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

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## 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-

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