Reviewer's report

Title: Psychoactive Substances Use and Associated Factors among Axum University Students, Axum Town, North Ethiopia

Version: 1 Date: 19 March 2013

Reviewer: Amy Jeffers

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"Psychoactive Substances Use and Associated Factors among Axum University Students, Axum Town, North Ethiopia"

In general, I found this paper interesting as it addresses an important public health concern in an under-studied area. Some comments/suggestions are noted below.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. The manuscript is unnecessarily long and could be streamlined. A few suggestions are provided. The Methods section could be shortened. Both the sample size formula and the operational definitions are not needed. However, these definitions should be replaced with a description of the measures as is customary to include in a Methods section. In the Results section, there are places with redundant statistics. For example, a sentence in the first paragraph reads "Among the study subjects, 444 (58.8%) were males and the remaining 312 (41.2%) were females." It is unnecessary to use both values as listing one group's statistic implies the value of the other. This type of language happens throughout the entire Results and Discussion sections. Further, it is unnecessary to duplicate information that's provided in the text with information provided in the tables. It would be helpful to list only the most meaningful values in the text. Finally, the Discussion section should focus on implications and many of the statistics, including both frequencies and percentages, p-values, and odds-ratios, that were listed in the Results section do not need to be repeated. For example, one sentence in the discussion reads “Being male [AOR: 1.96, 95CI: (1.25, 3.080], Muslim in religion...” Similarly, these statistics don’t need to be included for the additional studies mentioned in the Discussion section.

Minor Essential Revisions:

2. Although the manuscript is understandable, it would be very helpful if an English speaker edited it.

3. Please be consistent when using the terms “substance use” versus “substance abuse” as they have different meanings as defined by the ICD-10.

4. In addition to including a description of the measures in the Methods section, please include references for the measures. Also, if there’s evidence for reliability
and validity, please include appropriate statistics.

Discretionary Revisions:

5. Figure 4 (pie chart) seems unnecessary as all of the related statistics are mentioned in the text, and it is easy to visualize such percentages.

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:

I declare that I have no competing interests.