Author's response to reviews

Title: Autobiographical memory and hierarchical search strategies in depressed and non-depressed participants

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To
The Editor
BMC Psychiatry

Subject: Submission of revised manuscript (MS: 2902095341019117)

Dear Editor,

Thanks for forwarding the reviewers’ comments and concerns on our manuscript entitled “Autobiographical memory and hierarchical search strategies in depressed and non-depressed participants”. As we’ve found their concerns are justified, we have completed necessary revisions in our paper. The Results section in particular has been revised thoroughly. We present below point-by-point responses to the concerns.

1. Autobiographical memory retrieval model

As requested by the second reviewer, we’ve now added a brief discussion on the autobiographical memory retrieval model proposed by Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000) in the Background (page 4-5).

2. Exclusion criteria

Three exclusion criteria are indicated in the Method section under Participants (page 9).

3. Presentation of cue words

The way cue words were presented is now written in the Procedure (page 12).

4. Transferring two paragraphs from Results to the Method section
As suggested by the second reviewer, the text is now transferred to the Method section with necessary revision (page 12-13)

5. Reporting response latency

As suggested by the second reviewer, response latency data is now reported in the beginning of the Results section (page 13)

6. Results

As both reviewers were concerned with the large DF-values as reported in the paper, we have reanalyzed our data. Previously, we treated each memory as one unit of sample, which eventually gave us large DF values. This kind of analyses are common in autobiographical memory research published in various journals. For example, individual memories are treated as sample units (instead of participants) in Chi-squared test for independence (Haque & Conway, 2001) and log linear analysis (Conway, Collins, Gathercole, & Anderson, 1996). However, we certainly admit that this kind of DF calculation is rare in t-tests.

In any case, we accepted the reviewers’ suggestions and reanalyzed our data. Now, DF is calculated directly from the number of participants as it is usually done in inferential statistics. The dependent measures such as retrieval time, memory elements, emotional valence, and knowledge sequence are all calculated for each participants (see the Results section for further detail). Moreover, we’ve added several memory protocols in the text to clarify how the scoring has been done. We’ve dropped the two Chi-squared tests, and replaced them by two independent sample t-tests. The results of all t-tests are now reported in one big table (Table 1). As there were no outliers (mentioned by the first reviewer) in the transformed data, we didn’t report it in the text.

We believe that we’ve addressed all the concerns raised by both reviewers. We’ve also ensured that the paper conforms the formatting style suggested for the journal. Please let’s know if you have any further query or concerns.

Kind regards

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References
