

Exploring Dreams and Analyzing Its Impact on Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Dreams, as visual and imaginative experiences during sleep, universally captivate individuals with diverse interpretations. The significance of dreams varies widely, ranging from expressions of subconscious thoughts to potential connections with paranormal phenomena. Despite diverse beliefs, there is a consensus that dreams provide insights into innermost feelings and hidden desires. Olsen et al. (2020) found a substantial correlation between dream attitude and various life aspects, linking positive dream attitudes to optimistic outlooks and influence on decision-making, emotional problem-solving, and creative input. Dream interpretation involves analyzing recurring themes and connecting them with the dreamer's emotions and experiences. While there are no certified experts in dream analysis, individuals can engage in interpreting their own dreams. Dreams have short-term and long-term effects on behavior, influencing daytime worries, anxiety, and potentially impacting relationships. Moreover, dreams can offer insights into mental health conditions such as PTSD, ADHD, and depression, aiding clinicians in early detection and intervention (Schredl et al., 2009). In conclusion, dreams play a significant role in shaping human behavior and mental health. Their subjective meanings offer a window into the subconscious mind, providing valuable insights for personal growth, self-awareness, and mental well-being. The clinical importance of dream analysis is evident in therapy and diagnosing mental disorders, highlighting its role in understanding and managing mental health.

Keywords: *Dreams, Behaviour, Mental Health, Emotions*

Dreams are the imaginative experiences that our minds generate while we sleep, encompassing ideas, narratives, visuals, and sensations. They are thought to play a role in helping the brain process information from the day. Dreams primarily occur during the rapid eye movement (REM) stage of sleep, where brain activity is comparable to waking levels. While dreams can occur in various sleep stages, they are less vivid and less likely to be remembered.

On average, individuals have 3 to 5 dreams each night, but most are fleeting and challenging to recall. It's possible to experience up to 7 dreams in one night, with an average duration of 20 to 30 minutes. Dreams are most frequent during the initial 2 hours of REM sleep within an 8-hour sleep cycle.

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In contemporary understanding, dreams are often associated with the unconscious mind. They are diverse, covering a range of emotions such as inspiration, melancholy, joy, excitement, magic, fear, and even sexuality. Dreams can provide fresh perspectives and serve as sources of inspiration. Sigmund Freud, the pioneer of psychoanalysis, extensively explored the connection between dreams and our deepest desires, suggesting that suppressed feelings, fears, childhood memories, and obsessions may find expression in our dreams.

Dreams serve as a mysterious realm where our conscious and unconscious minds engage in communication. While not essential for our survival, they act as a conduit for personal growth, bridging the gap between our self-awareness and the unknown. Considered a type of mental rehearsal, dreams are thought to help us navigate various challenges and events we encounter in daily life. Additionally, they play a crucial role in consolidating and analyzing memories, encompassing habits and skills.

Several theories attempt to unravel the purpose of dreaming:

1. Expression of Unconscious Desires and Wishes: Dreams may serve as a canvas for the manifestation of hidden desires and wishes residing in our unconscious mind.
2. Psychotherapeutic Function: Acting as a form of self-administered psychotherapy, dreams provide a space for the mind to process and work through unresolved issues.
3. Information Processing: Dreams could be a mechanism for processing and organizing information acquired during waking hours, aiding in the integration of experiences.
4. Interpretation of Random Brain Signals: Some propose that dreams arise from the brain interpreting random signals during sleep, creating narratives that may not always align with conscious thoughts.

Dream analysis, a therapeutic approach widely recognized in psychoanalysis, finds its roots in the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud. He crafted dream analysis, or dream interpretation, as a means of delving into the wealth of unconscious information, viewing dreams as "the royal road" to the unconscious mind.

Moreover, mental health professionals employ dream analysis in various therapeutic frameworks, including art therapy, Jungian psychology, Gestalt therapy, and cognitive-behavioral approaches. The diverse applications of dream analysis underscore its adaptability within different psychological paradigms.

The systematic interpretation of dreams, termed oneirology, goes beyond mere decoding and delves into the intricate mechanisms of dreaming. It explores how we dream, the significance of dream content, and the unique meanings embedded within those dream experiences. While dream experts do exist, the most insightful analysts of our dreams are often ourselves.

Enhancing our proficiency in dream interpretation involves becoming acquainted with common symbols, maintaining a dream journal, and identifying personal associations with dream elements. Collaborating with a psychotherapist can further refine the process, offering valuable insights and facilitating a more effective analysis of our dreams. In essence, understanding the language of our dreams becomes a personal journey, enriched by self-awareness and the guidance of mental health professionals.

Several methods are employed in the examination of dreams, and here are a few illustrations:

1. **Maintaining a Dream Journal:** The primary and pivotal step in dream interpretation involves keeping a dream journal. This entails recording concise phrases or sentences that encapsulate the essence of the dreams, facilitating the transfer of ideas from the unconscious mind to the conscious mind.
2. **Identifying Recurring Elements:** Paying attention to elements that frequently reappear in dreams can unveil meaningful insights, as these recurring aspects may symbolize underlying unconscious thoughts.
3. **Discerning Emotions in the Dream:** Amidst the dream state, we often lose awareness of our emotions and thoughts. Analyzing the dream retrospectively allows us to identify and explore the spectrum of emotions experienced during the dream, whether it be fear, anger, joy, or sadness.

These approaches serve as effective tools in unraveling the layers of meaning within our dreams, enabling a deeper understanding of the messages conveyed by the unconscious mind. Through diligent observation and introspection, we gain valuable insights into the intricate language of our dreams.

Many musicians and artists find inspiration in the interpretation of dreams and their impact on their creative endeavors. While dreams create an abstract realm conducive to the development of fresh and innovative ideas, their influence is not confined to this aspect alone. Dreams carry diverse consequences, shaping our experiences beyond the creative sphere.

The distinction between a pleasant dream and a distressing one lies in their aftermath. A positive dream can imbue a sense of elation throughout the day, while a negative dream may leave us feeling melancholic and anxious. Beyond these immediate effects, dreams wield long-term influence.

Dreams serve as a means to unwind from the day's stresses, offering a reprieve from the challenges encountered. They have the potential to spark novel ideas, providing solutions to lingering problems. Additionally, dreams offer emotional insights, helping us navigate complex feelings. They can even serve as a catalyst, motivating us to tackle tasks we may have been procrastinating on.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cong et al. (2022) studied attitudes, motifs, and unfavorable feelings connected to dreams among 1242 Chinese college student's post-pandemic. Positive attitudes towards dreams were observed, with an increase in dream memories and uncommon themes like "having magical powers," more prevalent in students feeling down. Higher levels of depression were negatively correlated with positive dream attitudes.

Olsen et al. (2020) investigated how people perceive the usefulness of dreams in waking life. A substantial correlation was found between dream attitude and various aspects of life, such as decision-making, emotional problem-solving, and creative input. Participants reported dreams influencing important decisions, and a positive dream attitude was linked to a more optimistic outlook on dreams.

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Carr and Neilson (2015) compared emotional intensity and characteristics of dreams in waking daydreams, REM sleep, and NREM sleep. Found that both waking daydreams and REM sleep dreams are more emotionally intense compared to NREM dreams. Additionally, daytime REM dreams scored higher for bizarreness and sensory experience than NREM dreams.

Stowell, Mary Savage (2015) explored the phenomenology of precognitive dreams, focusing on psychological significance. Found that precognitive dreams, subjectively identified, were connected to personal and external events. Different categories of precognitive dream experiences were identified, and the visionary's perspective and attitude towards meditation influenced how these dreams were processed.

Lefing and Stacy (2013) found that recurring dreams and their significance throughout a dreamer's life. Identified three primary themes in dream content (powerlessness, separation/connection, and endangerment) and found recurring dreams coincided with transitional periods and past experiences, with varied interpretations based on positive or negative content.

Rani (2013) stated that the meaning and function of dreams among visually impaired individuals based on interviews. Dreams were categorized into six types, revealing insights into the dreams of visually impaired individuals and contributing to the understanding of dream significance.

Schredl and Erlacher (2010) explored the impact of dreams on creativity. Found that participants reported dreams inspiring creativity, providing insights, and aiding in completing challenging tasks. Dreams were seen as a source of inspiration and emotional insights.

Gauchat et al. (2009) conducted research on the relationship between frequent dreaming and psychological well-being in children. Discovered that boys reporting frequent nightmares showed higher reactive aggression, suggesting potential emotional troubles in dreams at an early age.

Morewedge and Norton (2009) found how people perceive their dreams. Participants attributed hidden truths and relevance to dreams, and dream content influenced their judgments and emotions in waking life.

Schredl and Sartorius (2009) examined dreaming in children with ADHD. Found that children with ADHD had more negatively toned dreams with misfortunes/threats, suggesting a potential link between dream content and inner emotional life.

Boucek (2008) explored the experiences of clients in Jungian dream interpretation. Participants' experiences confirmed Jungian hypotheses about dreams, and the study provided insights into how dream function exercises contribute to the broader process of dream interpretation.

Szmigielska and Holda (2007) investigated personal beliefs about dreams, attitudes towards dreams, and the impact of dreams on behavior. Gender-related correlations and individual variances in common beliefs about dreams were observed.

Rationale of the Study

Exploring the interpretation of dreams and their impact on behavior provides a promising avenue for individuals to address current problems, and therapists can leverage this knowledge to effectively tackle a range of mental health conditions. Despite the enduring fascination with dreams throughout history, comprehensive scientific research on them is a relatively recent endeavor. Freud, in his seminal work "The Interpretation of Dreams," anticipated ongoing research uncovering an organic basis for these mental phenomena. Dreams have intrigued humanity for centuries, with ancient civilizations such as the Babylonians and Egyptians assigning prophetic and celestial significance to them. Aristotle, in contrast, considered dreams as psychological events, offering glimpses into the dormant life of the soul. While the first scientifically grounded dream research emerged in the mid-19th century, it was Freud's groundbreaking work in 1900 that propelled dream analysis into widespread use.

Jung later revised Freud's conceptualization, suggesting that dreams are not merely manifestations of repressed desires, but rather creative expressions aimed at problem resolution. Consequently, dream analysis found applications in various therapeutic approaches, including gestalt therapy, art therapy, and cognitive-behavioral therapy, expanding its role beyond Freud's initial framework. This study seeks to contribute to the ongoing exploration of the scientific basis of dream interpretation, building upon historical foundations and integrating diverse therapeutic perspectives. Understanding the intricate relationship between dreams and behavior has the potential to enhance therapeutic interventions and provide valuable insights into addressing a myriad of mental health conditions.

Objectives

- Investigating the nature of dreams and their connections to our behaviour and mood.
- Exploring the analysis and interpretation processes of dreams.
- Examining the impact of dreams on behaviour.
- Exploring the clinical applications of utilizing dreams for therapeutic purposes.

DISCUSSION

Dreams, the visual and imaginative experiences we encounter during sleep, are universally experienced yet not universally interpreted. The significance of dreams and their representations vary widely, with interpretations ranging from expressions of subconscious thoughts and emotions to connections with paranormal phenomena. Despite diverse beliefs, many agree that dreams offer insights into our innermost feelings and hidden desires.

A substantial correlation was found between dream attitude and various aspects of life, such as decision-making, emotional problem-solving, and creative input. Participants reported dreams influencing important decisions, and a positive dream attitude was linked to a more optimistic outlook on dreams. (Olsen et al., 2020)

The process of understanding dreams, known as dream interpretation, involves analyzing recurring themes and connecting them with the dreamer's emotions and experiences. While there are no certified experts in dream analysis, anyone can engage in interpreting their own dreams.

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Dreams can have both short-term and long-term effects on behavior. Short-term impacts may include daytime worries stemming from dream occurrences or heightened anxiety from nightmares. Long-term effects can influence individuals' feelings and attitudes towards others, potentially even affecting their relationships. Furthermore, dreams can provide valuable insights into mental health conditions such as PTSD, ADHD, and depression (Schredl et al., 2009). By analyzing dreams, clinicians can detect and address underlying psychological issues, offering early intervention and treatment. Overall, dream analysis holds significant clinical value in understanding and managing mental health disorders.

CONCLUSION

Dreams play a significant role in shaping human behavior and mental health. While their exact meanings may be subjective and open to interpretation, dreams offer a window into the subconscious mind. By engaging in dream analysis, individuals can gain valuable insights into their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Moreover, dreams can serve as powerful tools in therapy and diagnosing mental disorders, highlighting their clinical importance. Overall, understanding and exploring dreams can contribute to personal growth, self-awareness, and mental well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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