

OPEN PEER REVIEW

# Examination of the Impact of Drug Legalization Policies on Crime Rates in Regions

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introductory paragraph is well-developed but lacks a clear thesis statement that outlines the specific aims of the study. I recommend revising the last few sentences to explicitly state the research questions or hypotheses being tested in this study.

The paragraph mentions "diverse socio-political and economic contexts across Iran's provinces," but it would benefit from a more detailed discussion or examples of these variations to set the stage for the rest of the paper.

When discussing "Deterrence theory," the paper could enhance clarity by providing specific examples or cases where deterrence has been effective in drug policy, possibly including a brief discussion on the counterarguments.

The section outlines the use of thematic analysis but lacks a discussion on the software or tools used for coding and analysis. Including this information would provide greater transparency and replicability.

The discussion section effectively compares Iran's situation to Portugal's experience but could benefit from a more detailed exploration of the differences in healthcare infrastructure between the two countries, which may impact the success of similar policies.

The analysis of potential increases in drug trafficking is well-articulated but would be stronger with the inclusion of data or case studies from other countries with similar geopolitical contexts to Iran.

The paper concludes with a call for a "balanced approach," but it does not provide specific policy recommendations. I suggest adding a few concrete suggestions or frameworks that Iran could consider adopting.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The comparison between Iran and other countries like Portugal and the United States is insightful, but it would be useful to include a discussion on how Iran's cultural and legal context might mediate these effects. This will make the argument more relevant to the Iranian context.

The phrase "empirical data on drug legalization in Iran predictions regarding its effects must be made cautiously" seems to undermine the confidence in the study's findings. Consider rephrasing to emphasize the value of hypothetical analysis while acknowledging the limitations.

The "Purposive sampling technique" is described but lacks justification. It would be beneficial to explain why this method was chosen over other sampling methods and how it ensures the inclusion of diverse perspectives.

The methodology mentions the use of semi-structured interviews but does not specify how the interview guide was developed. Including details on the creation and pilot testing of the interview questions could strengthen the section.

The results section provides valuable insights but should clarify the source of the quotes used. Indicating whether they are hypothetical or drawn from actual interviews will improve credibility.

The discussion of black market dynamics could be enhanced by including a brief mention of economic models or theories that explain these shifts in greater detail.

The results suggest potential improvements in public health but lack specific examples of harm reduction strategies that might be applicable in Iran. Including these examples would make the findings more actionable.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.