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Neural correlates of multimodal emotional congruency in 7-month-old infants: An fNIRS investigation

The integration of affective information across sensory modalities is fundamental for early social-emotional development. In everyday interactions, emotions are communicated through both facial and vocal cues, yet the neural mechanisms supporting audiovisual emotion integration in infancy remain insufficiently understood. This study examines neural responses to congruent and incongruent audiovisual emotional expressions in 7-month-old infants using functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS). Thirty-eight full-term infants will be recruited at the BabyLab, University of Padua. Infants are presented with dynamic audiovisual stimuli while hemodynamic responses (HbO, HbR) are recorded over bilateral temporal and prefrontal regions using a 20-channel fNIRS system. We hypothesize stronger cortical responses to congruent emotional expressions, reflecting emerging neural mechanisms supporting multimodal emotion integration in infancy.

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