Empathy plays a crucial role in successful human communication, i.e. by facilitating the perception and interpretation of other persons’ intentions and emotional states (Davis, 1983). Although musicians have been shown to have an advantage in the decoding of emotion from speech prosody (Lima & Castro, 2011), little is known about associations between empathy and musical ability more generally. Here we examined whether objectively assessed musical ability would be positively correlated with empathy. Additionally, psychometric properties of a short form of the PROMS-S (Profile of Music Perception Skills, Law & Zentner, 2012) were examined.

The constructs were measured via the PROMS-S, the Big Five Inventory-SOEP (BFI-S, Schupp & Gerlitz, 2005) and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI, Davis, 1983) in a German speaking sample of N=85 (49 females, mean age: 24.79, SD: 6.30).

Musical abilities explained 4.9% of variance of empathy beyond personality factors. Empathy was associated with musical ability, but not with extent of musical training. The PROMS-S has shown good psychometric properties making it easier to administer a multi-componential and objective musical ability test in a short time.

The mechanisms underlying the associations between empathy and musical ability remain to be investigated. Musical ability might enhance auditory emotional perception, which in turn is a component of empathy. More research is needed to substantiate this hypothesis.

**REFERENCES**


