

## Abstract

The present study investigated the role of harmonic context in perceiving emotions in music and how it affected the cognitive abilities. Selected music exemplars were divided in three emotion groups (happy, sad, and dignified). Five versions of exemplars with different levels of harmonic context and melodic presentation were developed. For each emotion, a 2(melody factor) x 3 (harmonic context) within-participants experimental design was employed. Participants were asked to rate the emotion intensity of the music stimuli. At the same time, they were asked to complete sets of cognitive tasks. The results indicated that harmonic context played different roles in different emotion settings and interacted with the presented melody. In the second part of the study, results implied that harmonic context affected participants' cognitive abilities in two ways: 1) distraction and 2) enhanced enjoyment level. The two effects influenced the performance of listeners in opposite ways and the dominance of the two effects depended on the emotion conditions and other musical features.