**Participant Information Sheet**

**Research Title**

Microdosing psychedelic substances to help with obsessive-compulsive experiences: an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

**What is this research about?**

Primary Aim:

explore experiences of microdosing classic psychedelics to help with experienced obsessive thinking and compulsions

We want to do this with a neutral and balanced view

Sharing your experience will be valuable in understanding this growing phenomenon and will support future research in this area.

We also want to explore your reasons for choosing psychedelic substances over conventional medicinal and psychological treatments for obsessions and compulsions.

We invite you to share your experiences if you have experience of being in a routine of microdosing a classic psychedelic drug (such as LSD, mescaline and/or psilocybin) to support your OCD symptoms

If you consent to take part in this study, you will be interviewed anonymously online through an encrypted webchat platform

**Why do we want to conduct this research?**

As microdosing appears to be a growing phenomenon, it is important to research it in order to gain further understanding. This study will aim to do so in a curious and neutral manner by exploring experiences of people who have previously or currently microdose classic psychedelics in order to change their experiences of OCD symptoms. This study will take a neutral stance to the use of microdosing psychedelics – neither condoning nor condemning - so that all aspects of the experience can be explored.

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| Who can take part? |
| * Those aged 18 and over
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| * Those who have previously experienced or are currently experiencing obsessions and/or compulsions (definitions of obsessions and compulsions below).
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| * Those with experience of being in a routine within the past year of microdosing at least one psychedelic substance to change their frequency or distress levels of experiencing obsessions and/or compulsions.
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| * Those able to confidently read and write in English
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| **Definitions of obsessions and compulsions** |
| **Obsessions** | **Compulsions** |
| Recurrent and persistent thoughts, urges, or images that are experienced, at some time during the disturbance, as intrusive and unwanted, and that in most individuals cause marked anxiety or distress. | Repetitive behaviours (e.g., hand washing, ordering, checking) or mental acts (e.g., praying, counting, repeating words silently) that the individual feels driven to perform in response to an obsession or according to rules that must be applied rigidly. |
| The individual attempts to ignore or suppress such thoughts, urges, or images, or to neutralise them with some other thought or action (i.e., by performing a compulsion). | The behaviours or mental acts are aimed at preventing or reducing anxiety or distress, or preventing some dreaded event or situation; however, these behaviours or mental acts are not connected in a realistic way with what they are designed to neutralise or prevent, or are clearly excessive. |
| The obsessions or compulsions are time-consuming (e.g., take more than 1 hour per day) or cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. |

Unfortunately, you will be unable to take part in the study if you are currently taking classic psychedelic(s) to experience full psychoactive effects such as visual or auditory disturbances, currently microdose psychedelics for substance use issues, withdrawal or recreational purposes.

**What would taking part involve?**

As this study is investigating psychedelic usage, which is illegal in most countries, it is crucial that the researcher maintains your anonymity as a participant. Therefore, if you are interested in participating in this study, it will be required for you to contact the researcher to register your interest with a username which is not linked to your real name and identity. Usernames should be carefully considered as they can infer cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

It is also important you do not contact the researcher or the University of Birmingham in any other manner other than the forum-specific messenger, as this will compromise anonymity. Additionally, if you do happen to over-disclose information in the interview, the researcher will work collaboratively with you to alter certain details of this information when it is stored for analysis.

You will set up a date and time to meet with the researcher via an online end-to-end encrypted webchat platform to talk about your experiences of microdosing psychedelic substances to help with OCD symptoms. This interview will last around 60 minutes, and you will have the opportunity to extend the interview or reschedule to another date or time if you wish and feel you have more information to share.

The researcher will delete their social media account (i.e., Reddit account) used to initially communicate with participants two weeks after the last interview is completed. This is to protect participant anonymity and to ensure all data linked to participants is lost. Participant usernames and a fabricated identifier number string will be saved within a password protected document to enable to researcher to identify which transcript belongs to each participant in case you chose to withdraw from the research. The withdrawal period is two weeks post-interview for each participant; therefore your username will be deleted after this time.

For a visual depiction of what will happen in the study, please see appendix A on the last page of this document.

**Duty of Care**

It is possible that during the interview you may disclose some sort of difficulty, or you or another are at risk, which may be of a concern to the researcher.

It is important to consider that this research is being conducted from the United Kingdom (UK), and the interview will not be a forum for help or advice. This is because the research is explorative and is not being completed by a researcher whom is an expert in this field. Furthermore, as the research is being completed in the UK, this may mean there is a time delay in any communication, so the participant cannot rely on the researcher for immediate help or advice.

If you were to disclose some difficulty or risk during the interview, the researcher will signpost to general services or suggest how you may look for local support services. However, the researcher and the University of Birmingham do not endorse any particular service.

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| **What are the possible benefits and disadvantages of taking part?** |
| **BENEFITS** | **DISADVANTAGES** |
| Participants in this study will be able share their story and contribute their experiences and opinions on microdosing psychedelic drugs. | It is important that the participant understands that sensitive topics are likely to be discussed, such as mental health, and the use of illicit substances. |
| They may feel the benefit of being able to share their experiences, in order to develop public knowledge and also to guide and inform future research. | It is important to take into account personal limitations and levels of distress. The researcher encourages participants to be honest in this regard. |
| Completing this study using a semi-structured interview will allow participants to tell their own unique story in a manner that supports openness, depth, and what really matters to them. | The participant is encouraged to state whether they do not wish to answer questions, or feel distressed by the questions, without need to give reason for this. |
| Given that individuals are using forums to research and participate in conversations about microdosing psychedelic drugs, it is possible that they will find the experience of being in this research enjoyable. | Any sign that a participant is becoming uncomfortable or distressed by the questions will result in the interview being paused, and a discussion with the participant can be held to see whether they wish to continue.  |

**Further supporting information**

***What are your choices about how your information is used?***

Following the research interview, you will have a two-week opt-out period for reflection. Within this time, you may contact the researcher on the forum-specific messenger and withdraw your interview entirely, without giving any reason.

The researcher will delete the social media account (e.g., Reddit account) used to initially communicate with participants two weeks after the last interview is completed, to protect anonymity and to ensure all data linked to participants is destroyed. Participant usernames and a fabricated identifier number string will be saved within a password protected document to enable to researcher to identify which transcript belongs to each participant in case participant(s) chose to withdraw from the research. The transcript will be saved with just the fabricated identifier attached. The withdrawal period is two weeks post-interview for each participant. Therefore, the researcher will delete the username from the password protected document after the allocated withdrawal timeframe to protect participant anonymity.

If you do not wish to carry on with the study, you can withdraw from the research without needing to give any reason. If you choose to withdraw, no further data would be collected or any other research procedures carried out. If you choose to withdraw from the research within two weeks of your completed interview, the researcher will immediately securely destroy all information collected to do with your participation so far throughout the process.

We need to manage your records in specific ways for the research to be reliable. This means that we won’t be able to let you see or change the data we hold about you.

***How will we use information about you and keep it confidential?***

Once the researcher has finished conducting interviews, the researcher will only have access to your unique identifier key and anonymous interview transcript.

The anonymised data collected during this study will be looked at by the researcher and academic supervisors at the University of Birmingham to ensure that the analysis is a fair and reasonable representation of the data. It may be used in other research projects and parts of the data will be shared with other research students as part of ongoing training and skill development. All data shared will be anonymous.

This research project will be run in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). A strict data management procedure will be carried out so that your information is confidential and safe.

***What will happen to the results of this study?***

* As this interview will take place entirely through the use of an end-to-end encrypted webchat platform, the entirety of the interview will be downloaded directly and will act as the transcript used for analysis. Using an end-to-end encrypted webchat platform means no IP address can be tracked to participants during the download of the webchat content.
* The results of the research will be written up as a doctorate thesis and submitted for publication in an academic journal. Some original quotes from the interviews may be used to back-up themes from the data. No identifying information will be connected with these quotes.
* If you would like to access the results of this research, the finalised paper will be included in the online catalogue of professional theses at the University of Birmingham in 2025.

***Further information***

This research is being funded by the University of Birmingham and organised by the researcher:

Charlotte A’Court
Trainee Clinical Psychologist, School of Psychology, University of Birmingham.

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This research is supervised by the following researchers:

Professor Alexandre Copello, Professor in Psychology

Dr Andrew Fox, Assistant Professor in Clinical Psychology

Dr Rebecca Ryan, Clinical Psychologist

***Where can you find out more about how your information is used?***You can find out more about how we use your information at

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/rss/ethics-and-governance/index.aspx>

**Appendix A
Visual roadmap of research activities**

