

University of Victoria

Pereptions of Psychedelics: University Students' Attitudes and Motives for Psilocybin Use

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Background

Attitudes

- Attitudes inform individual substance use and can help direct broader social policy, harm reduction, and education efforts.¹
- Scarce literature has explored the public's attitudes toward recreational psilocybin use and psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy (PAT).

Motivations

- Motives are a highly influential force in substance use and may vary depending on the substance or dose being used.^{2,3}
- Little research has compared motives for microdosing (0.1–0.5g) and macrodosing psilocybin (1–4g).

Hypotheses

1. Psilocybin users will have different attitudes than non-users
2. Motivations will differ for microdose and macrodose psilocybin use.

Methods

Participants

- Students (N=491) from the University of Victoria undergraduate psychology research pool consisting of 134 psilocybin users and 357 non-users.

Measures

- Attitudes on Psychedelics Questionnaire (APQ).⁴
- Marijuana Motives Measure (MMM).⁵
- Qualitative questions queried attitudes towards recreational and therapeutic psilocybin use, and motives for initiating and continuing microdose and macrodose psilocybin use.

Analysis Plan

- We conducted a two-tailed between-groups MANOVA to examine attitudes of psilocybin users and non-users on the adapted APQ.
- An additional two-tailed between-groups MANOVA was conducted to assess the difference between microdose and full-dose user scores on the adapted MMM.
- Thematic analysis was used to explore themes in our qualitative data.

Results

Attitudes

There is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of psilocybin users and non-users.

Figure 1

Mean APQ Scores for Psilocybin Users and Non-Users

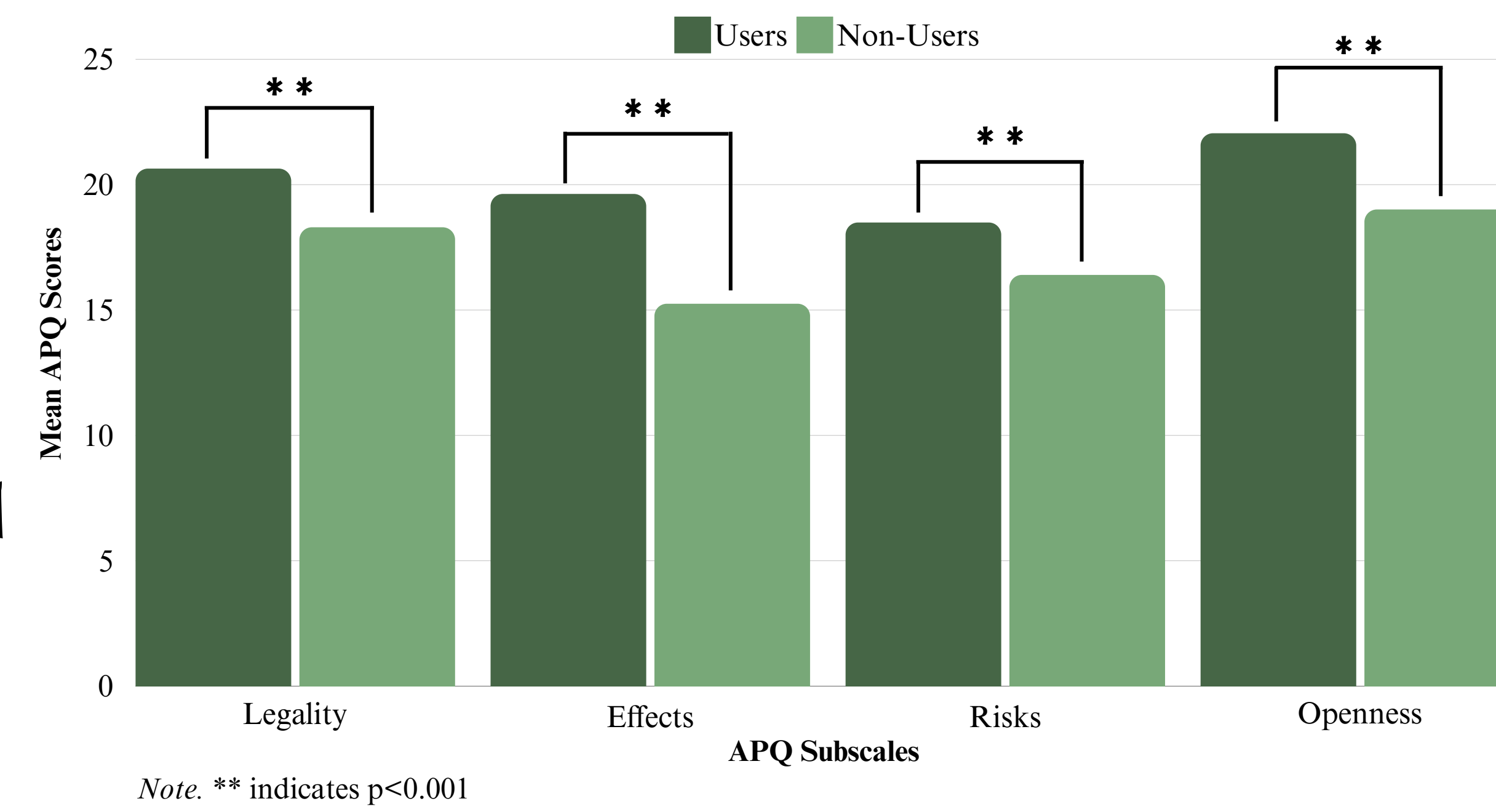
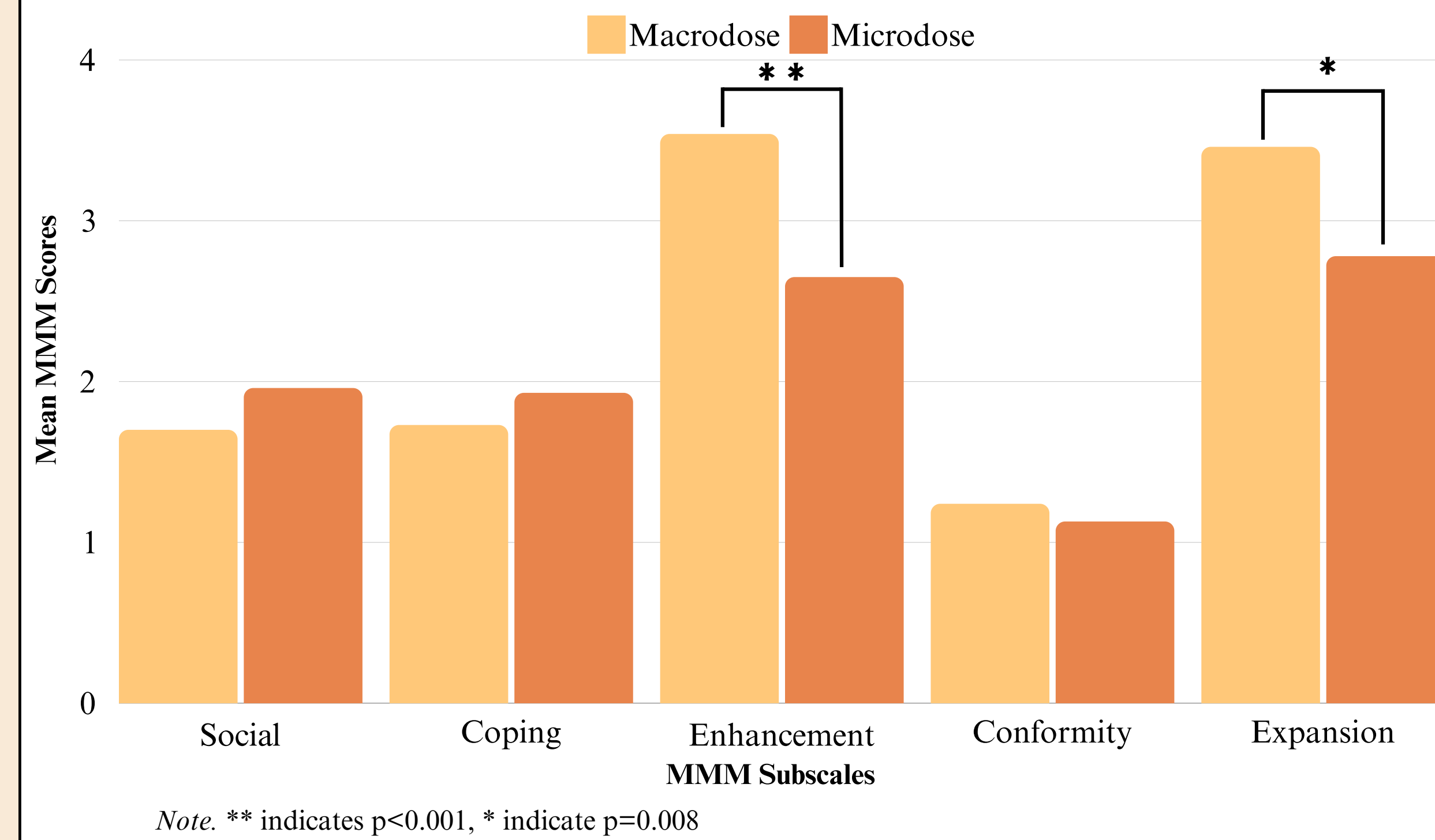


Figure 2

Mean MMM Scores for Macrodose and Microdose Users



Motives

There is a statistically significant difference between motivations for macrodosing and microdosing psilocybin.



There's a need for more education and research about psilocybin

Education: "I think the topic... can be a bit scary, just because I am not very informed and cultured around it. But if people were to educate us more on it, I would be all for it"

Research: "[It] could be useful and should be more invested in various research forms by the government"

People commonly initiate microdose use for therapeutic reasons

"I heard it had positive effects on the brain, especially in regards to reducing anxiety. I wanted to microdose along with meditation in an effort to become more calm."

People have more positive attitudes towards PAT than recreational use

Recreational: "I think it should be illegal considering the bad trips it can cause and the potential substance abuse"

Therapeutic: "I think its a great idea, no different [than] any other prescription drug besides it actually comes [from] the earth"

People are conditionally accepting of PAT and recreational use

"I think if it's moderately controlled and you prepare with a trip sitter and a good environment and mindset, and you are careful about where the drug is coming from then it is perfectly fine to use it in moderation"

Motives for initiating can differ from motives for continued use

Initiating: "Curiosity"

Continuing: "It gave me some valuable insights and allowed me to look inward and find a sense of peace and meaning"

Qualitative Themes

Additional Themes

Attitudes

- Participants perceive many benefits of psilocybin use while also being aware of potential risks.
- The majority of respondents who mentioned legal status support the legalization of psilocybin and PAT.

Motives

- The most common reasons for initiating psilocybin use are fun, curiosity, and social motives.
- Some discontinued microdose use because they did not experience any positive effects.

Discussion

Conclusions

- Psilocybin users had more positive attitudes towards psilocybin use than non-users.
- Respondents had more favourable attitudes towards PAT than recreational psilocybin use.
- Motivations differ for microdose and macrodose users, with macrodose users endorsing higher expansion and enhancement motives.
- Therapeutic motives are more often endorsed by microdose users.

Limitations

- Our sample consisted of university students with largely homogenous demographics.
- Respondents self-reported psilocybin use and preferred dosage.

Implications

- The majority of participants had positive attitudes towards psilocybin use, which could help inform public policy (e.g., legality), and provides evidence for the acceptability of PAT.
- There is a need for more education and research on psilocybin use.

References & Supplementary Materials



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