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Effect of Grammatical Accuracy and Content Accuracy on Eyewitness Message Credibility

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Effect of Grammatical Accuracy and Content Accuracy on Eyewitness Message Credibility

Determining Effects of Grammar Type and Content Accuracy on Message Credibility for Eyewitness Testimony

Background:

- Eyewitness testimony is an integral part of the criminal justice system, and has led to the wrongful incarceration of many
- Previous research has shown that the type of speech used (powerless vs powerful) in eyewitness testimony impacts the probability of guilt a juror will assign to a suspect, while DNA evidence impacts the final verdict
- Little research has been done onto the impact of grammar usage on perceived eyewitness credibility

Hypotheses

- **H1** = Participants who read eyewitness testimonies with low content accuracy will assign less credibility to eyewitnesses and lower sentences than participants who read eyewitness testimonies with high content accuracy
- **H2** = Participants who read eyewitness testimonies with low grammatical accuracy will assign less credibility to the eyewitness and lower sentences than participants who read eyewitness testimonies with high grammatical accuracy
- **H3** = Participants who read eyewitness testimonies with high grammatical accuracy and an inaccurate account of the crime will issue a more severe community service sentence and issue more credibility to the eyewitness compared to participants exposed

Results

- There was no significance for H1, H2, or the interaction mentioned in H3. However, we did find that grammar type is significant in determining credibility when the content is accurate ($F_{1,9} = 4.827, p > .05$).

Conclusion

- No significant results were found among our main three hypotheses
- Research into the perceived credibility of source material is still pertinent on the broader scale regarding the legal justice system
- In the future, research could be done regarding the type of source giving information - rather than text on a screen, we could use audio or video recording
- Additionally, community service hours could be higher in future iterations, negating the potential ceiling effect we had for community service hours

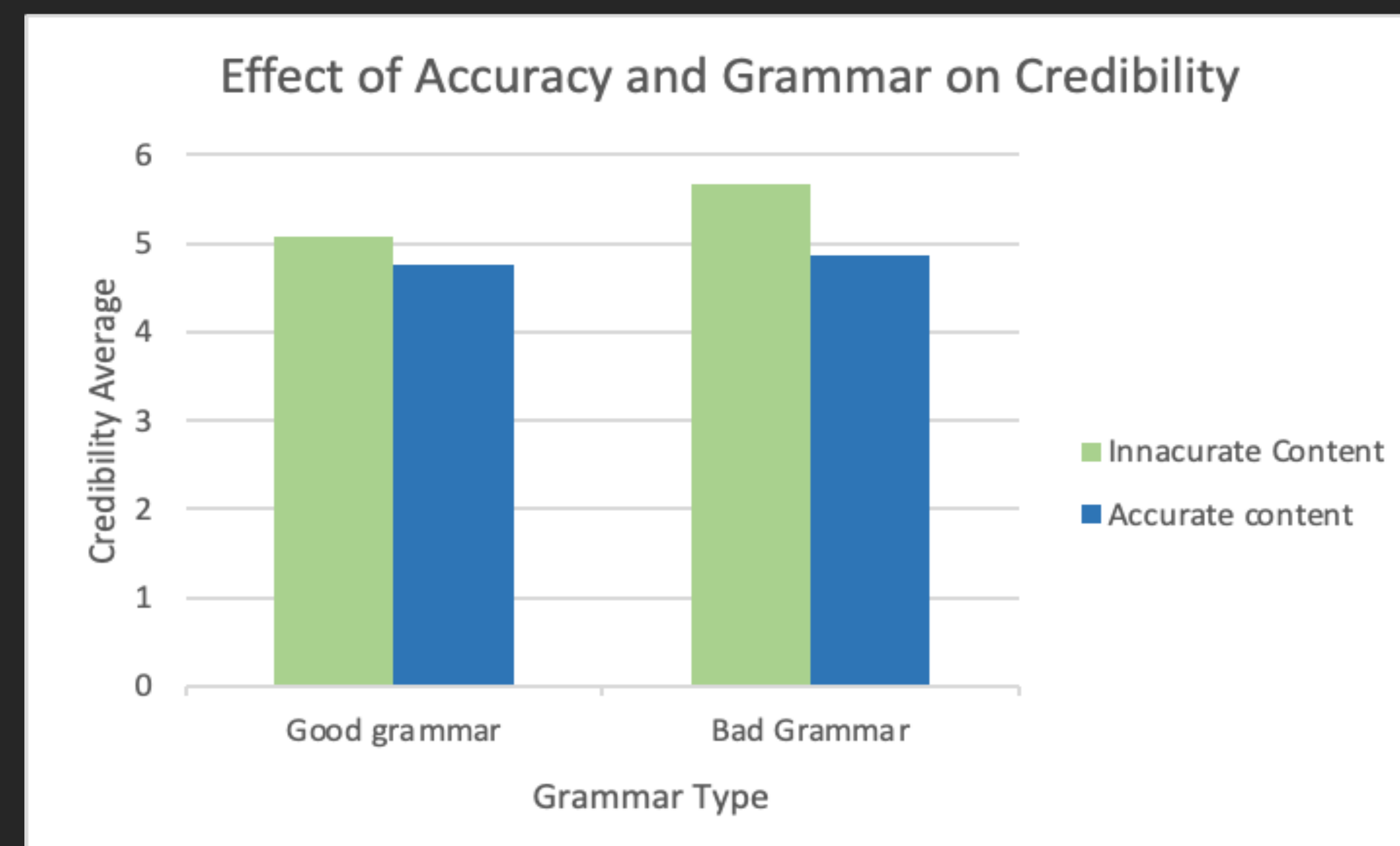


Figure 1 - 2-Way ANOVA of Grammar Type and Content Accuracy

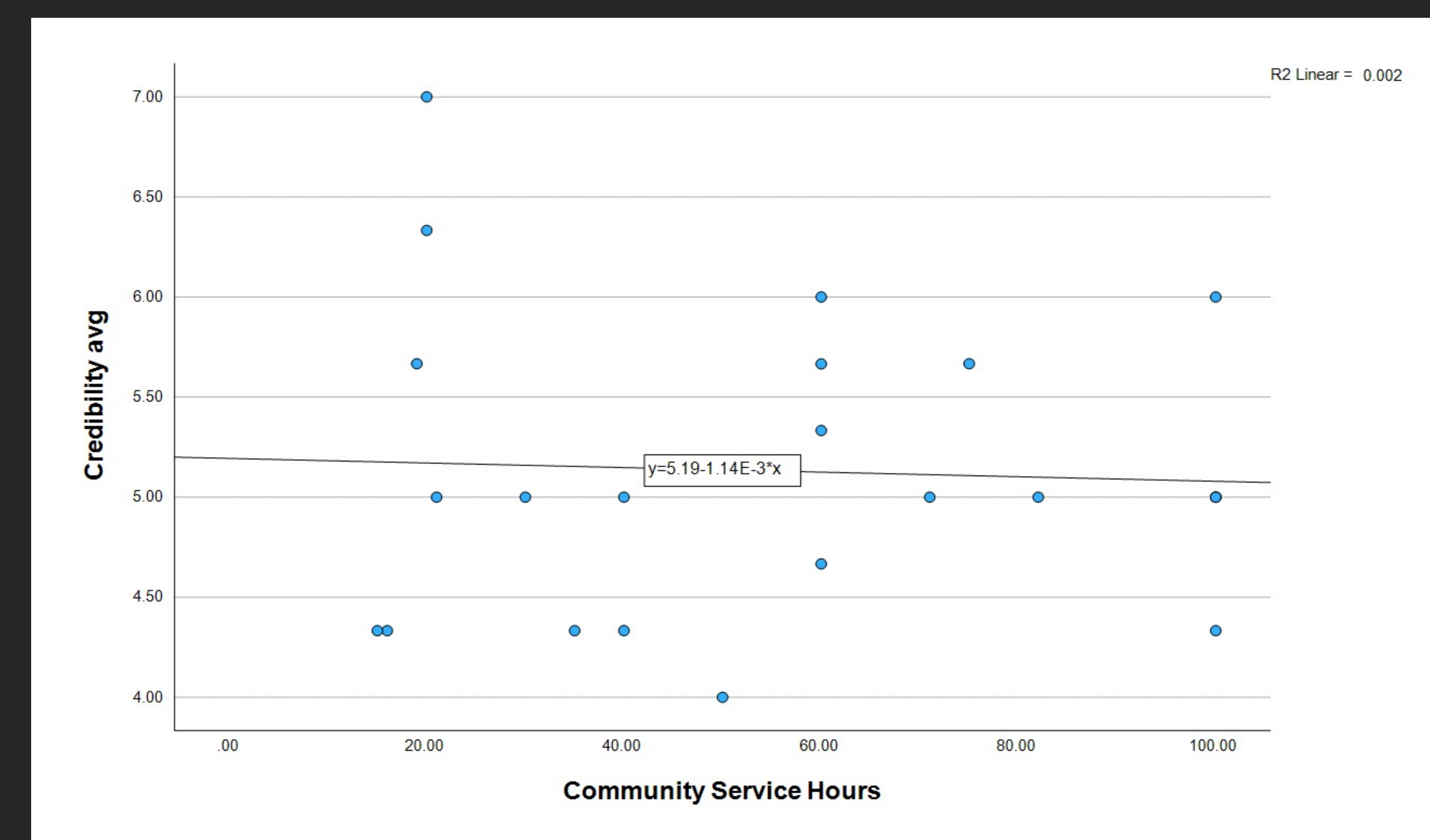


Figure 2 – Linear Correlation showed no relationship between community service hours assigned and credibility average

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