

Abstract

In this bachelor's thesis I explore the topic of set and setting in the context of undergoing challenging psychedelic experiences during ayahuasca ceremonies. I also focus on how these challenging experiences can be integrated into one's life. The theoretical basis for this thesis consists mainly of foreign sources, such as Hartogsohn and Strassman, who have dedicated space to the concept of set and setting in their research. There is a lack of quality research on this topic in the Czech Republic.

My aim in this thesis is to describe the influence of set and setting on experiencing difficult psychedelic experiences with respect to the subjective perception and reports thereof of the respondents. Understanding this concept may lead not only to safer use of psychedelic substances, but also to increased potential benefits of the experience for the participant in the ayahuasca ceremony.

I have chosen a qualitative approach to conduct my research. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The research sample consisted of 8 respondents, 4 women and 4 men. I used QDA Miner Lite software to analyze gathered data using clustering and pattern capture methods.

Generally speaking, the results demonstrate a relationship between personal set and setting of ayahuasca ceremony participants and the risk of undergoing a difficult psychedelic experience. The results also suggest that 3 out of 8 respondents would have accessed professional help integrating their challenging psychedelic experiences had they had the option. Furthermore, one of the stated effects of the experience is a focus on safety, which was mentioned by 4 respondents. The safety factor would have an impact on their future decisions to attend ayahuasca ceremonies.

The results provide insight into the issue of safe set and setting when using ayahuasca and can thus serve as a source of inspiration for any further, more detailed research. This work can also serve as a basis for the development of more effective drug policies along with efforts to minimize the risks of substance use in society. Education on this issue can then lead to better prevention of difficult psychedelic experiences.

Keywords: set and setting – psychedelic experience – ayahuasca – ceremony – integration