

Micro-dosing psychedelics as a plausible adjunct to psychosexual and couple's therapy: A qualitative insight.

Abstract

Background: Research has predominated among the therapeutic application of psychedelics for varied psychopathologies and yet remains limited when supporting sexual behaviour and intimacy among couples; particularly those who micro-dose. Method: Using semi-structured interviews, this qualitative study explored the micro-dosing sexual experiences of four partnered men and women aged 20-35 years. Interviews examined the effect of micro-dosing on confidence, openness, sexuality, inhibition and perceived relationship satisfaction. Results: Thematic analysis identified three key narratives: increased sexual self-efficacy; sexual exploration; and heightened relationship satisfaction. From the participant perspective, the use of micro-dosing psychedelics had a positive effect on sexual and physical well-being by reducing stress and performance-related anxiety. This in turn elevated sexual desire, exploration, communication and enhanced sensory and sexual experience, thus potentially supporting emotional and physical connection. In terms of erectile functioning and orgasm, participants attributed this to being micro-dose and psychedelic choice dependent. Whilst higher doses of ecstasy hindered sexual functioning this did not negatively impact the emotional and sensory experiences. Conclusion: These findings point to micro-dosing psychedelics as offering a potentially beneficial adjunct to psychosexual and couple's therapy; potentiating relationship and sexual satisfaction. Further research might wish to gravitate quantitatively towards a larger and varied micro-dosing populace in supporting sexual self-efficacy and intimacy.

Key words: psychedelics; micro-dosing; sex and couple therapy; relationship satisfaction; sexual wellbeing; thematic analysis.

Lay Summary

We wanted to explore micro-dosing among four couples who were engaged in psychosexual and couple therapy. Couples discussed how micro-dosing had reduced their performance anxiety and levels of stress, which in turn supported a deeper emotional connection. The couples in this study discussed increased sexual confidence, sexual exploration, and heightened relationship satisfaction whilst micro-dosing. They also discussed how orgasm and erectile functioning was sometimes micro-dose dependent. Higher levels of MDMA appeared to hinder sexual functioning and orgasm but did not negatively affect the physical

and emotional connection, which became heightened during micro-dosing. Micro-dosing might act as a useful adjunct to couple therapy, particularly since psychedelic therapy is becoming more available in the UK.

Introduction

Psychedelics are psychoactive substances which exert biopsychosocial and spiritual effects via serotonin 5HT_{2A} receptors (e.g. Johnson et al., 2018). The term psychedelic means 'mind manifesting', a term originally coined by Osmond in 1957 (Dyke, 2006). The use of classic psychedelics can produce changes in visual and auditory perceptions that can lead to changes in cognitive processing and altered states of consciousness (Nichols, 2016). Examples of classic psychedelic drugs include Mescaline, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), *N, N*-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) and Psilocybin (Baker, 2016), that have been applied to varied clinical presentations (e.g., Grob, et al., 2011).

The Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) regulates harmful drugs whereby psychedelics such as MDMA, LSD, DMT, and mushrooms are Class A drugs (Bradshaw, 1971). Psychedelic research is challenging in the resources needed, ethical considerations, study recruitment, and funding. There remain many obstacles when introducing psychedelic medicine into healthcare. However, this has not prohibited the application of psychedelics in therapeutic assisted research.

For example, LSD-assisted psychotherapy appears beneficial for participants in accessing 'intense emotional peak experiences' with access to emotions and the ability to confront psychopathologies with minimal side-effects (Gasser, Kirchner and Passie, 2014). Psychedelics have previously been found to enable realisation, awakening understanding to support the therapeutic process (Banbury and Lusher, 2015). Recent research has looked at the use of low micro doses of psychedelics to support well being including anxiety, depression and PTSD (Kaertner et al., 2021). 'Reddit micro-dosing community' has steadily increased to almost 130,000 members, up from only 1,600 members in 2015 (*/r/micro-dosing* subreddit, Reddit Inc, San Francisco, CA, USA). Micro-dosing tends to be used 2 to 3 times a week over several weeks with doses, ranging from 5 to 20 µg of LSD or 0.1–0.5 g of dried Psilocybin (Fadiman, 2011).

From a clinical and therapeutic perspective, there are arguably advantages to micro-dosing, as managing a full psychedelic experience takes resources and expertise, limiting its use

both financially and practically (Hutten et al, 2019). Some individuals may have had a bad experience of using classic psychedelics but still wish to use them in a more controlled manner.

Psychedelics have also been used to enhance the sexual experience. Gay et al (1982) found that psychedelics contain aphrodisiac qualities; increasing general experience and pleasure during sexual experience. Following a series of clinical trials, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) has proposed to introduce MDMA-assisted couple therapy into a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as an approved prescription treatment by 2023 (MAPS, 2021). MDMA allows the user to get closer to others as well as increase confidence, enabling relaxation and the ability to enjoy sex more. A study by Anderson (2017) examined the experiences of MDMA among 10 couples who reported heightened feelings of love and intimacy along with feelings of connection and safety during and post MDMA use. Part of this research targeted prior childhood sexual abuse/post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A further clinical couple case study by Wagner et al, (2018) explored couple-assisted MDMA therapy as an adjunct to cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in a small pilot trial. Outcomes included a reduction in PTSD symptoms and improvements in relationship satisfaction. Larger scale research including couples from varying socioeconomic and cultural ethnic backgrounds would be of interest.

Whilst there is a dearth of anecdotal reports on the use of classic psychedelics and sex, limited research has looked at the use of psychedelics in psychosexual healthcare. The few published studies that are available have suggested that the use of psychedelics increases sexual exploration, flourishing, and sexual connection (Giribaldi, 2020). A by-product of this would include sexual self-efficacy, which is the perceived control and confidence in one's capability to perform a given sexual outcome (Closson et al, 2018). This might include dialogue, communication performance, performance anxiety, and sexual exploration.

The present study has therefore aimed to investigate whether micro-dosing might support sexual wellbeing as an adjunct to psychosexual and couple therapy. It was anticipated that this study might supplement a better understanding of the effects of micro-dosing might have on sexual experience, looking closely at the effect on confidence, openness, sexuality, inhibitions, and satisfaction among microdosing couples.

Method

Design

Purposive sampling was employed to allow for the selection of participants who had knowledge and experience of psychedelics used alongside sexual experiences. Recruitment was carried out via an advertisement on the micro-dosing social media forum of Reddit and on an Instagram page. This qualitative study used one-to-one semi-structured interviews conducted over zoom. Since very little is known about micro-dosing and sex, semi-structured interviews provided an in-depth exploration into the topics which arose (Braun and Clarke., 2006).

Reflexivity was an avenue for qualitative objectivity. Willig (2014) states that reflexivity is important in qualitative research as reflection allows the researcher to analyse the ways in which they are implicated in the research and the research findings. The team was mindful of their influences and biases at every stage of the research (Berger, 2013) in order that the research is not written from the way we viewed the world.

Participants

The inclusion criteria included participants who were partnered, aged 18 years and above and both had micro-dosed psychedelics (at least one month prior to recruitment) and sexual intimacy during micro-dosing. Only one individual out of the couple participated in the study. All four participants (50% female, 50% male) were white, heterosexual, and aged 20-35 years residing in America, Europe, and the United Kingdom. Estimated micro-doses were between 5 to 20 µg of LSD or 0.1–0.5 g of dried Psilocybin, as supported by literature (e.g. Fadiman., 2011). This non-clinical cohort did not report any diagnostic mental health issues. All were assigned a pseudonym: Peter, Jack, Anna and Grace. Participant characteristics are presented in table 1. Any diagnostic labels voiced by participants were their own subjective interpretation.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Substance used	Main reason
Anna	Female	29	British	Psilocybin	sexual connection
Grace	Female	20	Polish	MDMA	communication
Jack	Male	35	American	LSD	sexual desire
Peter	Male	30	Spanish	MDMA	exploration

Materials

Briefing and consent forms were used prior to starting the interview and a debrief form was forwarded to each participant immediately following the interview. A distress protocol was kept available for the interviews but was not needed in this study.

An interview schedule with 14 key questions was developed. These included questions like 'What did the effect of micro-dosing have on your level of pleasure during the sexual experience?', 'What did the effect of micro-dosing have on your level of intimacy during sexual experience?' and 'What did the effect of micro-dosing have on your level of satisfaction during sexual experience?' Introductory questions were included to build rapport and open-ended questions were employed to allow for elaboration. Silence was used to encourage further disclosure and prompts (e.g., 'I see'; 'please tell me more') were incorporated to encourage further elaboration.

Procedure

In accordance with the BPS code of conduct and ethics for internet-mediated research (BPS., 2017) and following ethical approval from the University psychology Research Ethics Committee, an advertisement was placed in the Reddit Micro-dosing forum and on an Instagram page. Several replies were received, respondents were contacted asking for more information and why they would like to take part to gauge mental capacity to understand the research and ability to consent to take part. Four participants who met the inclusion criteria were recruited for the study having confirmed an absence of diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health issues, awareness of the study, and experience of the topic. Participants were then provided with a copy of the brief and consent forms. Once consent had been received, a mutual time to conduct each interview was agreed. Before commencing the interview, participants were verbally briefed, provided with an opportunity to ask questions and reminded to block their camera to protect their identity. Following this, the interview began and was audio-recorded. Interviews lasted 20-45 minutes and participants were fully debriefed at the end of each interview. All interviews were conducted via Zoom and audio recorded using an iPhone X Voice Memo Application.

Data were transcribed using Descript transcription software. Recordings were then played several times to enable immersion and closeness with the data (Fielden, Sillence and Little, 2011).

Data Analysis

Themes were identified in a flexible, inductive way using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to Thematic Analysis. The transcription was read many times to allow familiarity with the content and initial thoughts and codes were made on the data. The codes were studied and compared to identify themes within the data. Some codes became main narratives and others became developing narratives. Narratives without sufficient data to support them were abandoned (Fielden et al., 2011). Codes were generated based on what was felt to be relevant to the research question. Codes were studied and compared to identify themes within the dataset. Some codes became main narratives and others became developing narratives. Saturation had been reached when no new themes with codes had been identified where the final themes (main narratives) were finally constructed.

Results

With reference to table 2, the main narratives found were sexual self-efficacy; sexual exploration; and relationship satisfaction. The sub-narratives included increased sexual energy; reduced performance anxiety; sexual confidence; enhanced sexual experience; sexual connection; better communication; positive self-image; and mindfulness. These themes resonated among participants irrespective of the psychedelic drug being micro-dosed.

Table 2. Emerged themes

Main narrative	Sub-narrative	Illustrative quote
Sexual self-efficacy	Increased sexual energy	'I'm getting ready to finish and like, um, I speed up. I can go for a lot longer just because in like, without getting out of breath' Jack L117
	Reduced performance anxiety	'But, yeah, and I think more like intense feelings, I feel more relaxed, but probably the biggest one, like any form of anxiousness kind of goes away' Anna L68

	Sexual confidence	'it's nice that, you know, it's, uh, it gives you this feeling that you love everyone and stuff, and it gives you the feeling that you can be close with someone, but things just don't work. Too much MDMA and I can't get erections' Peter L40
Sexual exploration	Enhanced sexual experiences	'I guess the times we actually micro-dosed, um, (pause) the actual sex was, uh, more intense and enjoyable' Peter L91
	Sexual connection	'I wanted to also like spoon sex kind of thing, where it's like, but it's just like really intimate and close and like cuddly and not just like, like rabbit' Anna L271
Relationship satisfaction	Better communication	'We are more willing to get into like, A lot more deeper conversations and just, I don't know. It feels like it kind of brings us together a lot more' Jack L75
	Positive self-image	'I can kind of separate the negative eating disorder thoughts that I have. From what I actually think when I'm on mushrooms' Anna L91
	Sexual mindfulness	'(ecstasy) Just like really keeps you in the moment' Grace L111

Narrative Analysis

Main narrative 1 – Sexual self-efficacy

Sub-narrative 1.1 –*sexual energy*

An increase in energy was noted in three out of four interviews. Participants discussed it frequently during interviews, suggesting that it was an important factor in achieving a healthy sexual relationship for them and their partners. The energy gained from micro-dosing and how this enhanced opportunities for sex were discussed. This included both frequency and duration of the sexual act. For example, without micro-dosing, Jack suggested that when he would otherwise be too tired to engage in sex:

'...I dunno, like I'm getting ready to finish and like, um, I speed up. I can go for a lot longer just because like, without getting out of breath' Jack, Line 117.

Jack said that after a full day at his manual job, he still has the energy to have sex with his partner when micro-dosing, he describes not having the same energy and ability on days he has not micro-dosed. Grace corroborates, feeling very energetic from micro-dosing MDMA and sounded pleased with this. Indeed, participants expressed enthusiasm knowing that this was something to look forward to over the weekend with their partners. In many ways, it communicated stress release from daily living such as family and work. This was further echoed in the following sub-narrative.

Sub-narrative 1.2 – *Reduced performance anxiety*

A reduction in general anxiety was reported, as well as a reduction in the anxiety to perform during sex. Participants could relax with themselves and their partners, without feeling the need to prove anything to themselves or that partners regarding their sexual prowess. Anna made the comment below regarding general feelings of anxiety after micro-dosing mushrooms:

'But, yeah, and I think more like intense feelings, I feel more relaxed, but probably the biggest one, like any form of anxiousness kind of goes away'. Anna, L68.

Peter substantiated that micro-dosing LSD helps with social anxiety, stating that micro-dosing had enabled him to change his thought patterns and anxiety triggers by training his brain to think in a healthier way. New thoughts and realisations during micro-dosing lasted even after the effect had worn off, continuing the helping effect on his social anxiety.

Participants described feelings of being relaxed or chilled out after micro-dosing, with Jack

commenting that he felt 'sedated' after micro-dosing mushrooms, he also described feeling the opposite of this with LSD. Peter described feeling relaxed but not high after micro-dosing mushrooms and Anna describes her feelings as follows:

'It just feels like there's like a wave of calm that kind of like flushes down from your head to your toes'. Anna, Line 257.

Sub-narrative 1.3 – Sexual confidence

All participants discussed engaging with micro-dosing towards orgasm. However, participants also suggested that micro-dosing, on occasion, had prevented them from reaching orgasm or had caused problems. Peter commented with frustration:

'it's nice that, you know, it's, uh, it gives you this feeling that you love everyone and stuff, and it gives you the feeling that you can be close with someone, but things just don't work'. Peter, Line 40.

Peter noted that MDMA, especially if taken too much, made it difficult to get an erection, but this did not ruin the sexual experience as he suggested that he felt increased confidence, love, and bond with his partner despite not being able to get an erection. Grace reported sex being more immersive when micro-dosing but disappointingly described an inability to orgasm. Anna talked of "*feeling disconnected from her vagina during sex*" but said she still experienced pleasure and eventually had an orgasm. Whilst Jack described how LSD had made his existing problems with climaxing easier and micro-dosing had made it extremely easy to finish. The mixed sexual experiences here were dependent on dose, the type of psychedelic used, age and many other factors such as pre-existing difficulties. However, as a collective, participants expressed how they felt a heightened sensitivity towards touch and connection and waves of pleasure had been experienced. Participants described feelings of confidence towards having a better understanding of their sexual needs and desires, even if they did not reach orgasm. Whilst orgasm was important for these couples, the sexual experience itself went beyond orgasm and towards a deeper sexual connection. Indeed, the shift experience overall went from being goal-focused (orgasm as the goal) pre microdosing, to having a heightened sensory and emotional experience after microdosing. And with this, a sense of confidence ensued in their own sexual experimentation needs.

Main narrative 2 – Sexual exploration

Sub-narrative 2.1 – *Heightened sexual experiences*

Participants described how micro-dosing led to intense sexual experiences with their partners. Grace commented that both pleasure and sensitivity were more intense, both helping to enhance the sexual experience and to increase efficacy in exploration of the self and her partner.

'I guess the times we actually microdosed, um, (pause) the actual sex was, uh, more intense and enjoyable' Peter, Line 40.

Sub-narrative 2.2 – *Sexual connection*

All participants discussed the increased connection they had with their partners during and following microdosing. Anna illustrates how micro-dosing had led to sex where she wanted to feel close to her partner and not just to have penetrative sex. Anna's quote seemed like she is commenting on performance over the style and personal experiences of sex. A shift was made from being concerned about performance to please her partner, to enjoy the intimacy and closeness of the sexual moment. She described, with relief, how micro-dosing had brought about a change in her sexual behaviour as well as her partners, where both had engaged in other means of arousal and sexual satisfaction.

'I wanted to also like spoon sex kind of thing, where it's like, but it's just like really intimate and close and like cuddly and not just like, like rabbit' Anna, Line 271.

Peter commented shyly:

'Yeah, we did feel like a stronger connection, I think. Like, um, it's like it's just me and her in the world and that the moment between us is, uh, special' Peter, Line 61.

He also mentioned feeling 'like one' with his partner which increased their bond and brought them closer. Jack felt that he feels a deeper connection to his partner after micro-dosing and Anna, frequently mentions connectedness not only with her partner but having an awareness that she is a living breathing entity, with more connection to nature, like an awakening.

Main narrative 3 – *Relationship satisfaction*

Sub-narrative 3.1 – *Openness to experience and discourse*

As Peter said:

'I feel more open I guess, more open to, um, sharing my feelings' Peter, line 66.

This signifies that he finds it easier to get deep into his feelings and share them with his partner after micro-dosing. Anna, sounding excited, shared that she felt that her partner was more open to sharing his thoughts with her when he had micro-dosed and mentioned that she felt able, to be honest about how she felt without feeling bad. All participants reported this talkativeness or being chatty after micro-dosing in the sense that they had more confidence to share thoughts with their partners as well as other people. Jack said:

'We are more willing to get into like, a lot more deeper conversations and just, I don't know. It feels like it kind of brings us together a lot more' Jack, Line 75.

Open dialogue and communication had addressed conflict both sooner and with less angst suggesting that micro-dosing had supported their conflict resolution. Feelings became readily discussed supporting transparency of needs and overall satisfaction in the relationship.

Sub-narrative 3.2 –Positive self-image

The ability to have increased awareness of your own thoughts was important to Jack and Anna. Both felt the ability to analyse and challenge thought patterns which were problematic. Jack challenged thoughts related to his social anxiety disorder and Anna felt able to challenge her negative thought patterns surrounding her eating disorder and body image: *'I can kind of separate the negative eating disorder thoughts that I have. From what I actually think when I'm on mushrooms'* Anna, Line 91

Anna had sounded hesitant when sharing this, but she made it clear that the predominant reason for her micro-dosing was to tackle her eating disorder and negative sense of self, she mentioned retraining her brain when micro-dosing, with continuing effects on days she had not micro-dosed. She is more aware of her ability to change her thoughts and channel helpful thoughts instead of negative ones. Not too dissimilar to cognitive behavioural therapy she was attending. She identified the symbiotic relationship between counselling and micro-dosing. This had improved her confidence and efficacy during sex where the focus moved from the anxiety-provoking self and to the sexual experience.

Sub-narrative 3.3 –Sexual mindfulness

Participants talked of feeling more present in the moment after micro-dosing. Jack described how being in the present moment enabled him to push away feelings of self-doubt and insecurity. Peter had also discussed difficulties with sexual functioning and reaching orgasm, whereby '*spectatoring*' was evident in his sexual experiences. Sounding annoyed with herself, Grace said that her mind is always racing and micro-dosing MDMA allows her to focus on the present moment without her mind wandering off onto something else. This supported her focus on the sexual moment increasing the sexual experience.

General discussion

The aim of this study was to provide a qualitative lens to the potential effects of micro-dosing on confidence, openness, sexuality, inhibitions and overall judgment of relationship experience, and satisfaction. The main narratives identified in this study included increased sexual self-efficacy, sexual exploration, and heightened relationship satisfaction.

Sexual self-efficacy is an important concept in sexual health and behaviour and is part of Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). Social cognitive theory explains that perceived efficacy to exert control over threats and environmental demands causes stress (Bandura, 1986). This might include dialogue, communication performance and exploration. Sexual self-efficacy has previously been attributed to sexual health but now appears to be extending to body image and sexual behaviour and sexual dysfunction (e.g. Banbury et al., 2021).

This present study reflected on how the quality of sexual relationships based on micro-dosing had been heightened by maintaining sexual self-efficacy. This appeared to be enhanced by micro-dosing in several ways, through psychological and emotional benefits, such as increased sexual confidence, reduced performance anxiety and increased communication. According to the participants in this study, this enhanced both sensory and sexual experience. As higher sexual self-efficacy leads to a reduced risk of sexual problems and therefore higher relationship and sexual satisfaction, micro-dosing could promote sexual wellbeing through increasing it.

Participants in the present study discussed how micro-dosing had decreased their levels of performance anxiety and had heightened a positive sexual experience. Performance anxiety has been shown to be negatively correlated with sexual self-efficacy and sexual wellness (e.g. Banbury et al, 2021). The study by Grob and colleagues (2011) examined the potential therapeutic benefits of Psilocybin and found promising results for the treatment of anxiety

and depression when used alongside therapy. The findings suggest that the anti-anxiety effects of micro-dosing psychedelics could be of benefit in the treatment for anxiety related sexual performance issues and might assist in supporting sexual dysfunction (Banbury et al, 2021). In the present study, levels of confidence had increased to initiate the sexual act and as well as to explore different aspects of sexual being and sexual experience.

Our findings suggested that micro-dosing leads to greater feelings of intimacy and can enable a sexually satisfying relationship. Sexual dissatisfaction is a key reason why relationships dissolve (Sprecher, 1994) so micro-dosing leading to more enjoyable sex might support solidify a relationship by increasing sexual satisfaction towards climaxing (Impett et al, 2019). Penetrative sex is not the only way of sexual expression, physically affectionate behaviours, such as hugging, are just as important in maintaining sexual satisfaction (Hinchliff and Gott, 2008). A study of midlife individuals in five countries found that affectionate behaviours such as cuddling and touching increased sexual satisfaction, regardless of sexual frequency (Heiman, et al., 2010).

Those higher in sexual communal motivation felt higher sexual desire for their partner (Muise, Impett, Kogan, and Desmarais, 2013). Moreover, sexual giving is said to lead to more enjoyable sex, even with those who experience sexual dysfunction such as erectile and orgasmic difficulties; which is often the case with couples seeking sex therapy (Muise, Impett, Kogan and Desmarais, 2013). Participants in the current study stated that micro-dosing had provided a means of increasing an understanding of their own and their partner's sexual desires and needs, suggesting that this had supported sexual communal motivation. The couple's confidence appeared derived from the sexual connection achieved which sometimes went beyond orgasm.

The emotional connection between partners is what creates the bond in the relationship, helping couples to have long, successful relationships (Vannier and O'Sullivan, 2016). Feeling a human connection is vital for psychological and physical health and contributes to the experience of a meaningful life (O'Donnell et al, 2014). Sexual satisfaction can play a huge role in the quality of a relationship and despite this, couples can struggle with maintaining desire and having a sexually satisfying relationship (Impett, Muise, and Rosen, 2019).

One of the most common reasons for seeking relationship therapy is due to conflicts of interest regarding sex, with disagreements about frequency and differences in the sexual activities they wish to take part in (Impett, Muise and Rosen, 2019). An increase in

communication following micro-dosing was found in this study, suggesting that issues within a relationship, such as sexual expectations and goals, can be communicated easier. Participants felt that additional counselling support had provided sufficient insight to enhance the effects of the psychedelics. This study found that micro-dosing increases openness and discourse among participants in the present study, which could, in turn, support therapy.

The present findings support the conclusions of Gasser, et al., (2014) who stated that LSD enables awareness and reconstruction of an individual's world views. Self-awareness and can subsequently increase sexual satisfaction. Being in the present moment is the foundation of mindfulness (Shonin and Van Gordon, 2014). In a relationship, and even during a sexual experience, for some, it might be challenging to avoid thinking of past disagreements or hurt and worry about what the future may bring. Micro-dosing can help to increase sexual mindfulness, keeping the individual in the present moment, and enabling the individual to appreciate it for what it is. That is, it may increase the flow of the experience and reduce the potential for spectating (Banbury et al., 2021).

In relation to successful psychosexual and relationship therapy, the client is required to be able to effectively communicate, be open minded, and trust the therapist (Harrison, Hardy and Barkham, 2019). The shared micro-dosing experiences can enhance feelings of closeness supporting relationship connection (Gabb and Fink, 2015). Couples micro-dosing experiences became part of the things they enjoyed together.

This study was not without limitations. The sexual outcomes of microdosing psychedelics among a small sample cannot be generalizable to the wider microdosing community. Providing access to psychedelics, for the purposes of micro-dosing in a therapeutic setting, runs the risk that they may be taken in large doses. In large doses, psychedelics can lead to psychologically difficult or challenging experiences (Reiff, et al., 2020). Take this study outcome "side effects in the sense that" a higher dose of the psychedelic substance came with un-welcome effects, such as a racing heart or higher anxiety. This supports the work of Fadiman (2011), who described how higher doses can lead to a bad trip. A larger sample of participants would have offered a fuller appreciation of the different effects of the psychedelic drugs used. There were differences in sexual ability after micro-dosing across participants, it would therefore have been interesting to see if this is generally the case with one psychedelic compared to another. Another limitation of this study was the lack of diversity within the sample. All participants were white English, European or American; a larger sample size would have enabled more diversity in the participants. As stated, the couples were all partnered with those who also micro-dosed but did not participate as a couple.

Therefore, responses are based on an individual's interpretation of their sexual and emotional experiences of micro-dosing.

Whilst this study identified that micro-dosing improves energy, mood, stress and relationships (Szigeti et al., 2021), it did not include a placebo control. There was also uncertainty over the correct dose, purity, and substances used as the participants had micro-dosed at least a month prior to participation outside of a clinical setting. Future research needs rigorous placebo-controlled investigations to validate qualitative reports. Future research might also wish to focus on how micro-dosing psychedelics might support specific sexual dysfunctions.

The present study findings also suggest that micro-dosing psychedelics could be used successfully alongside psychosexual or couples therapy to promote sexual wellbeing. There is increased recognition of the potential therapeutic benefits of psychedelics, with psychedelic therapy clinics gradually beginning to emerge. However, counsellors must be specialised in psychosexual and couple therapy along with psychedelic training, where the latter is restricted to few training places in the world. The use of some psychedelics may be better placed for emotional connectivity and sexual enhancement compared to others. It is also down to the personal choice of the client along with the understanding and training of the clinician.

In conclusion, the couples in this study brought their experiences into the counselling arena to support couple therapy and they expressed how the use of psychedelics had supported their connectivity with their partners. This included increased sexual self-efficacy, sexual exploration, and heightened relationship satisfaction. These findings might suggest that microdosing has made a positive improvement to their sexual wellness. It is hoped that the findings from this research will prompt larger scale studies with diverse populations to offer additional confirmatory evidence for the use of micro-dosing psychedelics as a plausible adjunct to psychosexual and couple's therapy and to prompt systemic change.

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