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DMT-ENHANCED MEDITATION AND SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE. A RANDOMIZED PLACEBO-CONTROLLED STUDY OF MEDITATORS' RESPONSE TO DMT DURING A MEDITATION RETREAT

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Grant 333/20

Background: In recent years, both meditation and psychedelics have attracted rapidly increasing scientific interest, enacting growing evidence of their respective therapeutic potential. Recent research has started to target the similarities of meditation and psychedelics, their complementary differences, and their potential synergies in promoting well-being. While the current state of evidence suggests the promising potential of psychedelics to enhance meditative training, it remains equivocal whether these effects are specifically bound to psilocybin or if there are other classic psychedelics that might be more compatible with meditation practice. One particularly promising candidate is N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), a psychotropic alkaloid from the Amazonian plant medicine “ayahuasca”.

Aims: This project aims to investigate the effect of the psychedelic substance DMT, combined with the MAO inhibitor harmine, on meditation in comparison to meditation with a placebo. This exploration occurs within the context of meditators participating in a meditation group retreat.

Method: Participants, 40 experienced meditators (18 female, 22 male), participated in one of two 3-day meditation retreats, receiving in a double-blind manner either placebo or DMT combined with harmine. Participants' levels of mindfulness, compassion, insight, and transcendence were assessed, using psychometric questionnaires before, during, and after the meditation group retreat. The significance threshold was set at 0.05 and adjusted for multiple testing using Bonferroni corrections in post-hoc analyses.

Preliminary results: Compared to meditation with a placebo, meditators who received DMT and harmine self-attributed greater levels of mystical-type experiences, non-dual awareness, and emotional breakthrough during the acute substance effects and, if corrected for baseline differences, greater psychological insight one day later. Mindfulness and compassion were not significantly different in the DMT-harmine group compared to placebo. At 1-month follow-up, the meditators who received DMT and harmine rated their experience as substantially more personally meaningful, spiritually significant, and well-being-enhancing than the meditators who received placebo. This study contributes novel evidence highlighting the potential meditation-enhancing effects of the psychedelic compound DMT combined with harmine.

Keywords: Meditation, Psychedelics, DMT, Mindfulness

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