THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY IN PSYCHEDELIC EFFECT ON DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

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Psychological flexibility has been identified as a potential mechanism of change underlying the therapeutic benefit of psychedelics for individuals with depressive symptoms.

INTRO

- Recent research suggests a potential synergism between acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and psychedelic-assisted therapy.  
- Meta-analyses of individuals with mood disorders suggest utility of psychedelics in reducing depressive symptoms.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- Qualitative analyses identify psychological flexibility as a mediator of psychedelics' therapeutic effect on depressive symptoms.
- Psychological flexibility may function as a mechanism underlying the improvements in depressive symptoms observed post-psychedelic use.
- Current review is limited by inconsistencies in constructs (e.g., experiential avoidance decreases used as a proxy for psychological flexibility increases). Further research is needed to identify specific components of psychological flexibility associated with psychedelic use outcomes.
- Findings support ACT as a viable candidate for integration with psychedelic-assisted therapy.

Authors, year | Study design | Study purpose | Primary outcome measures | Psychological flexibility identified as potential mediator or mechanism
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Zelten et al., 2020 | Prospective cohort study | Explored the relationship between alterations in experiential avoidance and therapeutic outcomes resulting from psychedelic use | BEAQ, AAQ-II, MADRS, QUIIDS | Yes; mechanism
Davis et al., 2019 | Cross-sectional survey study | Investigated psychological flexibility as a mediator of acute psychedelic experiences' impact on anxiety and depression | AAQ-II, DASS-21 | Yes; mediator
Close et al., 2020 | Prospective web-based survey | Examined alterations in psychological flexibility following psychedelic experiences | AAQ-II, QUIIDS | Yes; mechanism
Mans et al., 2021 | Naturalistic observation study | Reanalyzed data relevant to the impact of psychedelic use on various facets of well-being | AAQ-II, QUIIDS-SR | No explicit discussion
Zelten et al., 2023 | Secondary analysis of RCT data | Examined pre-existing data to assess decreases in experiential avoidance as a mechanism underlying the therapeutic effects of psilocybin-assisted therapy | BEAQ, MADRS, QUIIDS-SR-16 | Yes; mechanism
Davis et al., 2020 | Retrospective self-report survey study | Investigated the impact of a multimodal clinical psychedelic program on mental health outcomes | AAQ-II, PHQ-9 | Yes; mediator
Davis et al., 2023 | Clinical chart review study | Further evaluated the effectiveness of protocol outlined in Davis et al. (2020) | AAQ-II, PHQ-2 | Yes; mediator
Xin et al., 2023 | Secondary analysis of a prospective chart review study | Built upon Davis et al. (2023). Assessed psychological flexibility as a mediator in intervention effect on mental health outcomes | AAQ-II, PHQ-2 | Yes; mediator

REFERENCES