



# **Altered State?**

**An exploration of the views of psychotherapists  
in Ireland towards the therapeutic  
use of psychedelic substances**

**Presented by Niamh O'Sullivan**



# Background

- **Definitions**
- **Human History**
- **Research**
- **War on Drugs**
- **Renaissance**
- **Psychedelic Therapy**
- **Ireland**



# Literature

## Review

- Limited literature worldwide
- Dearth of qualitative reports
- No Irish studies found
- Seven studies reviewed (U.S./U.K.)
- Literature Review Themes:

1. Potential
2. Concerns
3. Information
4. Personal Use
5. Client Use/Requests
6. Demographics

## Study Rationale

- Therapy Central to PAT
- Little research on views
- No views of Irish therapists
- Dearth of qual studies

## Aims & Objectives

- Gather views of therapists
- Gather views of therapists in Ireland
- Gather qualitative data

# METHODOLOGY

**CONSTRUCTIVIST EPISTEMOLOGY**

**QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGICAL  
APPROACH**

**PURPOSIVE & SNOWBALL  
SAMPLING**

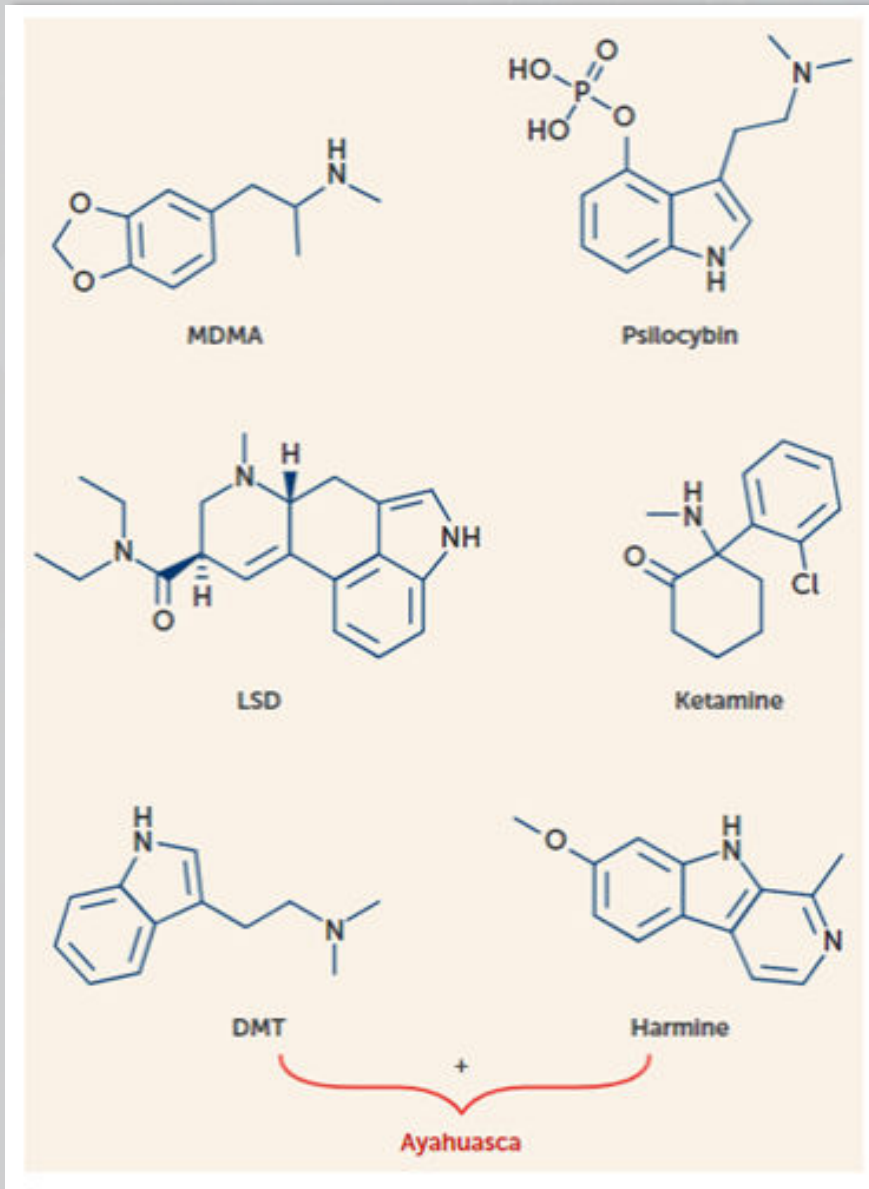
**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW AS  
DATA COLLECTION**

**THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS**

**DATA PROTECTION & STORAGE**

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**MITIGATE BIAS**

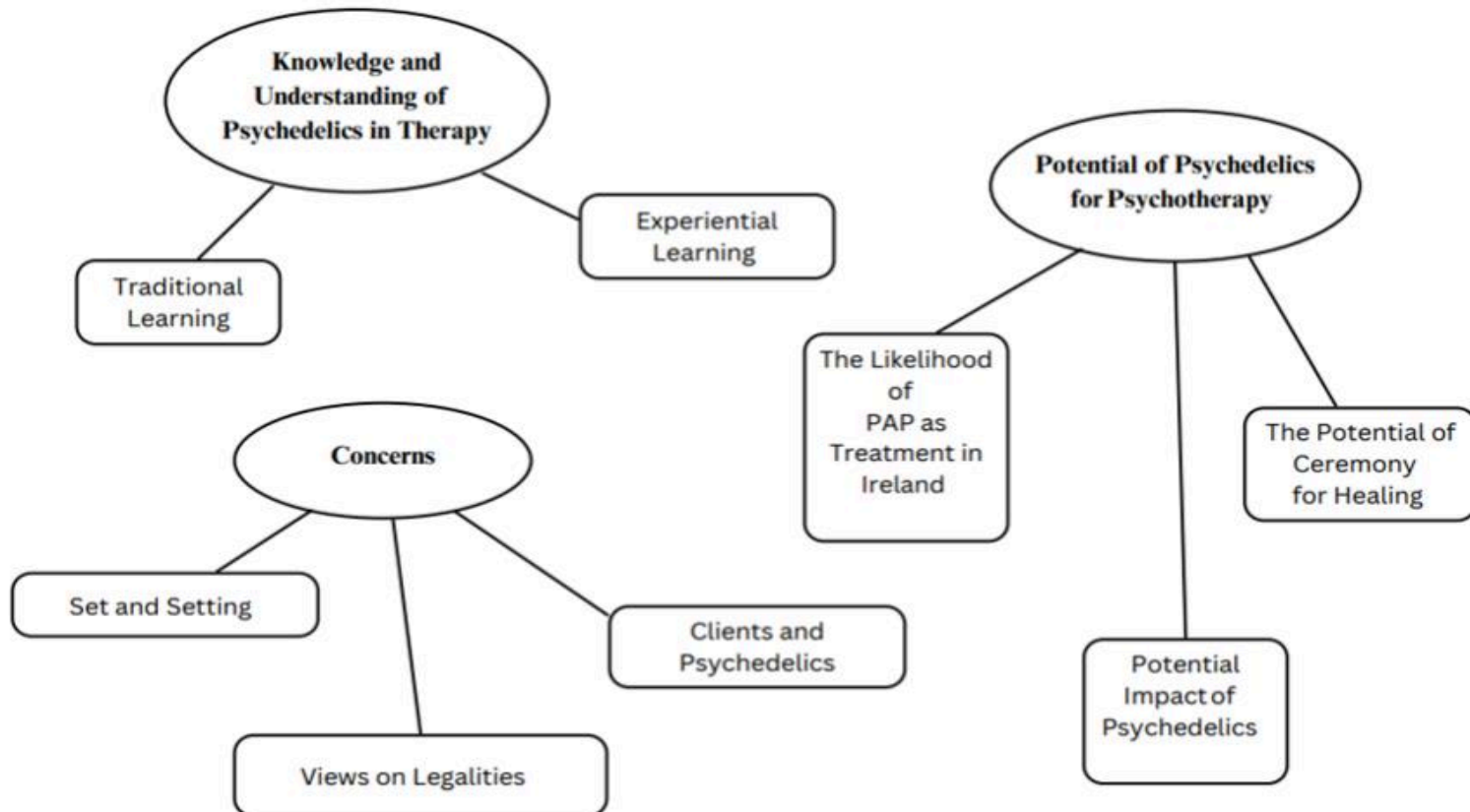


# Findings

## Demographics

Gender	Age	Approach	Practice	Qualified
F	35-44	Person Centred and Humanistic	Private Practice	2 Years
M	35-44	Person Centred	Private Practice	1 Year
F	45-54	Somatic Exp & Compassion FT	Private Practice	14 Years
M	35-44	Person Centred	NCS & CIPC	3 Years

## Final Thematic Map





# **THEME 1**

## **Knowledge & Understanding**

### **Subtheme 1: Traditional Learning**

- **Literature**
- **Media**
- **Contacts**



### **Subtheme 2: Experiential Learning**

- **Psychedelic Retreat**
- **Private Experience**
- **Experienced Colleagues**

# **THEME 2**

## **Potential of Psychedelic Therapy**

***"I got more out of those three experiences than I did out of ten years of talk therapy" Tracey***

### **Subtheme 1:** **Potential Impact**

- **Depth of Experience**
- **Facing the core**
- **Bodywork & Trauma release**

### **Subtheme 2:** **Likelihood of PAT in Ireland**

- **Change is challenging**
- **Not discussed in C&P community**
- **Demographics**

# **THEME 2:**

## **Potential of Psychedelic Therapy**

### **Subtheme 3:**

#### **The Potential of Ceremony for Healing**

- **Psychedelic Ceremony**
- **Learning from the past**
- **The value of ritual**

*"The substance is part of the process. It's not the whole process. It's the ritual of it." Hannah*

*"You prepare six weeks in advance and you enter into a kind of ceremonial process" Liam*

*"How was it used in ceremony? Why were they using it and what were the reasons?" Tracey*



# **THEME 3**

## **Concerns**

### **Subtheme 1:** **Set & Setting**

- **Mindset**
- **Safe environment**
- **Physically prepared**

### **Subtheme 2:** **The Law**

- **Research & MH**
- **General Public**
- **State Control**

### **Subtheme 3:** **Client Use**

- **Legal & Ethical implications**
- **Lack of support**
- **Lack of experience**

# **THEME 3**

## **Concerns**

*"...it has to be very, very closely minded and really respected because to be messing around with it...is really, really dangerous."*

**Tracey**

### **Set & Setting**

*"If the space is unsafe...something really difficult can unfold. And you don't know what the long-term effects of that is." Liam*

### **The Law**

*"They need to be [legalised] and tested and administered as a standardized medical treatment."*  
**Hannah**

### **Client Use**

*"I would have concerns for people who...keep coming back for more...maybe they need a different kind of support as well" Seán*

# **Conclusion**

## **Strengths**

- **Irish study**
- **Qualitative**

## **Limitations**

- **Generalisability**
- **Participant bias**
- **Limited scope**

## **Discussion**

- **Demographics**
- **Concerns**

## **Recommendations**

- **Research**
- **Practice**



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Gratitude





Any  
questions,  
comments  
or insights?