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Visual exploration of emotional scenes in aging during a free visualization task depending on arousal level of scenes

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Abstract

Research on emotion suggests that the attentional preference observed toward the negative stimuli in young adults tends to disappear in normal aging and, sometimes, to shifts towards a preference for positive stimuli. However, this age-related effect called the positivity effect may be modulated by several factors, such as the arousal level of stimuli. The present study investigated visual exploration of natural scenes of different emotional valence in three age groups (young, middle-aged and older adults) depending on arousal level of scenes using an eye-tracking paradigm. Participants visualized pairs of emotional scenes either in low or high arousal condition. In contrast with the literature, the preliminary results revealed a reduction in prevalence of negative stimuli relative to other ones in older adults regardless of the arousal conditions. No difference between young adults and middle aged adults was observed.