

Review of: "The Hidden Aspects of A Century of Substance Use Policymaking in Iran"

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Dear Authors, I have been the opportunity to review your article which aims to provide an historical analysis of the hidden agenda of Iran's substance use policy. The article is well written, noting an accurate description of the historical sequence over the years, although I think it should be better pointed out that Iran's substance use policies over the past century have had several hidden aspects that, inevitably, have affected the country's society and politics. In fact, as is well known, Iran has a long history in opium production dating back many decades, and during the colonial period, opium was grown in eastern Iran and sold to countries such as India and China. This production has created an economic and social dependence on opium and had a significant impact on the country's domestic and foreign policy. Drug trafficking through Iran has fueled domestic drug use and led to problems of drug addiction and related crime, so much so that over the years, the Iranian government has adopted repressive policies toward drug use and implemented prevention and treatment programs for people suffering from drug addiction. Inevitably, drug use and trafficking had a significant impact on Iran's economy and drug-related crime, including cross-border smuggling, undermining the country's economic and social development and creating challenges for the government and internal stability. In such a context, I would ask you to specify whether and how the involvement of terrorist groups has affected the drug situation in Iran and whether the Iranian authorities have taken measures to counter drug trafficking and the involvement of terrorist groups. It is important to recognize that opiate use in Iran is a complex and multidimensional problem that requires a holistic approach, including prevention, treatment, harm reduction policies and international cooperation efforts to effectively address the issue. I would ask you to elaborate on these issues, including describing whether there have been treatment and rehabilitation programs for opiate addiction over the years. In addition, it would be interesting to mention what impact cannabis has had on the country's society and politics. Cannabis is among the oldest known psychoactive plants, used as early as 10,000 years ago as a fiber but also, due to its interaction with the central nervous system as a medicine and psychopharmaceutical. In this regard, I offer some studies that may possibly be counted among your bibliographical references (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpba.2022.114841> - DOI: 10.19186/BC_2022.037 - doi: 10.3389/fpsyt.2022.998828), where it is reported that cannabis is currently the most abused drug worldwide and many Western countries have legalized this plant for medical use, precisely because it contains about 483 pharmacologically active compounds, phytocannabinoids being among the main ones. Another aspect that would deserve brief mention is that related to the adulteration of drugs of abuse, a common practice involving a wide range of different active ingredients added to primary drugs for pharmacological or profit purposes and exerting unexpected effects on the abuser, posing an additional health threat. A systematic search of the literature that I would suggest you to cite (<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijms232314619>) found

that adulterants play a role in some adverse effects commonly associated with the primary drug, such as cocaine adulterated with levamisole, which can induce vasculitis through an autoimmune process, reasoning that careful monitoring is essential. There is also an additional aspect to consider, which is food insecurity. A strong association between substance abuse and food insecurity has been reported from the research data, as you report in this paper (doi: 10.7417/CT.2022.2436), which I recommend contemplating among your bibliographic references. However, the purpose of your work appears clear and the method pursued certainly adequate, although some descriptive shortcomings are evident, as reported and in need of appropriate further study. Addressing these elements of discussion would certainly help to make the article more complete and articulate, so that it would be an acceptable contribution to scientific research.