
Emotional Mimicry and Smiling Behaviors in Schizophrenia: An Ecological Approach

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Résumé

Introduction: Individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia often experience social skill deficits, leading to reduced social interaction quality. For instance, several studies have reported deficits in emotional mimicry, defined as the imitation of another person's emotional expression, in individuals with schizophrenia (Haker & Rossler, 2009; Varcin et al., 2010, 2019). However, research in more naturalistic settings remains limited, largely due to methodological challenges. This study introduces a novel methodology for assessing emotional mimicry in ecological settings among individuals with schizophrenia.

Methods: We recruited 60 participants, including 20 interacting partners, each engaging in two interactions: one with an individual diagnosed with schizophrenia and one with a matched healthy control. Conversation participants took turns narrating happy memories to each other for six minutes while being filmed. Our methodology is grounded in the theoretical framework of emotional mimicry as a social regulator (Hess & Fischer, 2014). Using OpenFace 2.2, we first detected participants' emotional expressions and then computed mimicry scores based on the temporal alignment of emotional expressions between conversation partners.

Results: Consistent with our hypotheses, individuals with schizophrenia displayed reduced smiling and mimicry behaviors, which in turn led to lower willingness from their conversation partners to continue interacting.

Discussion: This study stands out for its innovative methodology, allowing for the assessment of a key social skill in an ecological setting.

Conclusions / Perspectives : Our findings highlight the importance of incorporating emotional mimicry training in clinical interventions for individuals with schizophrenia.

Références :

*Intervenant

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