc. However, on the Eyes Test, emotions are identified only by looking at static pairs of eyes. This is a weakness because not being able to perform well on the Eyes Test would not mean that a person would not be able to identify emotions in real life. Conversely, performing well on the test would not mean that the person would be able to identify emotions well in real life. This reduces the ecological validity of the findings of the study.

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