

# Review of: "Influence of Culture Among Users of Illegal Substances in Oman: An Ethnographic Study"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

## Abstract & Introduction

- **Weakness:** The abstract lacks specificity about the methodology and main findings. It does not clearly outline the significance of the study or its contribution to existing literature.
- **Gaps:** The introduction references cultural and religious influences but offers limited theoretical grounding. For instance, there is no explicit framework or connection to broader sociocultural theories on addiction or reintegration.
- **Error:** Repetition of ideas (e.g., the role of family and societal stigma) in the introduction suggests a lack of concise structuring.

## 2. Research Objectives

- **Weakness:** The objectives are overly broad, focusing on "cultural influences" and "familial reintegration" without narrowing down specific aspects of these factors.
- **Gap:** The study does not define key terms like "cultural influences" or "familial reintegration," leading to ambiguity in interpretation and findings.
- **Error:** No explicit research questions or hypotheses are articulated, which limits the focus and coherence of the study.

## 3. Methodology

- **Weakness:**
  - The sample size (19 participants) is small and lacks diversity, which compromises the generalizability of the findings.
  - Purposive sampling introduces bias and is not justified adequately in terms of achieving data saturation.
- **Gap:** There is insufficient discussion about the ethical challenges of conducting research with incarcerated individuals, particularly those in vulnerable situations like substance users.
- **Error:** The exclusion criteria eliminate participants who committed other crimes, but this could skew results since co-occurring criminal behavior is common among drug users.

## 4. Data Collection

- **Weakness:** The use of semi-structured interviews is suitable, but the study fails to explain how the interview guide was developed or pre-tested for validity and reliability.
- **Gap:** The study does not provide details about how field notes were used in thematic analysis, reducing transparency in data triangulation.
- **Error:** The phrasing of the interview questions appears simplistic and does not reflect deeper probing into cultural or psychological dimensions.

## 5. Thematic Analysis

- **Weakness:** The six-step process by Braun and Clarke is cited, but there is no evidence of how rigor (e.g., coding consistency checks or researcher bias mitigation) was maintained.
- **Gap:** The study does not discuss how themes were validated or whether participants provided feedback on the interpretations, which undermines credibility.
- **Error:** Themes are not integrated into a coherent framework. For example, the role of religion is treated as a separate theme without linking it to cultural or familial dimensions.

## 6. Results

- **Weakness:** The results section leans heavily on verbatim quotes without adequately synthesizing insights. There is an over-reliance on anecdotal evidence from participants, which weakens the analytical depth.
- **Gap:** The study does not compare its findings sufficiently with existing literature. For example, parallels with other Arab or Muslim-majority countries could provide richer context.
- **Error:** The use of direct participant quotes without thematic grouping or analytical commentary creates a fragmented presentation of findings.

## 7. Discussion

- **Weakness:** The discussion reiterates findings rather than interpreting them in light of the research objectives or theoretical frameworks.
- **Gap:** There is a lack of practical recommendations for policymakers or practitioners. How should Oman's cultural or religious frameworks be adapted to better support drug users?
- **Error:** The discussion fails to address limitations comprehensively, such as cultural biases or the impact of the small sample size.

## 8. Conclusion

- **Weakness:** The conclusion is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It summarizes findings but does not provide actionable insights or future research directions.
- **Gap:** It does not address the implications of the study for broader societal change or the integration of findings into

Oman's healthcare or rehabilitation policies.

## 9. Ethical Considerations

- **Weakness:** While ethical approval is mentioned, there is no detailed discussion about specific measures taken to ensure informed consent, especially in a prison setting where the risk of coercion is high.
- **Gap:** The study does not elaborate on how participants' identities were protected, especially in a small, closely-knit society like Oman.
- **Error:** The study overlooks the potential impact of cultural stigma on participants' willingness to share honest responses.

## 10. Citations and References

- **Weakness:** Some references (e.g., [1], [2], [4]) are vague or lack specificity about the context of Oman.
- **Gap:** There is an over-reliance on general statements about culture without citing Oman-specific or GCC-region studies on drug addiction.
- **Error:** The reference list is incomplete, with some sources cited in the text missing from the references section.

## General Observations

- **Strengths:** The study sheds light on an important, under-researched area by exploring the intersection of culture, religion, and addiction in Oman.
- **Weaknesses:** The study lacks depth in theoretical and methodological rigor. It also misses opportunities to connect its findings to actionable interventions or global perspectives.
- **Gaps:** The absence of a robust analytical framework and underdeveloped ethical considerations weaken the study's overall impact.
- **Errors:** Basic scientific writing errors, including redundancy and lack of coherence between sections, diminish its professional presentation.

## Recommendations for Improvement

1. Clarify and narrow research objectives.
2. Enhance methodological rigor, including a larger sample size and transparent coding processes.
3. Provide a stronger theoretical framework linking findings to broader sociocultural or psychological theories.
4. Address ethical challenges in greater detail.
5. Incorporate comparative analysis with other countries or regions.
6. Develop actionable recommendations for cultural and policy adaptations in Oman.

