

**For Immediate Release**

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**Decolonizing Hallucinations: A Cultural Perspective on a Universal Phenomenon**

*New study unveils the cultural significance of hallucinations and highlights their therapeutic potential via the need to redefine them in the Western world.*

Barcelona – A recently published study [Hallucinations and Hallucinogens: Psychopathology or Wisdom?](#) in the journal *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* examines the historical and cultural perspectives of hallucinations and argues for the need to "decolonize" the Western perspective on these experiences. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* is considered a leading journal in the field of medical anthropology and cross-cultural psychiatry since 1977.

Researchers from the [International Center for Ethnobotanical Education, Research, and Service](#) (ICEERS) and the Medical Anthropology Research Center (Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona), in collaboration with the Autonomous University of Madrid and São Paulo University at Ribeirão Preto, explored the historical significance of hallucinations in a Western, psychiatric view. The Western perspective commonly categorizes hallucinations as a symptom of underlying psychopathology, which has imposed this outlook on other cultures and influenced the ways they are perceived. The authors suggest there needs to be a better understanding of the relationship different cultures have with these experiences to integrate diverse perspectives from various knowledge systems.

"This research challenges the traditional Western perspective on hallucinations and suggests that they can be a source of wisdom and insight, rather than symptoms of mental illness," said Maja Kohek, the ICEERS Research Coordinator and one of the paper's authors. The study's principal investigator, José Carlos Bouso, also added, "Hallucinations are normal psychological functions that include imagination and perception itself. Destigmatizing the term is fundamental for destigmatizing the people who experience them."

The paper breaks down the different theories and models that have been used to explain the phenomenon of hallucinations. They explore reductionist perspectives that pathologize hallucinations or describe them as neuropsychological malfunctions. They also analyze and distinguish between pathological and non-pathological hallucinations and give examples of when these experiences can be considered therapeutic.

The study's authors call for a more inclusive, culturally sensitive approach that reevaluates the current psychiatric classification systems of hallucinations and hallucinogens. The recent interest in the clinical use of hallucinogenic drugs strongly challenges the assumption that hallucinations are exclusively pathological phenomena. The paper also encourages further

research on the therapeutic potential of hallucinations that take cultural and spiritual contexts into account.

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