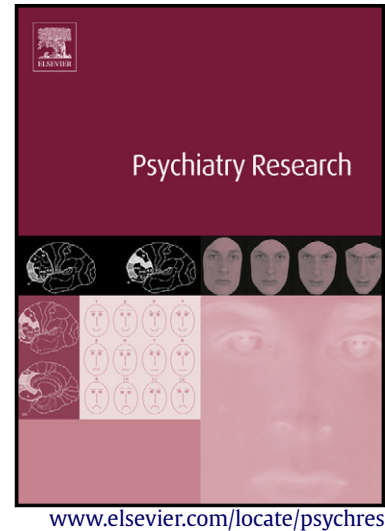


Juicy lemons for measuring basic empathic resonance

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Juicy lemons for measuring basic empathic resonance

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Abstract

Watch or even think of someone biting into a juicy lemon and your saliva will flow. This is a phenomenon of resonance, best described by the Perception–Action Model, where a physiological state in a person is activated through observation of this state in another. Within a broad framework of empathy, including manifold abilities depending on the Perception-Action link, resonance has been proposed as one physiological substrate for empathy. Using 49 healthy subjects, we developed a standardized salivation paradigm to assess empathic resonance at the autonomic level. Our results showed that this physiological resonance correlated positively with self-reported empathic concern. The salivation test delivered an objective and continuous measure, was simple to implement in terms of setup and instruction, and could not easily be unintentionally biased or intentionally manipulated by participants. Therefore, these advantages make such a test a useful tool for assessing empathy-related abilities in psychiatric populations.

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