

Review of: "A Philosophical Analysis of the Foundational Suppositions in Harm Reduction Theory and Practice"

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Potential competing interests: The author(s) declared that no potential competing interests exist.

This brief paper reports a conceptual study of harm reduction. I will comment on it in no particular order (somewhat reflecting the paper's style). The theoretical set of approaches informing this study is reportedly critical hermeneutical. The literature reviewed is primarily from a few decades ago. Some of the notions used are not fully up to date and/or not comprehensive, e.g., the notion of recovery has developed in the last few decades especially in the mental health sector (that often addresses substance use issues) to refer to personal recovery (such as seeking, gaining and maintaining personal meaning in life) and clinical recovery (such as symptom reduction and more independent functioning). The selection of three philosophical aspects to critically analyze (relativism, collectivism and determinism) seems somewhat arbitrary even if it is (albeit somewhat loosely) informed by the theoretical set of approaches as noted above. The conceptual analysis seems overly brief and unconvincing, particularly in relation to collectivism as even according to this paper it is not an inherent aspect of harm reduction but rather sometimes accompanies it. The structure of the paper is not standard, as only in the concluding section are some of the constructive proposals examined rather than earlier such as in a discussion section. Limitations of this study (even unrelated to my concerns as noted above) are not addressed, such as limitations of a critical hermeneutical approach. Perhaps most importantly, the contribution of such philosophical analysis is not made clear enough, as pluralistic yet realistic conclusions and related suggestions in this paper can be fairly easily reached without such philosophical analysis or perhaps by using an alternative philosophical approach such as pragmatism. Overall, I conclude that this paper can be considerably improved by addressing my concerns as noted above; alternatively, a different paper could be written using a simpler and possibly more coherent philosophical approach to examine harm reduction.