Review of: "Measuring the harms of psychotropic substance use and poly-use in the nightlife scene: a pilot application of poly-drug use indicators on Italian data collected within the ALAMA study"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Reviewer's comments.

Thanks for the opportunity to review this paper, that centered on evaluating indicators of self-harm and harm to others while indulging in substance misuse among night clubs attendees.

Abstract: This Abstract can be written in a standard scientific style, either structured or unstructured according to the Journal's method.

Introduction: no comment.

Methodology: Please, give details how this online recruitment was carried out:

- which social media were specifically used?

- which sampling method(s) were deployed in the recruitment, at festivals and clubs inclusive?

Result:

1. (Exploratory ALAMA analyses: subjects and substances)-

Authors need not compare their findings with others in the Result section but in the Discussion section.

1. '*The analyses show that the sample is rather homogeneous regarding demographic and social variables and the distribution of "Occupation" and "Educational level" suggest a sample different from typical "problematic use" subjects who usually have lower educational levels and even lower levels of employment, as is well known from the huge number of studies on problematic drug use.*'

Please, consider moving the above idea to Discussion section.

1. In Fig 7a and 7b. *'(6% declare 0 substances lifetime and 10% in the last 12 months)'*

This is not what is reflected in the graph with respect to the colour codes of the graphs.

i.e, The grey/ash coloured key represent % distrubution, and only about 2% declared 0 substances lifetime, against 6%.

Guess there was an error of colour code reversal.

1. *'Table 2 shows the frequency of use of each investigated substance, lifetime and in the last 12 months. It should be added that the category "Other substance" was present in the survey, but very few subjects reported anything not in the main list. The most frequent answers (at least 5 subjects) among this category were Opium (20 subjects), Salvia Divinorum (12 subjects), Crack (7 subjects) and Mescalin (5 subjects)'*

This is not shown in the table 2. You may consider its removal.

1. *'The sample size of users here and in the following analyses is 809, as some substance incomplete questionnaires have been excluded; as well as data relating to those who declare that they have not used any substance. Taking into account a statement by EMCDDA "Surveys in nightlife settings tend to focus more broadly on 'substance use', rather than simply on (illicit) 'drug use', reflecting the complexity of contemporary patterns of non-medical use of Qeios, CC-BY 4.0 · Article, September 14, 2023 Qeios ID: EZY631 · https://doi.org/10.32388/EZY631 10/22 psychoactive substances", it is useful to consider the illegal and legal substances separately. The average number of substances used by users lifetime is 5.5 per person, including alcohol and tobacco in addition to illegal classical substances and NPS (NPS=0.7 per person). The average number of substances used in the last 12 months is 4 per person, including alcohol and tobacco in addition to illegal classical substances and NPS (NPS=0.26 per person). If legal substances (alcohol and tobacco) are excluded, the average numbers of substances used lifetime per person are: 4.5 substances excluding Alcohol, 4.6 excluding Tobacco and 3.6 excluding both (2.93 classical substances and 0.67 NPS). If legal substances (alcohol and tobacco) are excluded, the average numbers of substances used in the last 12 months per person are: 3.1 substances excluding Alcohol, 3.2 excluding Tobacco and 2.2 excluding both (1.94 classical substances and 0.26 NPS).'*

Please, I could not find which Table or Figure the above section was referring to?

1. Figure 8 and Table 3 have the same contents of the Result. So, you can choose one.
2. '*Considering the percentage of non-base values, indicated by p, it can be concluded that at least p% of users is poly-drug user and that at most (100-p)% of users use only one illegal substance. This p value for ALAMA data is 54%: at least 54% of subjects have used more than one illegal substance during the last 12 months.'*

Do not conclude in the Result section, better moved to the Discussion part.

1. The bars in Fig 10, 11 and 12 graphs do not show any substance they represent.

The authors can use alphabets to denote the substances in the earlier table, and then use it to represent each substance in the graph.

1. *Possible relations between poly-drug use indicators and individual demographic/social variables*

The statement above in the Result section may mean the authors are not sure of their results/findings in the study. Please you can rephrase.

1. ‘*Furthermore, the two variables occupation and residence are quite correlated as shown in Figure 13.’*

What is the correlation value, by mere looking at the fig 13?

Discussion: NIL. The authors should discuss their findings.

Conclusion:

1. *An important part of the work was the collaboration with experts in new substances who organised the classification and scoring of NPS of interest for the survey. It was also shown how to proceed in the case of new substances of interest for specific studies to get the possibility of using poly-drug use indicators.*

The above should not be part of the conclusion but under Limitation and Strength of the study if you wish.

1. *‘Another important observation is that the patterns of use do not seem to correlate to a large extent with classical demographic/social variables. Previous works (Colasante et al., 2019 and Fabi et al., 2023) rather point towards relational/psychological variables such as relations with parents (at least for young subjects), school results (again young people) that, more in general, could be thought of as extending to measurement of satisfaction with current situation, maybe relations with others, etc...’*

Your work or result did not show any statistical correlational value.

This part of your Conclusion is not correct.

Better use as Limitation of the study if you wish.

Thanks.