Reviewer's report

Title: Hookah Tobacco Use Surpasses Cigarette Use among University Students: A Cross-Sectional Study of Multiple Tobacco Product Use

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Reviewer: Amanda Richardson

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Manuscript Title: Hookah Tobacco Use Surpasses Cigarette Use among University Students: A Cross-Sectional Study of Multiple Tobacco Product Use

This study surveys a sample of students from the University to Florida on their tobacco use. Questions assess use of cigarettes and several other tobacco products. The authors chose to focus on hookah. Overall, the paper reports on some interesting data on the prevalence of hookah but additionally runs into some issues that need to be resolved:

1) By far my biggest concern: The authors seem to have a bit of indecision regarding the focus of this paper. The title clearly presents it as a paper focused on hookah and much of the paper is heavily focused on hookah. Yet the data--and several points sprinkled throughout the paper—reference other tobacco products assessed. If the authors want to focus on hookah, then I would recommend constructing the whole paper and Tables to do the same.

a. If the authors do want to expand to include other tobacco products, then the introduction and Discussion needs to be more inclusive of these other tobacco products. I would also recommend clarifying that the cigar category is ‘little cigars/cigarillos’ as the term cigar suggests large cigars as well.

2) The title is a bit misleading in that hookah tobacco use surpasses cigarette use among University students as current use is the same and cigarettes were used more often than hookah in the past month. Although this is clear in the text, it could be made more clear in the title as well.

3) Although the authors presented raw numbers and weighted percentages, it would be help (given the sampling approach) to add a bit of discussion about how the sample compared to the larger University population and the degree of correction that was needed (especially across demographics) to make the data representative.

4) My second largest concern: the data analysis was simplistic and could benefit from additional analysis beyond frequencies and chi-square tests. The authors state several significant p-values and associations and yet it is difficult to know whether these associations would remain after controlling for potential covariates. I would recommend doing some regression analysis to expand on their findings.
5) It would be helpful to know exactly how the prevalence of hookah use in this study compared to other national studies. There is a sentence in the Discussion about rates being similar to other studies, but how similar and what is the sample of those studies? Although a reader could look that up, it is much more informative to supply a few more details in the text so we could see how this study compares. That would also help when considering the implications of this study.

6) The Discussion was a bit erratic. The authors jumped from one topic to another and it was difficult to follow the line of thought. I would recommend re-organizing and streamlining the discussion so it was clear what point was being addressed. For example, the authors started to discuss the hookah results and then switched abruptly to cigarette smoking results, then went to hookah, followed by other tobacco products. It just didn’t read clearly.

7) Regarding the discussion again—the authors start to defend several aspects of the study (representative, sampling approach) yet don’t preface this by stating that there were limitations. It helps the reader to set it up that you are about to discuss limitations, or else it seems disjointed to suddenly be defending an aspect of the study.

8) A minor editorial note--the authors would benefit from additional proofing of their manuscript as there are several inconsistencies in where hyphens are used, how the U.S. is displayed, comma placement (or lack thereof), the way 10th is written, etc.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interests to declare