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# The role of effort in moderating the anxiety – performance relationship: Testing the prediction of processing efficiency theory in simulated rally driving

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## Abstract

We tested some of the key predictions of processing efficiency theory using a simulated rally driving task. Two groups of participants were classified as either dispositionally high or low on anxiety. Participants completed a simulated rally driving task. Participants were then classified as either high or low on anxiety. The results showed that participants who were high on anxiety had a negative effect on processing efficiency as indexed by the self-report, pupillary

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response and variability of gaze data. Predicted differences due to dispositional levels of anxiety were also found in the driving control and effort data. Although both groups of drivers performed worse under the threatening condition, the performance of the high trait anxious individuals was affected to a greater extent by the anxiety manipulation than the performance of the low trait anxious drivers. The findings suggest that processing efficiency theory holds promise as a theoretical framework for examining the relationship between anxiety and performance in sport.

Keywords: Processing efficiency anxiety visual search driving

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