Reviewer's report

Title: Ideal, expected and perceived descriptive norm drunkenness in UK nightlife environments: a cross-sectional study

Version: 0 Date: 03 Sep 2018

Reviewer: Morten Hesse

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript entitled "If you're happy and you know it drink some more" is based on a cross-sectional survey in three cities. The aim was to assess drunkenness, expected drunkenness and ideal drunkenness, in order to assess whether patrons "exceed their ideal level of drunkenness whilst on a night out and relationships between ideal and expected drunkenness and perceptions of nightlife drunkenness norms."

I have several comments on the manuscript:

The specific theoretical framework for this study is in my view underdeveloped. The aim as described above is somewhat vague and the statistical analyses that follow do not help the reader to understand why exactly this study was conducted as it was.

Two things were new to me - if they were in fact based on previous studies, that could be clarified.

One was the perspective that the perceived normative intoxication (i.e., what the patron believes to be normative drunkenness) rather than normative consumption, could be important for nightlife drinking. Expecting to "fit in with the crowd" rather than standing out as much more (or less) intoxicated may be an interesting variable to include in future research on nightlife drinking.

The other was "ideal drunkenness". While the second point is backed up by reference 25 to a study in Italy, the authors could do much more to elaborate on the meaning of "ideal drunkenness", and how this variable could be studied in various contexts.

The statistical analyses use the so-called "backward method". However, as other regression methods that rely on significance to include co-variates, the backward method is now considered exploratory, and capitalizes heavily on chance. See for instance Thompson, 1995 (https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164495055004001), and I see no reason why the analysis could not include all variables of interest.

The term "preloading" is not a term that I would expect the average reader of a public health journal to know - although I know what it means, I think it should be defined with a reference the first time it is mentioned. I suggest Foster & Ferguson as a reference (Alcohol and Alcoholism, Volume 49, Issue 2, p. 213-226, https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agt135), although there are many others.
The authors write about "drunkenness norms". The alcohol literature generally distinguishes between descriptive norms (which is the type of norms that is relevant for this paper), prescriptive norms (norms for how one should behave), and proscriptive norms (norms for how one should not behave). I would suggest that the authors state that the norms that they refer to here are descriptive (see for instance Borsari et al, J Stud Alcohol. 2003; 64(3): 331-341).

In light of these considerations, I would recommend that the catchy title be changed into something that better reflects the content of the manuscript.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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I am able to assess the statistics

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