**1327 The quest for process operations’ variability reduction in manufacturing firms in South Africa**

After reading your paper, I have decided to offer you a so-called ‘revise and re-submit’ (R&R). This implies that I see potential in your paper, but at the same time I think that the quality of the manuscript can and must be improved considerably to justify publication in SAJEMS.

Below I share with you my main recommendations on a point-by-point basis.

• Please add an appropriate research aim and goal to the Introduction of the paper;

Point 1 Introduction: an appropriate research aim and goal has been added to the introduction

• Please define and specify your dependent variable (POVR) in more detail. This is rather important because the functional specification suggests that there is one DV, whereas Figure 1 proposes that there are at least 4. This is very unclear in the manuscript.

Point 3 The proposed model: the equation POVR has been replaced with an appropriate explanation to eliminate confusion

• Section 2 is a literature review. It is unclear to me what the aim of this section actually is. Now it reads as a series of short summaries without a clear focus. I advise you to rewrite Section 2 and 3 in such a way that the model in Section 3 is the result of your systematic analysis of the literature. In the current version of the manuscript this is not the case ant the three factors (fundamental drivers, intermediate measures, and competitive capabilities) come more or less out of the blue.
• Related to the previous point, please develop and discuss the hypotheses that are the building blocks of your model. For example, it seems that one of your hypotheses is about the relationship between core competencies and throughput time and stock levels. Specify these relationships and provide (theoretical) arguments for the relationships.

Point 2 Literature review was completely revised and corrected. It now includes the following point:

2.1 Background

2.2 Performance drivers’ mechanisms

2.2.1 Increased adherence to schedule

2.2.2 Increased reliability of supplier deliveries

2.2.3 Reduced process time variability

2.2.4 Reduced process output variability

2.2.5 Linking routines to capabilities in operations management

2.2.6 Foundation of the process operations’ variability reduction model

• Furthermore, it seems you have a dynamic model: please specify how the feedback loops work.

Point 3 The proposed model and point 5.3 Path analysis provide explanation of the feedback loop

• It seems your database consists of 54 firms (which is rather low), but measurements took place multiple time (quarters). How many observations do you use in your empirical analyses? Please describe.

Point 4 Research methodology: last paragraph; the number of observations have been included in the research methodology

• Please describe in detail, the measurement of each of the variables in the model. The current description leaves it to the reader to figure out with measurement is connected to which variable.

Point 4 Research methodology, the measurement have been described in details as per the reviewer recommendations

• Please add a table in which your present descriptive statistics (average + SD) for each of the variables in the model plus all correlation between dependent and independent variables.

Table 2 Results of statistical analysis – Correlations, Means and Standard deviations

• From Table 1, I get that you estimated each of the relationships is the model separately. This is incorrect as now you cannot correct for co-variance. The fact that equation (11) has all independent variables in one model also suggestions that separate regressions models are an incorrect choice. As a matter of fact, your model is a mediation model, which asks for a specific analytical approach (namely Structural Equation Modelling). I ask you to apply the appropriate statistical technique to your data.

Path analysis which is a specific type of Structural Equation Modelling method was used to provide support to the model. See point 5.3 Path analysis

• You argue that the coefficient of regression is for example 62.16%. This is incorrect as this actually is the R square. The correct regression coefficient is 0.6724.

Corrections were made as per the reviewer recommendations

• Change the Sections 6 and 7 once you have re-estimated your models.

Sections 6 and 7 have been changed

Please let me know whether or not you are accepting my R&R offer.