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2018

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Opperman, Ingrid (2018) The impact of alcohol on the different components of working memory, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28407

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The Impact of Alcohol on the Different Components of Working Memory

Cover Letter with Respect to Examiners Changes

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Examiners:

Dr Chetty-Makkan

Prof Thatcher

Prof Bartholow

I would like to express gratitude to the examiners for their valuable suggestions and notes. The below table delineates the recommended changes and responses.

Recommendation	Response
Typographical, grammatical and clarity alterations.	The suggestions and notes have been attended to throughout the thesis. In the mentioned cases, clarity on details emanating from typographical and grammatical issues has been included. Sentence lengths have been reviewed for clarity. Any noted missing information has been included.
Consistencies and integration between text, figures and tables.	The decimal points and other details of the tables and text have been checked for consistency and any errors have been rectified. The table labelling has also been checked and corrected if necessary. In some cases, additional references to the relevant tables were added in-text for clarity purposes. Labelling and reference to the figures has been clarified as necessary.
Inclusion of more detailed definitions of terms and criteria.	Where the recommendations have been noted, terms, criteria and definitions have been clarified. This has been applied in-text and within the tables.
Inconsistencies in term usage, particularly for the research design and "questionnaire", and specificity of terms.	The inconsistencies have been corrected for continuity throughout the text. Specificity in terminology has been included as required.
Sentence length.	The appropriate portions of the abstract and text have been edited for brevity and clarity.
Additional referencing.	The sections where the need for additional referencing was noted have been reviewed and additional references have been added.

Recommendation	Response
Inclusion of the location of the study in the title, abstract and keywords.	Upon review of this recommendation, the location (country) in which the study is not deemed to be of importance to the outcome. As a result, inclusion of the location would imply a difference in the impact of alcohol across different nationalities, which is not supported by the available literature on the subject. Therefore, this change was not included.
Inclusion of the sample size in the abstract.	This change has been implemented.
Specificity regarding the important short-term memory changes based on the findings in the abstract.	The abstract has been adjusted for greater specificity
Adjustment of the abstract conclusions to better reflect the thesis conclusions.	The abstract has been edited accordingly.
The clarity of the argument in the second paragraph under the section "A brief critique of the Baddeley and Hitch modal model".	The paragraph has been adjusted for a clearer and more concise argument.
A short introduction to the Baddeley and Hitch Model prior to discussion of other models of working memory.	The importance of the Baddeley and Hitch model, and its primary tenets, has been briefly included prior to discussion to the other models of working memory. Therefore, the final paragraph of the introduction to working memory theories has been expanded.

Recommendation	Response
Inclusion of time delays in the referenced test-retest reliability studies.	Unfortunately, the majority of the referenced studies did not provide sufficient detail regarding the delays between administrations of the instrument. This was due to the reliability of the instrument being mentioned in general. In most cases, studies referenced a delay of a "minimum of…". This was clarified as possible in-text.
The applicability of the psychometric instruments within the South African context and for the adult population.	In all cases, the available literature on the instruments was discussed. This included published reliability and validity studies. Although limited South African literature was available, the instruments had been studied in a variety of populations. The citations did include reference to studies on children, as this group was the primary focus of usage of the instrument. However, some studies referenced did include adults. These have been more clearly noted for the readers. If required (and as recommended), age ranges have been included as far as possible. As a result, the available literature of the instrument has been cited and, where possible, South African literature has been included.
Inconsistency in the ordering of discussion of the AWMA and the Ravens between the "methods" and "results".	In the "methods" section the AWMA is discussed first as the primary instrument. In the results, the Raven's is considered to be a covariate and, therefore, understanding prior to the experimental discussion is required. Hence, the order was retained.
Introduction to the "methods".	A short introduction to the "methods" chapter has been included.

Recommendation	Response
Description of the sample size in-text as opposed to appendices.	Due to the size of the sample and the number of factors which may impact the effects of alcohol, the sample description was retained in-text rather than as an appendix. This will allow the reader to clearly understand the characteristics of the sample which are essential to understanding the experimental outcomes.
Limited detail regarding the enrolled sample.	Upon review of the text, it is believed that the sample is sufficiently described for the purposes of the study.
Clarity regarding the exclusion criteria and mention of the exclusion of students at the institution.	The mention of the exclusion of students was indicated under “ethical considerations” as this was an ethical requirement. The exclusion was not mentioned under the section regarding the screening instrument as it was a broad ethical requirement, not a methodological exclusion criterion.
Inclusion of the screening questionnaire as an appendix, particularly for clarity on screening for psychological disorders.	Rather than including a copy of the screening questionnaire, clarity was provided in-text demonstrating that the screening was self-report. A general description of the questionnaire was also clarified.

Recommendation	Response
Mention of “screening failures”.	Although some screening failures were present in the study, the number of applicants to participate who were not included did not impact the outcome of the study. Therefore, screening failures were not included. This was also due to the screening being implemented to ensure that the study met ethical requirements rather than for methodological reasons. All participants who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate. This was explained in the text in the “methods” chapter.
Mention of the study timeline.	The timeline of the study was extensive. However, detailed information was superfluous as it did not impact the outcome or experiment. Details regarding the test-retest delays were considered.
Units of alcohol dosage and blood/breath alcohol measurement.	The original units of dosage reported in the text were retained (both mg/dL and g/kg). The choice to retain the inconsistent terminology was to a) ensure accuracy in the dosage reported, particularly in terms of dosage versus blood alcohol levels, and b) to ensure readers following up on the citations were able to follow the information clearly.
Choice of dosage.	The choice of dosage (one standard unit as opposed to per kilogram body weight or a higher dosage) was implemented in the methodological design due to constraints imposed by the ethics committee which approved the study. Therefore, no further justification or explanation could be provided for this choice.

Recommendation	Response
Reliability of the BAC measurement instrument.	The "reliability" of the instrument was not reported in the manual. However, it is mentioned that the instrument is calibrated to a certain number of usages and two decimal points.
Time taken to administer the full battery.	The methodological process did not include time measurement for the administration of the battery. Therefore, this information could not be included.
Variability in test-retest delays.	Unfortunately, the variability in test-retest delays emanated from practical issues rather than a methodological decision. Therefore, rationale for the delays used cannot be provided.
Reference to the "other subtests" which were leptokurtic.	This section has been rephrased for clarity.
Extent of detail included in the "results" chapter.	It was decided to retain the detail in the results chapter. The detail is intended to allow the reader to compare the different models produced. If only the "important" findings are highlighted, this will reduce the depth of interpretation of the results.
The term "approaching significance".	Although it is noted that the use of this term is not always considered to be appropriate, the decision was made to retain its inclusion. For the present research, a definition (alpha level) of "approaching" significance was provided for clarity. It is believed that this enhances understanding. Kindly note that removal of the term emanated from one of the three examiners.

Recommendation	Response
Clarity of a results paragraph around pg. 196.	The paragraph has been reworked to provide clarity and improve readability
Summation following the results chapter.	The final paragraph of the results chapter has been expanded upon for improved clarity regarding the findings.
Citation and information regarding the continuation of the effects of alcohol following a return to a breath alcohol level of 0.00	Reference and clarity in this section has been adjusted/included.
Use of “trends and themes” rather than “associations”.	The use of the term “trends and themes” was retained as it better describes the broad outcomes emerging from the study. The term associations may mislead readers into considering the findings to be simple associations rather than complex interactions.
Reference list DOI numbers.	Several references contained DOI numbers, but not page numbers, as pointed out by the examiner. The reason for this formatting was the use of references from an online-based journal for which page numbers were not available but the DOI was a necessity.