Reviewer's report

Title: Reasons for not using ecstasy: a qualitative study of non-users, experimental users and ex-users

Version: 1 Date: 11 November 2011

Reviewer: Elyse Singer

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Major Compulsory Revisions: None

Minor Essential revisions:

1.) In the background section in paragraph 7 there are words missing in the sentence that begins: “However, this study did not elucidate whether….” It should read: “However, this study did not elucidate whether the opportunity to use was only characterized by the fact that individuals had been in a context where the drug was present or whether they had been directly offered the drug.”

2.) Is it true that no studies have been conducted on experimental Ecstasy users? This is claimed in paragraph 7 of the background section. Perhaps you might say few studies.

3.) In the Methods section under “participants,” The second sentence in paragraph one is confusing. It might read: “The sample group…..without evidence of cognitive or psychiatric impairment who were able to complete the interview.”

4.) In the methods section after the three groups of users are defined, a new paragraph should begin with the sentence that reads: “Between 2009 and 2010…..” In this sample paragraph it should be noted that “snowball” sampling is a recruiting method that taps into the social networks of participants. This paragraph should also answer how researchers gained access to parties in which participant observation took place. Were these public/private parties?

5.) In the section labeled “Changes in Lifestyle and Expected Future use,” the first sentence of paragraph two which begins “However, these respondents answered…..” is confusing. How could non-users answer from the perspective of experimental use if they’ve never used?

Discretionary Revisions:

1.) The authors don’t include what language the research was conducted in.

2.) You might consider exploring a paper myself (Elyse Ona Singer) and Jean J. Schensul wrote entitled “Negotiating Ecstasy Risk, Reward, and Control: A Qualitative Analysis of Drug Management Patterns Among Ecstasy-Using Urban Young Adults,” in Substance Use and Misuse. This article makes a case for the necessity of exploring Ecstasy cessation and would be useful to cite in the “background” section in paragraph 5 after the sentence that begins “Some
authors have suggested...

3.) In the section of the paper labeled “background,” the first sentence reads: “Ecstasy has been used by young adults on every continent, and prevalence rates....” I suggest the word “and” be replaced with the word “but” so the sentence reads: “Ecstasy has been used by young adults on every continent, but prevalence rates vary....”

4.) In paragraph 2 of the background section the sentence that reads: “These events are attended by young adults and are characterized by electronic music and colorful decor” should read: “These events are attended by young adults and are characterized by the presence of electronic music and colorful décor.”

5.) In paragraph 6 of the Background section the last sentence might be re-written to read: “Most studies have been conducted in North American and Europe; thus, new studies on ex-users are needed to illuminate patterns of cessation across cultural contexts such as in Latin America.”

6.) In the background section paragraph 7, line 1 might be re-written to read: “There has been little research conducted on individuals who have never used Ecstasy or who never advanced beyond experimental use.”

7.) In the Methods section under the sub-section labeled “interviews,” authors might describe any precautions that were taken during interview sessions because participants were being asked personal questions about illicit behavior. Also, if participants expressed interest in entering a substance use program during the interview, were they referred anywhere?

8.) In The Results section in the sub-section labeled “Adverse effects,” authors explain that Ex-users decided to quit due to complications associated with long-term use. Because inclusion in the category of Ex-user requires that users have used Ecstasy at least 5 times in their lives but not in the past 12 months, I’m wondering how much variation there was in terms of length of Ecstasy use career and number of times used among users classified in this group. Further, did length of E career and number of times used on one’s lifetime affect the reasons they chose to quit and the difficulty they had in quitting?

9.) In the section labeled “Dependency,” data reveals that the Ex-users report that Ecstasy does not lead to chemical dependency. At this point I think it’s important to include an explanatory sentence such as: “The fact that Ex-users report that Ecstasy does not lead to chemical dependency might be because they were able to quit successfully.” Based on a study by Singer and Schensul (2011) I know that currents Ecstasy users who wanted to quit but were unable did report feeling chemically dependent on Ecstasy.

10.) In conclusion authors might include the following: Because Ex-users reported quitting Ecstasy as a result of changes in their lives such as professional responsibilities or personal growth, it seems that Ecstasy might be a drug that certain groups of people grow out of. This information is useful in developing prevention/intervention programs that should emphasize how Ecstasy interferes with individual responsibilities and life trajectories. Interventions/prevention work might emphasize life goal setting as a deterrent from use.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.