

Perceived Risks of Using Psychedelics in Individuals with Substance Use and Psychiatric Disorders

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Background

- Psychedelics may be promising treatments for SUD.¹
- Research to understand the acceptability of psychedelics by individuals with SUD and psychiatric disorders is limited.²
- Despite their promise, psychedelics have the potential to cause significant harm especially to those individuals with risk factors such as bipolar and psychotic disorders.³
- Patients may have concerns including risk for addiction, increased risk of relapse and other adverse effects.
- Knowledge about the beliefs and perceptions of individuals with AUD, OUD, and psychiatric disorders towards psychedelics may help inform implementation efforts.

Aims

- 1) Assess use of psychedelics for among patients with psychiatric disorders with and without SUD
- 2) Characterize their perceptions of risk and treatment acceptability of psychedelics as treatments for SUD or psychiatric disorders.

Study design

- Anonymous online survey lasting 15-20 minutes
 - Inclusion criteria: Age >18 years, English-speaking, has a diagnosis of AUD, OUD, or a psychiatric disorder.
 - Recruited using online advertisement and emails
 - \$10 gift card compensation
- Online survey collected the following information:
- Demographics: Age, Sex, Gender, Ethnicity and Race, Education, Living situation, Insurance
 - Substance Use: Treatment and substance use history, Awareness of psychedelics as substances and treatments, Perceived risks/harms and acceptability of psychedelics, AA/NA attendance, Spirituality

Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics summarized the results
- Analyses were stratified by whether participants supported or did not support psychedelics as treatment for SUD or psychiatric disorders (Figures 3-4)

Quantitative findings

- A total of 191 individuals completed the survey
- Mean Age= 45.1 [14.3]; 62.8% Female; 86.9% White; 9.4% Black; 6.8% Asian; 1.6% Native American; 3.7% Other

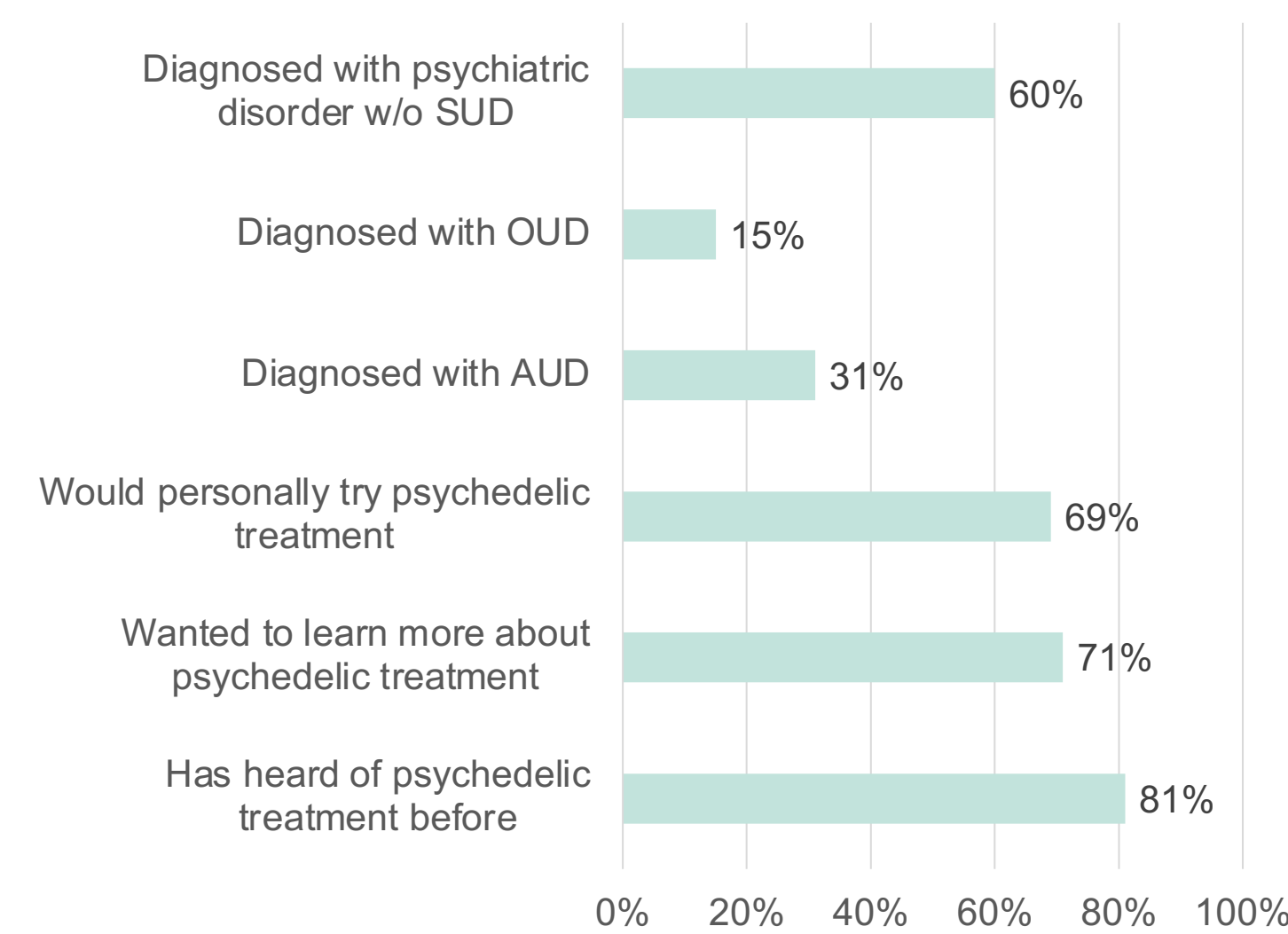


Figure 1. Characteristics of the 191 participants surveyed

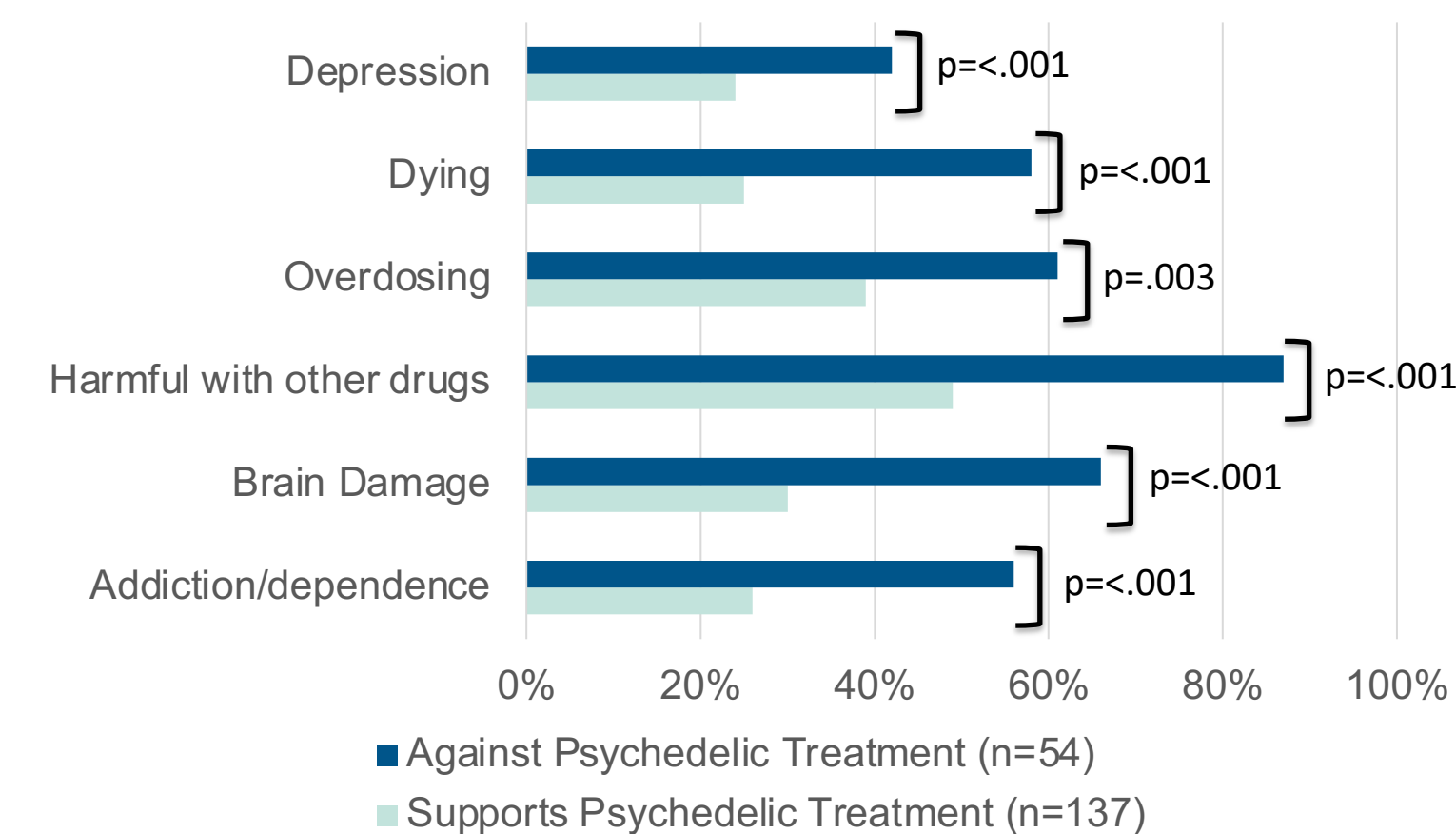


Figure 3. Risks that participants associated with using psychedelics, stratified by whether they supported psychedelic treatment for SUD or psychiatric disorders. Individuals who were against psychedelic treatment were more likely to think psychedelics could cause depression (p<.001), death (p<.001), overdosing (p=.003), harmful interactions with other drugs (p<.001), brain damage (p<.001), or addiction/dependence (p<.001)

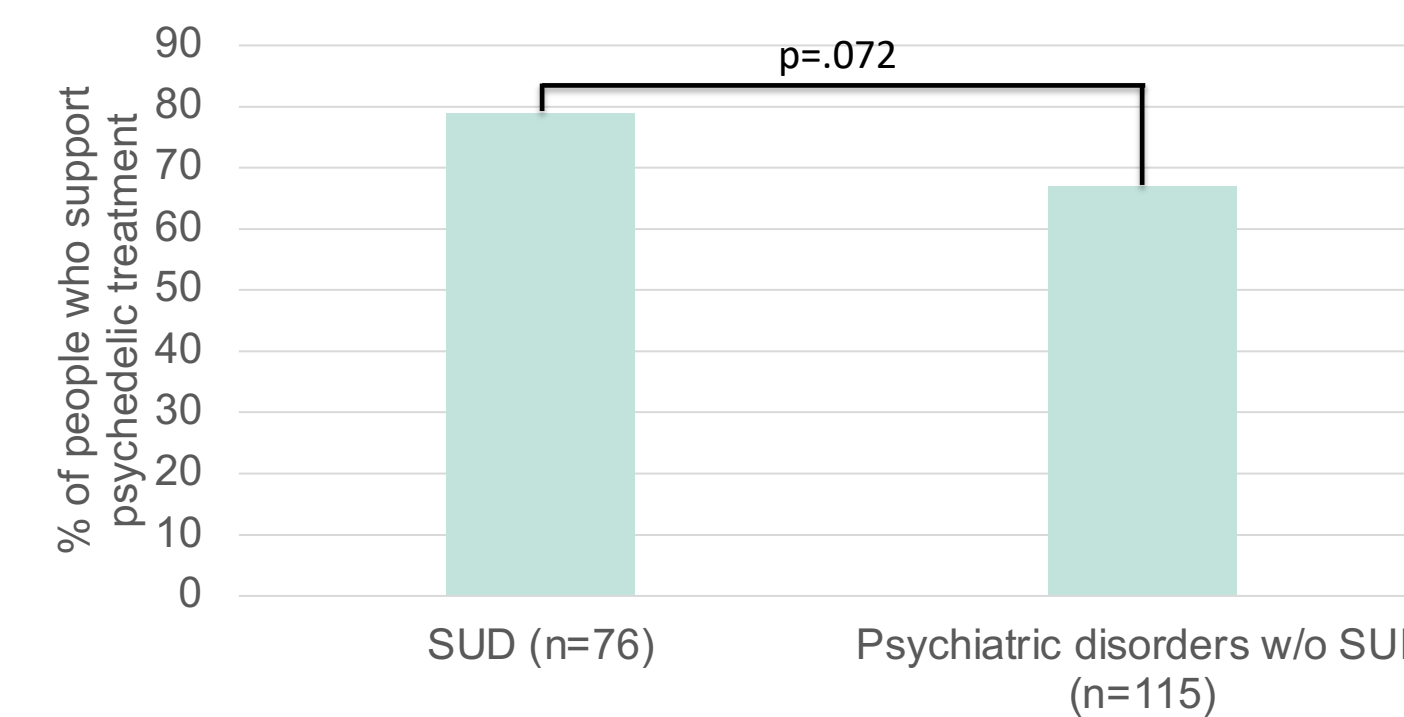


Figure 2. Percent of individuals who supported psychedelic treatment, stratified by whether they were diagnosed with an SUD or a psychiatric disorder w/o SUD. There was no significant difference in psychedelic treatment support between individuals who had SUD and individuals who had psychiatric disorders w/o SUD (p=.072)

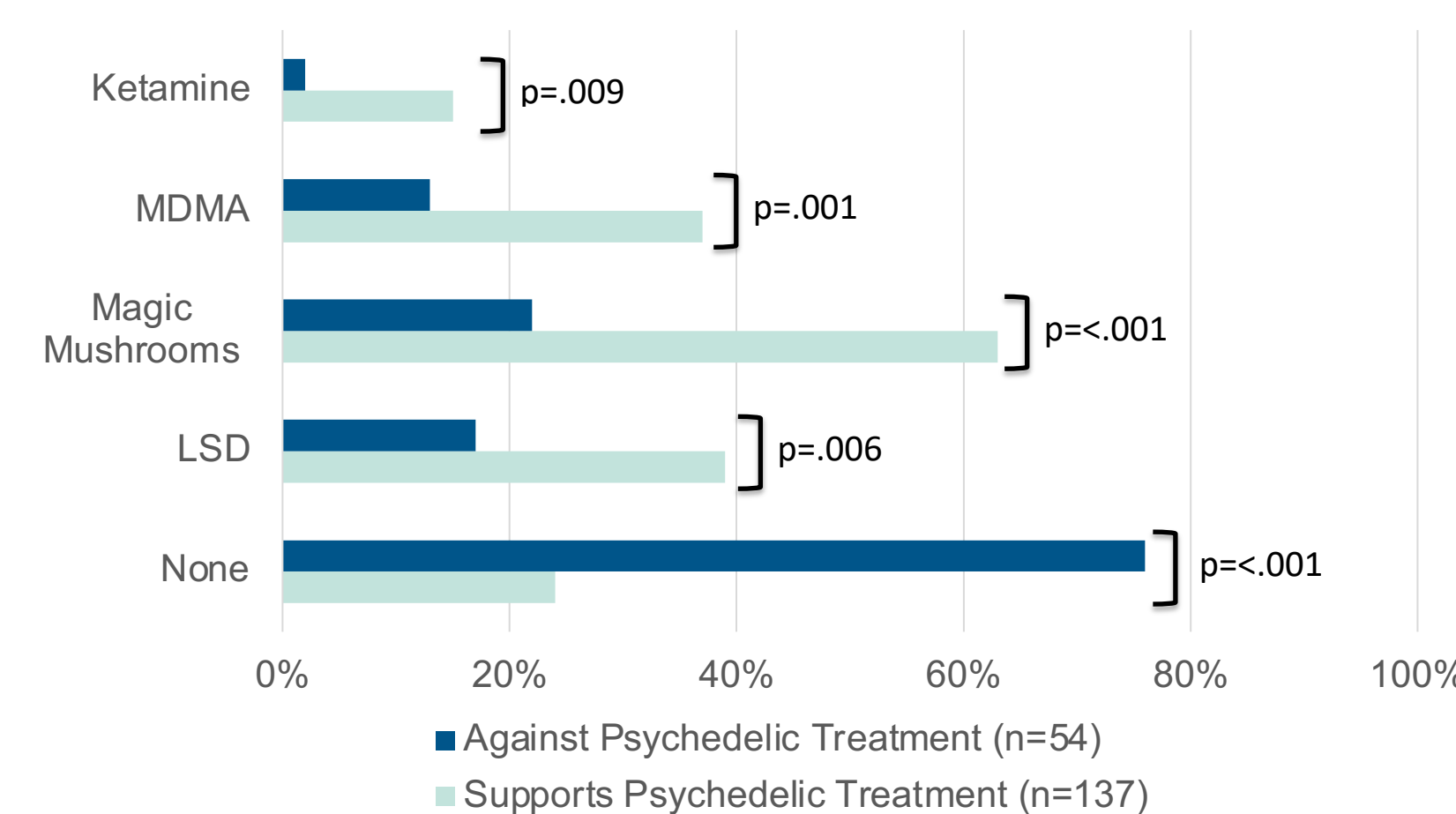


Figure 4. Percent of individuals who reported using certain psychedelic substances, stratified by whether they supported psychedelic treatment for SUD or psychiatric disorders. Individuals who supported psychedelics as a treatment were more likely to have used ketamine (p=.009), MDMA (p=.001), magic mushrooms (p<.001), LSD (p=.006). People who had never used a psychedelic were significantly less likely to support psychedelic treatment (p<.001)

Key terms

OUD = Opioid use disorder
AUD = Alcohol use disorder
SUD = Substance use disorder
AA = Alcoholics Anonymous
NA = Narcotics Anonymous

Discussion

- Psychedelics appear to be generally acceptable as treatments to individuals with SUD and other psychiatric disorders.
- Yet, participants also harbored concerns for their safety including causing depression, addiction/dependence, brain damage, harmful interactions with other drugs, overdosing, and death.
- Future efforts could focus on exploring adverse events related to psychedelics and educating patients on the safety and risks of using psychedelics.
- Additional research could further explore use of psychedelics on AUD, OUD, and psychiatric conditions.
- Limitations include the mostly white respondents, the cross-sectional nature of the survey that preclude any determination of causality, and the difficulty teasing out the opinions for different psychedelics (i.e. ketamine vs psilocybin).
- More research is needed to better understand the patients' perspectives on this emerging new class of treatments.

References

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Authors and Disclosures

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A. Nothing to disclose