

Exploring Altered Realities: Unveiling the Effects of Psychedelics on Perception and Consciousness

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation is to ask the question of what the short-term and long-term effects of psychedelics on consciousness are and how these effects influence individuals' metaphysical beliefs, perceptions of reality, and brain functions. Information and investigations relating to this question were found through the usage of search engines like Google Scholar and Ebsco Host. While challenging at times to find suitable sources due to external limitations like a faulty computer or Ebsco Host being challenging to use due to it being heavily censored, this investigation was still able to be completed. The sources found effectively provided information suitable to answer the research question.

Introduction

Psychedelics are a type of drug that produces hallucinations and or an altered state of consciousness. This research paper will delve into psychedelic-induced altered perception, the effects psychedelics have on consciousness, how they can induce ego death, how ego is the root of suffering, and whether psychedelics truly expand consciousness or are dangerous and should not be trusted. These research topics are important because they help better understand the effects of psychedelics on perception; people can learn more about altered states of consciousness and gain a better understanding of how consciousness works and interacts with reality. People have used psychedelics for thousands of years; it was thought to put people in a “higher” or more spiritually connected state of consciousness. In the 60s, psychedelics became a very controversial topic; many people were saying that psychedelics should not be trusted and that they are just dangerous drugs. Other people say that psychedelics can be good as they can expand the mind and allow for more profound thoughts, an easier time understanding abstract topics, and open the door to ego death, ultimately killing the root of suffering. If the latter is true, the safe use of psychedelics could allow for a more insightful and deeply thinking society. While this investigation will not delve much into this topic, recent studies have shown that psychedelics have been able to improve the mental state of many people when nothing else worked. People do not have much knowledge of the ways psychedelics alter consciousness. The people who do understand or know a little bit about the effects of psychedelics on the brain sometimes regard the psychedelic state as “greater” or “higher” than regular waking consciousness. This assumption is not entirely accurate and comes from not being fully educated about this topic. While it has been challenging to study this in the past, recently, more studies have been coming out, shedding light on the question of whether these drugs truly have individual and societal benefits as have been claimed for millennia or if they are just dangerous recreational drugs.

Research Question

What are the effects of psychedelics on consciousness, and how do these effects influence individuals' meta-physical beliefs, perception of reality, and brain functions?

Literature Review

Information on Altered States of Consciousness and Mistakes to Avoid when Interpreting Consciousness

Many philosophers and scientists attempting to interpret consciousness should consider this information. The purpose of this study is to present data from altered states of consciousness that should be considered in the interpretation of consciousness. The investigation examines the issue of scientists and philosophers interpreting consciousness exclusively in light of their individual experiences and knowledge. It asserts that to understand and interpret consciousness fully, people must be aware of and grasp its altered states. It starts by talking about general definitions of consciousness. Subsequently, the focus turns to altered states of consciousness. The investigation focuses on reality perception, non-standard information transmission, and physiological plasticity. It then analyses the implications of these findings for coming up with theories of consciousness. Investigations like these are often used in research papers:

Philosophers, psychologists, and other scholars sometimes take their own experience as the measure of reality in their theories of consciousness. Or, to use methodological terminology, their theory is based on a sample size of one and the inherent limitations of that single individual. So, for example, by looking to his own experience, William James found that thinking (which, according to James, is what consciousness is) is just the breath (James, 1904, p. 491). Daniel Dennett proposed a cognitivist theory of consciousness that fit “all the dear features” that he had discovered in his “inner life” (Dennett, 1978, 173). And so on. I am not criticizing the effort to look to one’s own experience when theorizing — it is, in fact, necessary to do so — but, instead, I am asking for respect for the limitations of such a methodology and for attention to reports of events that lie outside of its boundaries. There is much to be learned from research into altered states of consciousness that bears on any theories of consciousness, in particular, and theories of mind and reality in general. In this paper I clarify some basic matters concerning the study of consciousness, then provide a list of alterations of consciousness, and, finally, discuss three issues that arise in the context of altered states of consciousness that have implications for understanding consciousness. (Baruss, 2012)

The summary explains what happened in the investigation, making it easier to analyze the investigation. This investigation helps by providing information on generally known theories and definitions of consciousness. It also helps by presenting data about lesser-known forms of consciousness/altered states of consciousness. This info assists the reader and or writer by allowing them to understand consciousness better. Being more knowledgeable about this topic allows the reader and or writer to avoid the issue the article discusses. The issue is how many philosophers and scientists define/identify consciousness using only their knowledge and experiences. Being more knowledgeable about this topic can also help one understand other sources regarding consciousness. It can help us understand what to look for in new sources.

Do Psychedelics Result in a Higher State of Consciousness?

It is assumed that psychedelics lead to a higher state of consciousness, but that might not be entirely true. The purpose of this study is to determine whether psychedelics genuinely result in an enhanced state of consciousness. In this study, the idea that a psychedelic state of consciousness is a "higher state of consciousness" than a

typical waking state is examined. It also seeks to establish whether calling other states of consciousness "higher" or "lower" is appropriate. Two psychedelic drugs, psilocybin and "LSD," are used in the investigation to evaluate this, and data from peer-reviewed articles and lab experiments is also gathered. According to the study, while hallucinogens enhance some cognitive functions, they also impair other brain functions. This investigation shows that a hallucinogenic state is not "higher" or "lower." The investigation concluded that the hallucinogenic state is not higher; it just has some heightened functions coming with the trade-off that other brain processes are impaired. Investigations like these are often used in research papers:

For example, in the state of ordinary waking awareness, a wide variety of contents can enter consciousness, and a wide variety of cognitive and behavioral capacities can be exercised. In other conscious states, however, both the range of conscious contents and the range of cognitive and behavioral capacities may be curtailed. Conditions that are often associated with changes in conscious state include post-comatose disorders of consciousness (Bruno et al. 2011; Casarotto et al. 2016), sleep and drug-induced sedation. We turn now to the nature of the psychedelic state of consciousness, focusing on two of the most commonly used serotonergic hallucinogens: lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and psilocybin (found in 'magic mushrooms'). Although there are differences between the states of consciousness associated with the ingestion of these two substances, and there are a range of other drugs known to induce altered states of consciousness, we will ignore these points here and will use 'psychedelic state' as a general term to refer to the paradigmatic states of consciousness associated with the consumption of psilocybin and LSD. (Bayne & Carter, 2018)

The summary explains what happened in the investigation, making it easier to analyze the study. This investigation provides information on how two very common hallucinogens affect the brain. How they increase and decrease cognitive functions. The fact that they reduce and increase functions supports the reason for the investigation. The investigation aims to see if "higher" and "lower" states of consciousness exist. It concludes that the idea that there are "higher" and "lower" levels of consciousness is skewed; this can help a writer or reader understand more about consciousness. It can also help the reader or writer see that consciousness is not black and white.

The Effect of Psychedelics on Metaphysical Beliefs

Researchers have found the significant effects of psychedelics on metaphysical beliefs. The purpose of this study is to determine whether using psychedelic drugs can alter metaphysical beliefs over the long term. In a study to look at the long-term consequences of psychedelic drug use on metaphysical beliefs, they used an extensive internet survey. The results showed that psychedelics did have a substantial impact on metaphysical ideas. Those who were materialists or physicalists began to hold more fantastic views of panpsychism and fatalism. This change in outlook lasted for around six months. It was more pronounced in people who were mentally healthy or had prior experience with these drugs. An independent clinical investigation confirmed the theory that psychedelics can shift metaphysical ideas. Investigations like these are often used in research papers:

Focusing specifically on psychedelics, recent evidence has demonstrated that psychedelics can reliably and robustly induce intense, profound, and personally meaningful experiences that have been referred to as 'mystical-type'²⁷, 'spiritual'²⁸, 'religious'²⁹, 'existential'³⁰, 'transformative'³¹, 'pivotal'¹⁵ or 'peak'³². Some specific facets of these potentially transformative psychedelic experiences include: a perceived transcendence of the physical bounds and laws of this 'consensus reality'^{23,24,25,26}, encounters with 'supernatural' beings^{26,29} and an 'ultimate reality'²⁹, and the witnessing or comprehending of spatial and temporal vastness, a sense that the 'cosmos is fundamentally conscious'²⁵ and/or that all things are essentially inter-related or connected, i.e. the so-called 'unitive experience'³³. Psychedelics have been found to acutely increase psychological suggestibility, likely by relaxing the confidence of held beliefs^{40,41} thereby allowing for an easier transmission of others' implicitly and explicitly held beliefs into one's own⁴². This phenomenon may be particularly pertinent in the context of collective psychedelic experiences⁴³. (Timmermann et al., 2021)

The summary explains what happened in the investigation, making it easier to analyze the study. This investigation delves into the idea that psychedelics can alter metaphysical beliefs. It surveyed a large group of people. The results show that psychedelics can alter metaphysical beliefs. People changed from having materialistic and physicalist views to having fatalist and panpsychist beliefs. These alerted metaphysical beliefs lasted for around six months. Learning this helps a reader or writer understand the vast, potentially long-lasting effects that hallucinogens can cause; this can help understand general altered states of consciousness and their long-lasting effects.

The Connection Between Brain Entropy and Different States of Consciousness

The study's primary goal is to understand the connection between brain entropy and altered states of consciousness—wildly psychedelic states of consciousness. This work aims to study the interaction that exists during REM sleep, or the early stages of psychosis, between the "Primary state of consciousness," or that of the psychedelic user, and the "Secondary state of consciousness," or that of the awake, average person. This idea suggests that psychedelic drugs cause the brain to enter a distinct, more primordial state of consciousness, which provides new opportunities for studying psychology and therapeutic approaches. Interestingly, brain imaging during psychedelic usage shows that the brain is shifting between a state of order and entropy called heightened criticality. This state is also known as a higher state of awareness. Although the ordinary waking mind is thought to operate in a secondary state of consciousness, input is blocked. It aids in the person's ability to distinguish between "make-believe" and reality, but it also suppresses certain aspects of consciousness to allow for reasonable existence. The waking mind operates in a fundamentally distinct level of awareness:

The psychedelic state is considered an exemplar of a primitive or primary state of consciousness that preceded the development of modern, adult, human, normal waking consciousness. Based on neuroimaging data with psilocybin, a classic psychedelic drug, it is argued that the defining feature of "primary states" is elevated entropy in certain aspects of brain function, such as the repertoire of functional connectivity motifs that form and fragment across time. Indeed, since there is a greater repertoire of connectivity motifs in the psychedelic state than in normal waking consciousness, this implies that primary states may exhibit "criticality," i.e., the property of being poised at a "critical" point in a transition zone between order and disorder where certain phenomena such as power-law scaling appear. Moreover, if primary states are critical, then this suggests that entropy is suppressed in normal waking consciousness, meaning that the brain operates just below criticality. It is argued that this entropy suppression furnishes normal waking consciousness with a constrained quality and associated metacognitive functions, including reality-testing and self-awareness. (Carhart-Harris et al., 2014)

This study provides a critical missing piece in other studies and dramatically supports the theory that psychedelics create a higher state of consciousness in people. Specifically, this study used neuroimaging of the brain on psychedelics and in a normal working state. Among the conclusions drawn was that psychedelics allow the brain to slip into a higher state of consciousness that the waking brain suppresses. The "Secondary state of consciousness" of the waking brain creates the ego or the "I" humans experience. However, it filters out various inputs and experiences that the brain using psychedelics is open to; this includes profound spiritual experiences and broader feelings of understanding and perspective. Since the original theory was that psychedelics induce a higher state of consciousness, this study appears to go straight to the heart of that theory and goes a long way to proving it. It explains why and how that transition into the "Primary state of consciousness" happens.

Comparing Non-Psychedelic and Psychedelic “God Encounter Experiences”

This study analyzed "God encounter experiences" in detail and looked at how they changed consciousness, comparing "God encounter experiences" that were psychoactive and those that were not. Comparing the subjective "God encounter experiences" that arise after psychedelic use with those that occur naturally is the aim of the study. The unexpectedness of the events and the participation of one or more senses were among their commonalities. Majorities in both groups reported having spoken with an entity and thought these encounters were more authentic than ordinary consciousness. Ultimately, both cohorts had long-lasting changes in their outlook on life that came later. Some notable differences include that the psychedelic group was twice as likely to associate the experience with God and that the entity could affect this reality. Additionally, they experience a significant reduction in the fear of death:

The Non-Drug Group was most likely to choose "God" as the best descriptor of that which was encountered while the psychedelic groups were most likely to choose "Ultimate Reality." Although there were some other differences between non-drug and the combined psychedelic group, as well as between the four psychedelic groups, the similarities among these groups were most striking. Most participants reported vivid memories of the encounter experience, which frequently involved communication with something having the attributes of being conscious, benevolent, intelligent, sacred, eternal, and all-knowing. (Griffiths et al., 2019)

If naturally occurring experiences of seeing life through a higher consciousness are actual, this study supports that similar drug-induced experiences are no less real. While it admittedly does not provide conclusive evidence that the feelings of higher consciousness induced by ingesting psychedelics are confirmed, it supports it. People experiencing epiphanies in everyday life appear to have moments of higher consciousness that are more readily acceptable. This study shows that they are remarkably similar. Both create the feeling of seeing a higher truth, of overwhelming compassion and understanding and frequently cause lasting and positive changes in those experiencing them. While some differences were observed, they seemed dwarfed by the similarities in the two groups. In summary, these similarities seem to add another piece of evidence that psychedelics can create the user to experience an actual higher state of consciousness.

The Association Between the Reported Subjective Effects and the Binding Affinity Profiles of Substituted Phenethylamines and Tryptamines

Finding out whether the similar effects of some psychedelics (such a strong feeling of a deepening of awareness) and medications with similar molecular structures are related is the aim of this research and the publication that follows. The inquiry concerns whether comparable drug classes connect to comparable proteins in different people's brains; this could explain why similar feelings arise. Alternatively, the study focuses on whether a distinct chemical structure explains widespread variations in perception. In conclusion, the study looks for a relationship between the molecular makeup and binding affinity of the medicines consumed and the range of psychedelic experiences. After doing several regression analyses on the data, it was shown that there is, in fact, a strong association between the user's experience and the way that the specific drug affects standard physical features in the users' brains. Research suggests that at least some of the experiences associated with particular psychedelics may be explained by the type of substance consumed:

The diversity of subjective effects elicited by different compounds has been attributed to the variables of “set” and “setting,” to the binding affinities for other 5-HT receptor subtypes, and to the heterogeneity of transduction pathways initiated by conformational receptor states as they interact with different ligands (“functional selectivity”). Here we investigate the complementary (i.e., not mutually exclusive) possibility that such variety is also related to the binding affinity for a range of neurotransmitters and monoamine transporters including (but not limited to) 5-HT receptors. (Zamberlan et al., 2018)

The investigation is trying to determine if psychedelic drugs can produce a heightened consciousness. This study investigates if there is a correlation between the shared experiences of psychedelics (feelings of heightened consciousness, for instance) and how different drugs, as defined by their molecular design, impact the brain physiologically. Since it was found that there is a correlation, it supports that the feeling of heightened consciousness may be a physiological reality and not just an empty feeling. In other words, if actual changes in brain activity cause feelings of heightened consciousness, it may be valid. While it is inconclusive because the physiological changes could produce a common feeling and not an authentic experience, it at least supports that something is changing in the brain. Furthermore, that genuine change helps rule out that the users do not merely invent heightened consciousness. It is at least one step closer to defining what is causing the experience.

Existential and Neuroscience Perspectives on The Therapeutic Journey

This study aims to offer a neuroscientific and existentialist explanation of the psychedelic experience. The goal in accepting this interpretation is to start using this knowledge to improve therapy. Gaining further insight into the psychedelic experience is the aim of this research in order to make it a valuable therapeutic tool. It concludes that psychedelics are remarkably effective in treating a variety of mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety. The conclusion is that ego and sense of self are the root of all suffering. Psychedelics can help heal mental illnesses by causing identity loss and ego death. It also finds that not only can it help with mental illnesses, but ego death can liberate anyone from humanity's conditioning. Losing this conditioning allows beings to be free and live completely at peace with all:

One of the complementary findings from therapeutic and brain scan studies is that diminution of the ego-related processes is one of the primary effects of psychedelics and that they may underlie the success of treatment. That the diminishment of self, either through confrontation with mortality or the experience of ego-death, is felt by many people to be a profound and enlightening experience suggests that it may be the very existence of the ego that causes suffering. This is supported by the observation that humans have found many ways to escape, forget, or expand the sense of self through alcohol, drugs, meditation, or the pursuit of extreme experiences. While self-awareness is an important evolutionary tool for communication and cooperation, the hyper-focus on oneself demanded by an individualist, consumerist culture may be the seed of suffering. (Seelig, 2017)

This is one of the investigations that delves the furthest into the topic of how psychedelics affect the way reality is perceived. Understanding psychedelic effects is its primary objective in order to facilitate therapeutic approaches. Much of the information could have been more helpful because the source focused mainly on the medical benefits. Despite this, the source kept providing a plethora of insightful information that was highly pertinent to our investigation. This source was essential to the research conducted. It advanced this investigation by providing abundant information related to the research question. In particular, the way psychedelics alter one's perception of reality.

Using Psychedelics to Answer Questions About Consciousness

The purpose of this source is to discuss common interpretations of the term "consciousness" in the context of psychedelics. It also considers a few brain-based models of psychedelic effects that have been connected to consciousness explanations. The use of psychedelics in this research aims to provide a deeper understanding and explanation of consciousness. It discusses the nature of consciousness and the relationship between it and psychedelics. The study aims to use psychedelics to answer the hard questions of consciousness, like explaining the existence of or biological basis of phenomenal consciousness. It also attempts to answer the more straightforward questions of consciousness, which involve relations between subjectivity, brain function, and behavior. It finds that through psychedelics, they were able to answer these easy questions but still could not reliably

answer the hard questions. They find that this knowledge could pave the way to answer the hard questions in the future:

One of the many reasons that the hard problem of consciousness is difficult (or maybe impossible) to scientifically address is that phenomenal consciousness cannot be observed directly by anyone other than a given conscious entity. This is referred to as “the problem of other minds” (Blackburn, 1994). To illustrate, the reader knows that she or he is conscious, but cannot be certain that anyone else is conscious. Strictly speaking, the best one can do is infer consciousness in others on the basis that others seem to be similar kinds of beings as oneself. This poses serious problems for the scientific method regarding consciousness. Even if it were possible to engineer the creation of consciousness (e.g., with artificial intelligence), it is unclear how one could prove whether consciousness had indeed been created. (Yaden et al., 2021)

This source provided information relating to part of the research question. That part is the effects of psychedelics on consciousness. What differentiated this source from others with similar purposes is that it looked deeper into what consciousness means. It found that consciousness cannot have one definition. The source attempts to resolve this issue using two interpretations of the question. One answered the difficult question, and the other answered the more straightforward question. This unique study method allowed this investigation to be more diverse in its sources.

Observations from LSD Research

The purpose of Stanislav Grof’s book *Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research* is to share his seventeen years of LSD research with psychiatric therapy. While he endeavors to share the benefits of treatment of various psychological conditions, he also shares his experiences with altered or heightened states of consciousness. He intends to generate responses and interest in continuing the research among the scientific community. Stanislav Grof’s book *Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research* is an account of his nearly two decades of research with treating patients with the hallucinogenic drug LSD. He begins by describing the controversy surrounding the drug and then summarizing the scientific basis for a new theoretical framework to continue research. He then summarizes his experiences with his therapy sessions. Next, he describes the influence of external and internal factors in the research, including the subject’s state of mind and whether it is in a laboratory or a nurturing setting. The final sections delve into the categorized experiences of the different patients. The categories range from “Perinatal and past life experiences” to “Temporal expansion of consciousness, Spatial expansion of consciousness, Spatial constriction of consciousness,” and finally, “Experiential extension beyond the framework of objective reality.”

In rare instances, an LSD subject can have the feeling that his consciousness has expanded to encompass the totality of life on this planet, including all humankind and the entirety of flora and fauna, from unicellular organisms to highly differentiated species. An individual can identify with the phylogenetic evolution of life in all its complexity and reach an intuitive understanding of the underlying biological laws. He can explore the factors that influence the origin of new species or are responsible for their extinction. (Grof, 2016)

The information in Dr. Grof’s book is both relevant and informative to the question of what effect psychedelics have on consciousness and people’s spiritual and metaphysical beliefs. Dr. Groff used “Many hundreds” of therapy session notes from patients on LSD to categorize and outline their varied experiences. In that process, he outlines over 25 categories and subcategories of experience, all of which entail deepened or altered states of consciousness. Some include experiencing oneself as a part of all creation or sharing the experience of another person, animal, or inorganic material. The more profound experiences involve interacting with other entities, including celestial beings or collective consciousness. Dr. Grof describes that most of these profound experiences are remembered by the patients and impact their spiritual beliefs, beliefs of the afterlife, and emotional well-being long after the sessions. These shifts persist for months or perhaps permanently. Dr. Grof notes that many beliefs and residual feelings persist as long as he stays in touch with the patients.

Psychotherapy and its Relation with Birth, Death, and Transcendence

The objective of Dr. Grof's *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death, and Transcendence in Psychotherapy* is, first, to definitively demonstrate that our present scientific worldview is inadequate to explain the extraordinary states of consciousness experienced through LSD and other means. Then, he proposes a new model of the human psyche that fits his findings, including new states of consciousness viewed as impossible by standard scientific models. Dr. Grof draws from his nearly 30 years of experience, over 3,000 therapy sessions with patients using LSD, and 2,000 more from colleagues to detail why the current scientific model and framework are inadequate to explain the results. He shares multiple examples of past life experiences and perinatal memories, later confirmed by pursuant research. He cites that these are particularly meaningful scientifically because of at least a limited means of verification of their veracity. He then shares multiple cases of similar, more "Outlandish" experiences as defined by our current scientific models that are less verifiable. He shares the everyday experiences of consciousness that transcend spatial and temporal boundaries, including experiencing the consciousness of inorganic material such as gold or the universe before our solar system was created. While not verifiable, Grof observes remarkable similarities in the experiences. Grof then offers a new model that can incorporate these phenomena and offers new interpretations of mental health and illness:

In transpersonal experiences that involve historical regression or transcendence of spatial barriers, it is thus not the content that is surprising, but the possibility of having a direct experience of, and conscious identification with, various aspects of the phenomenal world outside of us. Under normal circumstances, we would consider those to be entirely separate from us, and experientially inaccessible. With respect to lower animals, plants and inorganic materials we may also be surprised to find consciousness or awareness where we would not expect it. (Grof, 1985)

In this later work of Dr. Grof, he concludes, without a doubt, that hallucinogenics, particularly LSD, produce deepened and altogether transcendent states of consciousness. Drawing on over 5,000 sessions, he notes an overwhelming recurrence of common themes, including experiencing past lives, perinatal memories, and extending consciousness beyond the typical boundaries of the waking mind. Similar to his prior book, but with increased conviction and evidence, he includes a common theme of spiritual awareness and encounters with everything from a universal consciousness to gods of all faiths and times and even unique spiritual entities. While he acknowledges that these experiences of transcendental consciousness are scientifically unverifiable, he notes that they overwhelmingly have lasting impacts on the patients. Many change their view of the meaning of life and death and experience life in a more connected, interdependent way. Many develop or deepen their interest in spirituality. Further, spiritual matters play a significant, lasting role in their daily lives. This work indeed presents compelling evidence that hallucinogenics create profoundly altered states of consciousness in the people who use them and routinely create powerful and lasting spiritual insight.

Materials, Design & Methods

The investigation used a computer with an internet connection alongside an internet browser (Google Chrome and Opera). In order to find the sources required for this investigation, the Google Scholar and Ebsco Host search engines were paramount for pinpointing the necessary sources to elucidate the research question. Although the internet connection was unstable at times, it proved sufficient to conduct all the required constituents of this investigation. All of the sources were peer-reviewed and approved by the investigation mentor. There was a reading process for the summarizing approach as a delineated requirement. All these components working in tandem created the optimal conditions for the consummation of this project. This investigation utilized a qualitative research type. A documentary analysis design and a descriptive content analysis methodology were used to collect and conduct the bulk of information.

Results

The utilized search engines proved most beneficial for the selected sources of this investigation. One of the sources needed to be more recent, and it dealt with information regarding information on altered states of consciousness and mistakes to avoid when interpreting consciousness. The second source needed to be more recent. It discussed information regarding the question of whether psychedelics result in a higher state of consciousness. The third source was very recent. It explores the effects of psychedelics on metaphysical beliefs. The fourth source needed to be more recent; it studied the connection between brain entropy and different states of consciousness. The fifth source was recent; its goal is to compare non-psychedelic and psychedelic “god encounter experiences” to be able to understand each one better. The sixth source was not recent; It investigates the association between the reported subjective effects and the binding affinity profiles of substituted phenethylamines and tryptamines. The seventh source was not recent and dealt with information regarding existential and neuroscience perspectives on the therapeutic journey. The eighth source was very recent. It discussed information regarding using psychedelics to answer questions about consciousness. The ninth source was not recent. It explores Dr. Grof’s observations from LSD research. The tenth source was not recent; it studied psychotherapy and its relation with birth, death, and transcendence. Ebsco Host and Google Scholar proved to be effective in delimiting sources presented in this investigation. No external sources were needed to pinpoint the required sources. All of the sources provided were peer-reviewed.

Discussion

In one form or another, all of the sources used to perform this investigation were related to the main idea of how psychedelics affect the mind. Some focused on the physical aspects of psychedelics, like how brain chemistry and different psychedelics’ chemical makeup interact with each other. Others focused on more abstract topics like the effects psychedelics have on metaphysical beliefs, like one source that compared psychedelic-induced “god encounter experiences” with those same experiences induced by other means like being heavily religious. Other abstract topics covered were psychedelic’s effects on the mind’s perceptions of reality, their ability to change people’s outlook on life and death, or ego death and how it is the path to ending suffering. One source mainly focuses on ego death; it delineates how ego death can not only end suffering but allow one to connect with the universal consciousness and become at peace with and one with everything. Another source focused on laying out issues many investigators have when attempting to interpret or research about altered states of consciousness, like the psychedelic state of mind, and how to avoid these issues. While no source is perfect, all these sources helped answer this investigation’s research question.

Conclusion

The presented sources were able to elucidate the main idea of the sources, which is to present data from altered states of consciousness that should be considered in the interpretation of consciousness, and the main idea of source two, which is to determine whether psychedelics genuinely result in enhanced states of consciousness and if the idea that there are higher or lower states of consciousness is a correct way to think of it. Moreover, this investigation delineated the main idea of source three, which is to determine whether using psychedelic drugs can alter metaphysical beliefs over the long term. The investigation then studied the main ideas of sources four, five, and six, which are in number order, finding the connection between brain entropy and different states of consciousness, comparing non-psychedelic and psychedelic “god encounter experiences,” and exploring the association between the reported subjective effects and the binding affinity profiles of substituted phenethylamines and tryptamines. Finally, the investigation delved into the main ideas of sources seven, eight, nine, and

ten, which are in number order, finding existential and neuroscience perspectives on the therapeutic journey, using psychedelics to answer questions about consciousness, Dr. Grof's observations from LSD research, and psychotherapy and its relations with birth, death, and transcendence. The process revealed some limitations, which might be resolved by more investigation. The altered state of consciousness focused on by this investigation is the psychedelic state. Generally, it would have been beneficial if the sources could outline more information on the effect of psychedelics on people with different cultures and backgrounds. In a general sense, the sources were able to present a vignette on the effects of psychedelics on consciousness. For upcoming continuing research and data analysis, recommendations include securing more years of data and requesting more study resources. Ultimately, this investigation aimed to answer how psychedelics affect consciousness. Sources converged to provide an answer, which is that psychedelics affect consciousness by enhancing some brain functions and decreasing others; they can also affect people's metaphysical beliefs. These findings can help us better understand the effects of psychedelics on consciousness; this can help pave the way for neuroscientists and society to use psychedelics safely and healthily.

Limitations

For the investigation to come to fruition, the scope of the research question had to be more encompassing to find more information on the subject, which permitted the optimal conditions to answer the research question. If the original research question had not been changed, the essay would not have been written as well, given that the research question would have been challenging to complete. Having these new sources and a more suitable research question allowed the question to be answered well, with the articles covering all the questions. Because of this, the limitations did not arise from a lack of information but from many external variables. These external limitations wasted time that could have been used to improve this investigation. The most prevalent external limitation was that the computer used to find sources to answer the research question needed to be updated, making it difficult and tedious to conduct this investigation. The other limitation was that one of the search engines used (Ebsco host) censored many of its articles, making it very difficult to find usable information considering the topic of this investigation.

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