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The effects of perceptual load in processing emotional facial expression in psychotic disorders

Joana Grave^a, Sandra C Soares^{a,b,c}, Sofia Morais^{d,e}, Paulo Rodrigues^f, Nuno Madeira^{d,e*1}

^aDepartment of Education, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

^bCenter for Health Technology and Services Research (CINTESIS-UA), Department of Education, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

^cDepartment of Clinical Neurosciences, Division of Psychology, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden

^dPsychiatry Department, Coimbra Hospital and University Centre, Coimbra, Portugal.

^eDepartment of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal

^fDepartment of Psychology and Education, University of Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal

Nuno Madeira: nunogmadeira@gmail.com

nmadeira@uc.pt

Joana Grave: joanafgrave@gmail.com

Sandra C. Soares: sandra.soares@ua.pt

Sofia Morais: sofiamorais86@gmail.com

Paulo Rodrigues: pjfsfr@ubi.pt

*Corresponding author. Nuno Madeira, Department of Psychiatry, Coimbra University Hospital Centre, Praceta Mota Pinto, 3000-075 Coimbra, Portugal Telephone number: 00351 239400650 Fax number: 00351 239403950

Abstract

Psychotic disorders are some of the most severe psychiatric conditions. Patients have difficulties in identifying facial expressions and appear to be highly sensitive to the presence of emotional distractors. Yet, no study has investigated whether perceptual load modulates the interference of emotional distractors. Our goal was to test whether psychotic patients were more sensitive to irrelevant emotional stimulus, even when the task demands a high amount of attentional resources. Twenty-two participants with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder and twenty-two healthy controls, performed a target letter discrimination task with emotional task-irrelevant stimulus (angry, happy and neutral facial expressions). Target-

¹ Department of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Coimbra
Rua Larga, 3004-504 Coimbra, Portugal

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