



Prevalence, patterns, and predictors of psychedelics use connected with meditation practice in the Poland general population



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INTRODUCTION

One of the essential purposes of using psychedelics over the millennia was to obtain higher spiritual experiences by enhancing or accelerating the appearance of the effects of meditation. There are neurophysiological overlaps between psychedelic and meditative states. Still, there is limited information on the characteristics of individuals who use it and how exposure to psychedelics might be associated with meditation-related variables. This study aimed to investigate the prevalence, patterns, and predictors of psychedelic use connected with meditation practice in the Poland general population.

METHODS

The survey was conducted on an Ariadna panel on a nationwide sample of people (N=1051) from December 30, 2022, to January 2, 2023. Quotas matched according to representation in the population of Poles aged 18 and over for gender, age, and size of the locality of residence. We assessed lifetime classic psychedelic use and exposure to meditation in a representative sample. Chi² and Cramer's ϕ tests are used.

RESULTS

The results showed that Poles, regardless of gender, locality of residence, political beliefs, and orientation, are hostile toward using psychedelics. An exception is young people (most 18-25 years old) having primary and high education, having a mandate or being students, cohabitating and without children who are indifferent toward using psychedelics.

The results show that 12,4% of the Polish population (about 2.3 million) have used psychedelics. Lifetime psychedelic users were more likely to be male, younger (25-34 years old), coming from large cities, with primary education, students, cohabitating, without children, practicing meditation, having conservative political beliefs, and having centrist party orientation (Table 1.).

Meditators showed ambivalent attitudes toward using psychedelics, except for yoga practitioners, who had a negative attitude toward using psychedelics. It turns out that 12.2% of meditators (lifetime and past 12 months) and 31,6% practiced formal meditation take psychedelics (Table 2.). These subjects practice meditation most often, several times daily, or once a month.

Yoga practitioners take psychedelics slightly less than practitioners of other meditation techniques (lifetime – 8.6%; past 12 months – 10.7%) (Table 3.). These subjects practice yoga, most often daily.

Table 1. Comparison of lifetime psychedelic use (in percent) by selected user characteristics (χ^2 significant in gender $p<.001$ $\phi=.11$; age $p=.006$ $\phi=.12$; residence $p=.020$ $\phi=.10$)

Characteristics	N	Yes	No	Diff
Gender				
Female	563	3.6	96.4	<.001
Male	488	8.8	91.2	<.001
Age				
18-24	125	6.4	93.6	<.001
25-34	217	11.1	88.9	<.001
35-44	168	6.0	94.0	<.001
45-54	194	4.6	95.4	<.001
55 and above	347	3.5	96.5	<.001
Residence				
Rural	395	5.8	94.2	<.001
Small town	137	5.8	94.2	<.001
Medium town	205	4.9	95.1	<.001
Large town	182	3.3	96.7	<.001
Large city	132	12.1	87.9	<.001

Table 2. Psychedelic use lifetime (in percent) and meditation (χ^2 significant only in Meditation lifetime $p<.001$ $\phi=.11$ and Formal practices $p=.006$ $\phi=.23$)

Characteristics	N	Yes	No	Diff
Meditation lifetime				
Yes	148	12.2	87.8	<.001
No	903	5.0	95.0	<.001
Meditation past 12 month				
Yes	82	12.2	87.8	<.001
No	67	11.9	88.1	<.001
Meditation frequency				
Several times daily	6	33.3	66.7	n.s.
Ones daily	9	0.0	100.0	n.s.
5-6 a week	6	16.7	83.3	n.s.
2-3 a week	14	0.0	100.0	n.s.
Ones a week	9	22.2	77.8	n.s.
2-3 a month	9	22.2	77.8	n.s.
Ones a month	9	33.3	66.7	n.s.
Ones every 2-3 month	11	0.0	100.0	n.s.
Rarely	9	0.0	100.0	n.s.
Formal				
Yes	19	31.6	68.4	n.s.
No	129	9.3	90.7	<.001

Table 3. Psychedelic use lifetime (in percent) and yoga (n.s.) (χ^2 nonsignificant)

Characteristics	N	Yes	No	Diff
Yoga lifetime				
Yes	209	8.6	91.4	<.001
No	842	5.3	94.7	<.001
Yoga past 12 month				
Yes	131	10.7	89.3	<.001
No	78	5.1	94.9	<.001
Yoga frequency				
Several times daily	4	25.0	75.0	n.s.
Ones daily	12	33.3	66.7	n.s.
5-6 a week	8	25.0	75.0	n.s.
2-3 a week	24	12.5	87.5	.003
Ones a week	28	7.1	92.9	<.001
2-3 a month	16	0.0	100.0	n.s.
Ones a month	15	13.3	86.7	.024
Ones every 2-3 month	13	0.0	100.0	n.s.
Rarely	11	0.0	100.0	n.s.

Characteristics of psychedelic use in Poland:

Polish adults take psychedelics generally because of curiosity (most of them), of the possibility of expanding their mind's capacity (especially adults from the large city), developing well-being (especially employees), or reducing stress (especially business people).

The vast majority of Polish adults take LSD, mainly aged 18-24 (50%) and 45-54 (60%), with primary (60%), secondary (29%), and higher (31%) education. A somewhat smaller number of subjects take hallucinogenic mushrooms, especially subjects aged 45-54 and over 50, from a large town, with primary education and unemployed. Business people mainly take mescaline, and other psychedelics are used to a small extent.

Most subjects (30%-75%) take psychedelics, most often one to two times a day. A somewhat smaller number of subjects take them 3-5 times (especially aged 35-44) and 6-10 (aged 45-54). People with primary education (30%) and unemployed (40%) are most likely to take drugs (over ten times).

Psychedelic experiences

Psychedelic use experiences were for users most often difficult to determine (males, from all kinds of residence and education). For some people was pleasant (generally only for females and youth aged 18-25) and for other very unpleasant (for subjects aged 45-54 with primary education). The use of psychedelics has generally not affected respondents' lives. The exception is people with primary education, for whom the use of psychedelics has caused adverse effects (30%).

CONCLUSIONS

Most active in taking psychedelics are meditators who practice formal meditation (31,6%), followed by those who practice mindfulness and other similar techniques (12.2%) and least by those who practice yoga (lifetime – 8.6%; past 12 months – 10.7%).

These results support the potential synergy between meditation and psychedelic intake in the Polish population, especially when practicing formal meditation. However, randomized controlled trials are necessary to establish safety and evaluate potential causal relationships.

LIMITATIONS

The data were drawn from a cross-sectional survey; as such, the results can only suggest association, not causation. The survey is collected by self-report and as such is at risk of recall bias or measurement error.

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