

# Report on Bachelor's Thesis

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*Name of marker: Dr Timothy Wells*

**Mark: Class 3 58%**

**NOTE:** Although I worked closely with David on this project, he chose to submit it without my approval; I was not able to offer advice on the statistical analysis and I only saw an early version of the Introduction. As such I am extremely disappointed at the result – this should have easily been a first class project. Despite David working very hard and showing a lot of initiative, the thesis ultimately suffers from a series of flaws that could so easily have been addressed through revision. David shows a lot of promise academically but needs to listen to advice and respect the process; taking the appropriate time to see something through to completion rather than simply rushing to a conclusion.

The thesis concerns the theory of effort-reward imbalance as it relates to stress in an academic environment and the possible mediation of cognitive inhibition as an explanation for negative health consequences. The project included the use of computerised 'stroop task' that David himself programed and some psychometric scales. This was an interesting topic, since the main tenets have typically been applied to working environments and so the results offer an intriguing opportunity to make comparisons with existing literature and determine if similar models can help to inform students about positive health issues.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The introduction was far too descriptive in places and tangential; lacking a coherent structure such that it was not clear what the study was about apart from the opening statement. The literature mainly concerned models of stress and pathology rather than critically discuss the nature and purpose of focusing on a student population. For example, what considerations are there in applying the effort reward model to both work and academic situations. The aims, which should have summarised and concisely highlighted the nature of the study, did not provide clarity. The introduction was otherwise written in an academic style and contained relevant literature with some evidence of evaluation and debate.

## **METHOD**

The method section was not appropriately sub-sectioned for a quantitative project and contained irrelevant information whilst omitting crucial details. For example, a detailed discussion about each psychometric should not be in the methods. Rather a simple description of what the scale measures with perhaps an example question, how it is scored, and any reliability/validity indicators should be concisely presented. Similarly, any discussion of the stroop task as a measure of inhibition should have been included in the introduction, leaving the methods to concisely detail the procedural aspect of the task. The participant sample was not adequately described (age), nor was it stated how they were recruited.

## **RESULTS**

Despite receiving no input on the analysis, the results section shows a good level of statistical competency aside from a few discrepancies. There was some indication of interpretation of the results here, rather than just describing the analysis and results. The descriptive statistics would have been better presented in a table and a graph illustrating the stroop task effects would have been a welcome addition. The t-test, correlation and multiple regression analyses contain at least the basic information and appear to have been interpreted correctly. The multiple regressions however, include several variables, two of which are confounding each

other. Given the degree of correlation between many of the variables, it seems likely that there is some mediation/moderation happening in any case. Rather than look to see if there was a difference between effort-reward imbalances (high and low) with respect to performance on the stroop, I might have included it as a variable in the regression. For example, inhibition could have been considered as mediating the relationship between effort-reward imbalance and health measures. There were some interesting correlations that would have been interesting to explore in further analyses that I might have recommended had I seen it.

## **DISCUSSION**

The discussion does not begin by restating the aims of the study whilst briefly highlighting the main findings that will be discussed in the following section. Nevertheless, there was a definite attempt to discuss the results with respect to the literature with greater focus on the significant correlations. However, the lack of clarity in the introduction is compounded here by omitting almost entirely, any discussion of academic context. Rather than simply investigating effort reward imbalance in a different setting it would have been far more interesting and fruitful to have engaged with what that actually means for this model of stress. Only in the conclusion is university setting mentioned and so there is no in-depth examination. The conclusion itself is too long and does not concisely highlight the main message.

## **REFERENCES**

The project is very well referenced with appropriate style both in text and in the reference section.

### ***Supervisor's conclusions***

*Overall, I find this thesis is of sufficient quality to achieve a pass at Grade 3 (58%). David has demonstrated a number of competencies in planning, designing, programming an executing this study, in addition to handling and analysing data. I am confident that David has a pretty good understanding of the literature. However, where this project falls down is in the attempt to present the research as a coherent whole. Whilst written intelligently, the thesis itself contains numerous structural errors and does not adequately deal with the main focus of inquiry. As a first draft, it is quite impressive - I have no doubt that this project would have received top marks had there been ample opportunity to review and make appropriate revisions before submission.*