

Participant Information Sheet

Research Title

Experiences of microdosing psychedelics in an attempt to support wellbeing and mental health.

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Invitation and brief summary

The aim of this research is to explore people's experiences of microdosing classic psychedelic drugs, primarily psilocybin (or 'magic mushrooms') or LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide). The study is recruiting people who have experience of being in a regime of microdosing a classic psychedelic drug to support their mental health and/or wellbeing, and invites them to share their unique experiences.

Participants who consent to take part in the study will be interviewed anonymously online. Sharing your experience of microdosing will be valuable in understanding this growing phenomenon and will support future research in this area.

Explanation: purpose of and background to the research and invitation

As microdosing appears to be a growing phenomenon, it is important to explore it in order to gain an understanding of it. This study will aim to do so in a curious and neutral manner by gathering information from people who have been microdosing classic psychedelic drugs in their daily lives.

Who can take part?

- Those aged 18 and over
- Those with experience of being in a regime of microdosing a classic psychedelic drug to support their mental health and/or wellbeing.
- Those able to confidently read and write in English.

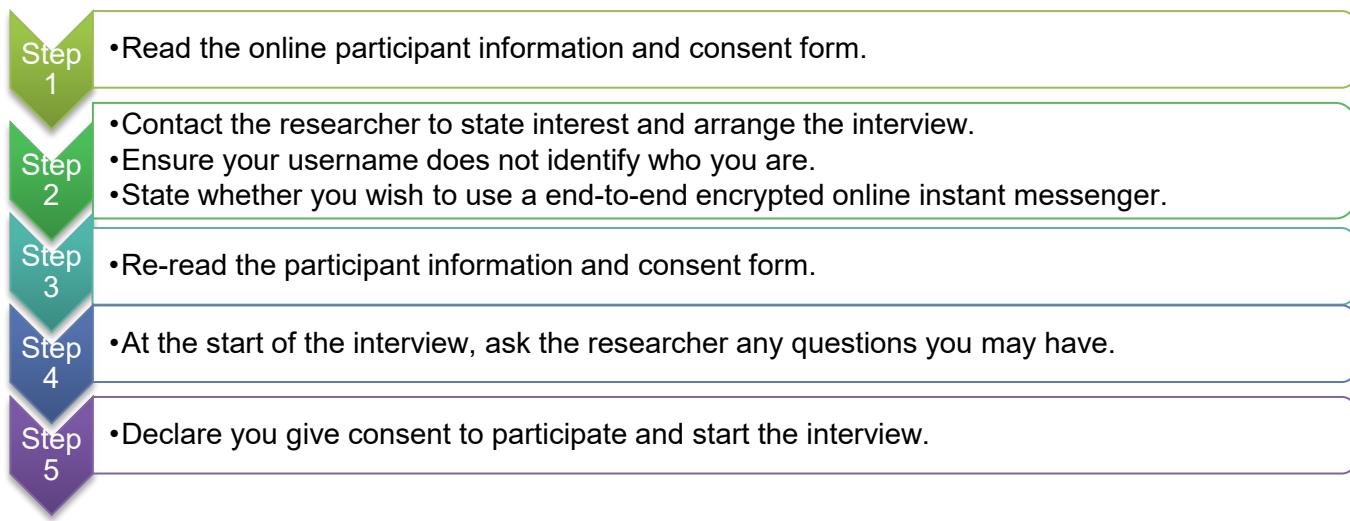
Unfortunately, you will be unable to take part in the study if you are currently microdosing to cope with substance use issues/withdrawal, or, if you use microdosing for any other purpose e.g. recreational purposes.

What would taking part involve?

If you participate, interviews will be held via the forum-specific instant messenger to the website you saw the advertisement for this study. From seeing this advert and reading this participant information form and then consent form, you can contact the researcher via the forum-specific messenger to state your interest.

You will have the option to use an end-to-end encryption instant online messenger if you wish for added security. This means that the online interview details can only be seen between researcher and participant and no other body.

If you agree to consent, the types of questions that may be asked will be around your microdosing regime and your experience of microdosing in terms of supporting your mental health and/or your overall wellbeing. No intrusive questions such as how you acquired illegal drugs will be asked, and no identifying information will be gathered from you. It is estimated that an interview may take around 1 hour, but this will depend on how the interview develops.



How will anonymity and confidentiality be maintained?

As this study is investigating an illegal activity, it is important that the researcher maintains the anonymity of the participant as much as they possibly can.

When a person uses the internet there is normally an IP address attached, unless they use camouflage technology like Tor browser. An IP address (Internet Protocol address) is a unique identifier which identifies any device using the internet. This means that when a person uses the internet they run the risk that if an authority were to demand information from the website, the IP address of the person could potentially be tracked, which could then possibly identify that person.

It will be a prerequisite that if you sign up to the study, and you are going to give informed consent, then you must use a username in the study which is not linked to your real name/identity. Usernames should be carefully considered as they can infer cultural and ethical 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.

Once the interview is complete, and the two week opt-out period has passed, the interview notes will be transferred to a document for analysis. Any usernames will be immediately deleted, and a data key will be created to link the username with a random identifier, so the link between your username and the interview data will be broken.

Duty of Care

It may be possible that during an online interview with a participant they may disclose that they are having some sort of difficulty, or they 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 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 the participant were to disclose some difficulty or risk during the interview, the researcher will signpost the participant to general services or suggest how the participant could look for services of support. However, the researcher and the University of Birmingham do not endorse any particular service.

What are the possible benefits and disadvantages of taking part?



Participants in this study will be able share their story and contribute their experiences and opinions on microdosing psychedelic drugs.

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.

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.

Given that individuals are using forums to research and participate in conversations about microdosing psychedelic drugs, it is possible that the will find the experience of being in this research enjoyable.

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.

Hence it is important to take into account personal limitations and levels of distress. The researcher encourages participants to be honest in this regard.

The participant is therefore encouraged to state whether they do not wish to answer questions, or feel distressed by the questions, without need to give reason for this.

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

It is important to stress that the researcher does not condone the purchase and use of illegal drugs.

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 or in part, without giving any reason.

If you do not wish to carry on with the study, you can so say without reason. Data already collected with your consent would be retained and used in the study. No further data would be collected or any other research procedures carried out. At your request, you can retract all your data from the study and it will be securely destroyed.

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?

People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your name or contact details. Your data will have a random identifier instead.

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.

Once we have finished the study, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results. We will write the reports in a way that no one can work out that you took part in the study.

The anonymised data collected during this study will be looked at by the researcher and academic supervisor at the University of Birmingham to ensure that the analysis is a fair and reasonable representation of the data.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The results of the research will be written up as a doctorate thesis. 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. This research will be included in the online catalogue of professional theses at the University of Birmingham.

Further information

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

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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/Research-Support-Group/integrity-ethics-governance/Research-Governance/index.aspx>