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Department of Psychology

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Facial emotion perception and schizophrenia

Schizophrenia as a possible contributor to an incorrect
identification of negative facial expressions

Kristina Börtz

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Supervisors: Åse Innes Ker and Susanna Vestberg

Examiner: xxxxxx

Abstract

Schizophrenia is a disease highly characterized by a disturbed perception of reality, where delusions often generate misinterpretations of the individuals perceptions. Emotion processing has been widely documented within schizophrenia, which above all has demonstrated a reduction regarding the Theory of mind. Also well documented is that individuals with schizophrenia depict a reduced perceptual ability. What is flawed however is combining studies which explore emotion recognition and facial recognition, for mapping of whether this dysfunction is of emotional or perceptual character. Research related to psychopathology and emotion recognition has had its focus mainly on the negative symptoms. Positive symptoms are related to a faster processing of threatening stimuli, a higher sense of paranoia and should therefore be examined as a predictor for a reduced emotion recognition ability and incorrect identification of negative emotions. Twenty-one patients with schizophrenia and twenty-three healthy controls participated in the study and completed test for emotion recognition, including Identification and Discrimination, and test for Facial recognition. Positive and negative symptoms were estimated using PANSS for individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia. The findings from the three tests conducted depicts how individuals with schizophrenia performed significantly less accurate regarding emotion recognition, both Identification and Discrimination, and also on the facial perception task, Facial recognition, compared with the healthy controls. Significant differences were also demonstrated for an incorrect identification of negative emotions where individuals with schizophrenia to a greater extent interpreted the positive emotions as negative.

Keyword; schizophrenia, emotion recognition, facial emotion recognition, facial recognition, emotion perception, positive symptoms.