Analysis Against Psychedelic Therapy

Adrian Reyna
Psychology 101
Rick Bell
Psychedelic therapy is the use of psychedelic drugs such as LSD, DMT, MDMA, Psilocybin, and even the more mild psychedelic effects of THC for the purpose of treating mental disorders through the expansion of the mind.

This is illegal in many countries and most states, so this isn’t particularly supported by psychiatric professionals in the U.S., however the effects of these substances on the psyche are still regularly studied.
Going Back to the Roots

- While some who seek this mostly self-induced therapy intake synthetic substances like LSD or MDMA, a greater part of those who go this route opt for substances found in nature within leaves, mushrooms, cacti, etc.
- This is a draw for many since plants are generally perceived as healthy and even sometimes as given by providence for our healing. It makes many people feel as though they are in touch with nature and the earth.
What is a Psychedelic Substance?

- Psychoactive substances are substances that change the functions of the nervous system. Psychedelic substances more specifically produce changes in a person’s perception, mood, and cognitive processes, usually altering their sense of time and emotions as well.

- These substances create some form of hallucination whether visually, audibly, or in mental perception.
Cannabis has recently become legalized medically or recreationally throughout the U.S. It is not typically considered by society to be a psychedelic however it is shown to have psychedelic effects mildly for constant users and heavily for first-time and occasional users.

A study done over the course of 3 years and completed in 2015 cognitively tested adolescents at 16 through 19 years old and then reassessed them 18 to 36 months later, some of which were using cannabis and some who were not.

It revealed that even for those who were using cannabis only twice a week, their cognitive skills were significantly lower than nonusers. The younger a person was when they started, the worse their skills had depreciated by the end of the study.
Twins, New Zealanders and Cannabis

- In 2021 a study was completed where scientists followed the lives of various sets of identical twins in which one used cannabis and the other did not, which helps remove differentiation between genetic, cultural, and familial influences.
- The study found that twins who used cannabis from adolescence up to age 30 ended up with lower paying occupations, less educational attainment, lower positions in their specific occupation, lower GPA’s, and a lower desire to increase academically.
- Another study followed New Zealanders, up to age 45, and it showed those who used cannabis had lower credit scores, less savings, less investments, less life satisfaction, and more loneliness than nonusers.
Hallucinogen-persisting perception disorder

- Studies show that all substances with psychedelic effects can result in a disorder known as HPPD, or hallucinogen-persisting perception disorder.
- This is especially true with more potent substances like LSD, MDMA, DMT, and Psilocybin.
- Essentially, HPPD is when the effects of a substance being used continue to persist even after a person is no longer using it.
- This disorder can last weeks, months, years, or even throughout life in extreme cases.
HPPD Examples

Visual Trailing

Heightened Floaters

Visual Snow

Episodes of Blurriness

Intensification of Colors, Lights, etc.
Beyond HPPD

- HPPD is a more “tangible” aspect of the negative effects of psychedelic substances that has the potential of being managed without being too much of a life inhibitor, since it by itself is simply a visual issue.
- Besides a reduction in cognitive ability, two other potential side effects that can be a real hindrance to living a productive and fulfilling life are derealization and depersonalization.
Derealization at its core is the feeling that one’s surroundings are not real and itself is a symptom of mental disturbance. Symptoms include feeling like you are in a dream, losing a proper perception of time, feeling like life is lifeless, colorless or foggy, viewing other people and things incorrectly, and feeling like you’re looking through the world through a lens, glass, barrier, etc.
Depersonalization

- A state in which one’s thoughts and feelings seem unreal or in which one does not feel like they belong to themselves is called depersonalization.
- Symptoms of this disorder include emotional or physical numbing, loss of identity, anxiety, depression, impaired awareness, and feeling out of your body.
Conclusion

- Psychedelic substances occasionally help people overcome barriers in their life, however they are ultimately just pulling down walls that are developed in our mind for our protection mentally and emotionally.
- We have no control over which walls get pulled down and this can open us up to cognitive depreciation, HPPD, and derealization/depersonalization.
- The use of psychedelic substances to treat mental, emotional, physical and other issues is not worth the potential negative side effects and repercussions.


Preparedness for Healthy Ageing and Polysubstance Use in Long-Term …, www.thelancet.com/journals/lanhl/article/PIIS2666-7568(22)00201-X/fulltext.
