Predictors of third person perspective dreams, and the association between anxiety and memories for emotional events

Kate Soderlund, and Ben F. Cotterill

Psychology Department, Clemson University, Clemson, SC, USA

Summary. Third-person perspective dreams, in which the dreamer acts as an observer of the self, remain largely unexplored in dream research. Their occurrence may be shaped by emotional factors, cognitive style, and early environmental influences. This study examined whether personality traits, anxiety, and early media exposure predict these types of dreams, and whether personality and anxiety further predict dream content and emotional memory recall. One-hundred and sixty-two South Carolina college students completed a survey with sections about types of media present when they were children, third-person perspective dreams and dream content, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, the Big Five Personality Inventory, the Open Extended Jungian Types Scale, and an emotional event questionnaire. Results showed that anxiety, neuroticism, openness, and feeling-thinking significantly predicted the recall of third-person perspective dreams, with anxiety, neuroticism, and openness also predicting their frequency. Early media consumption was only significantly correlated with the frequency of third-person perspective dreams, with playing video games during childhood showing a significant correlation. No other early media variables were significant. Personality also predicted dream content and emotional memory recall, highlighting the broader influence of personality traits on both the nature of dreams and the recall of emotional experiences.

Keywords: Anxiety, dreaming, emotional memories, third-person perspective dreams

1. Introduction

Third-Person Dreaming

Dreams are typically experienced from a first-person (internal) perspective, in which the dreamer views events through their own eyes, as in waking life. In contrast, a third-person (observer) perspective involves seeing oneself from an external viewpoint, as if watching a character in a movie. While dreams vary in content and emotional tone—often influenced by memories (Rosen & Sutton, 2013), emotional processing (Dang-Vu et al., 2007), or sleep quality (Raduga, 2021)—not all dream characteristics are experienced equally across individuals. One notable variation is the dream's visuospatial perspective. For instance, Soper (1999) found that college students most commonly reported dreams that were "mainly first person but some third," followed by "exclusively first person," "mainly third but some first," and finally "exclusively third person." Third-person dreams are considered unique because they reflect a kind of psychological distancing, often linked to reflective awareness or self-objectification (Kahan & LaBerge, 1996).

A likely reason third-person dreams are relatively rare and under-researched relates to how the brain constructs dreams. Rosen and Sutton (2013) suggest that dream imagery typically mirrors the visuospatial perspective used in waking memory, which is predominantly first-person. Additionally, Cook (2011) argues that cultural influences, particularly visual media like cinema, shape the way people encode and retrieve experiences, possibly reinforcing a default first-person perspective in dreams. As a result, much of the existing research has focused on dream content, perspective frequency, and demographic correlates like gender (Cappadona et al., 2021; Soper et al., 1994), rather than exploring personal factors that might promote third-person dreaming.

This study aims to address that gap by examining possible predictors of third-person dream perspective, beginning with early exposure to visual media. A growing body of research suggests that electronic media, including movies, television, and video games, can influence both the content and frequency of dreams (for a review, see Diushekeeva et al., 2024). For example, individuals who play video games are more likely to dream of imaginary characters (Gackenbach et al., 2009), and adults who dream in black and white often had less exposure to color media in childhood (Schwitzgebel et al., 2006). These findings suggest that early visual experiences can shape dream content later in life. Importantly, certain forms of media, particularly video games, often involve a third-person or "bird's-eye" viewpoint, where players view their character from an external perspective. This recurring visual framing may promote a cognitive style that transfers over into dream construction. Since studies have shown that media exposure can influence dream content, the current study extends this logic to investigate whether such experiences might also shape the structural features of dreams; specifically, whether people are more likely to adopt a third-person perspective.

In addition to media exposure, personality traits, particularly openness and neuroticism, may influence the perspective from which dreams are experienced. These traits

Corresponding address:
Ben F. Cotterill, PhD, Brackett Hall 312C, 321 Calhoun Dr, Clemson, SC 29634, USA
Email: bfcotte@clemson.edu

Submitted for publication: October 2024
Accepted for publication: May 2025
DOI: 10.11588/ijodr.2025.2.107820

are part of the Big Five model of personality, a widely used framework that includes openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Openness is associated with imagination, curiosity, and fantasy proneness (Zhiyan & Singer, 1997), and has been linked to both greater dream recall and more vivid dream experiences (Schredl & Göritz, 2017). Neuroticism, on the other hand, reflects emotional instability (McCrae & Costa, 1989) and is often linked to distressing or intense dream content, particularly nightmares (Schredl & Göritz, 2017). Similarly, higher levels of anxiety have also been associated with nightmare frequency (Blagrove, 2007). Additional research supports these associations, indicating that both neuroticism and anxiety contribute to emotionally intense dreams, while openness predicts greater engagement with dream content (for a review, see Blagrove, 2007). Because third-person perspective dreams may involve psychological distancing or reflective processing, it is possible that individuals high in these traits, especially those prone to emotional intensity or fantasy engagement, are more likely to experience dreams from an observer perspective.

Emotional Events

Dreams, particularly third-person perspective dreams, are often influenced by emotional experiences (Gazzillo et al., 2020). Emotional events—those that evoke strong feelings at the time they occur—tend to be remembered more vividly than neutral events, likely due to their significance in shaping personal identity and future expectations (Kensinger & Ford, 2020). Such memories remain accessible and salient, guiding future perceptions and responses to similar situations (Kensinger & Ford, 2020). This vividness is not only due to the emotional intensity of the events themselves, but also their psychological relevance, as they impact self-perception and decision-making (Heuer & Reisberg, 1990).

Studies have consistently shown that emotionally charged memories are recalled with greater accuracy and clarity than neutral events. For example, Earles et al. (2016) demonstrated that participants were more likely to recognize emotional (positive and negative) events compared to neutral ones, highlighting the stronger encoding of emotional memories. Siedlecka et al. (2015) further found that emotionally significant memories, such as those involving anger or guilt, feel temporally closer compared to neutral memories, suggesting that emotional events are more salient and easier to retrieve.

Anxiety is often associated with a heightened focus on emotionally charged events, particularly those with negative emotional significance (e.g., Herrera et al., 2017). Given that anxiety disorders are common (World Health Organization, 2022), and are frequently associated with personality traits such as neuroticism (McCrae & Costa, 1987), the current study aims to examine whether individuals with higher levels of anxiety remember emotional events more intensely than those with lower anxiety.

Hypotheses

The goal of this study is to assess the relationship between third-person perspective dreaming and the predictors, media consumption, anxiety, and personality, as well as the association between emotional events and anxiety and personality. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Early media consumption, anxiety, and personality will all be significant predictors of third-person perspective dreams. Specifically, these variables will significantly predict how often third-person perspective dreams occur, how frequently they are recalled, and how vividly they are remembered.

H2: Anxiety and personality will significantly predict dream content, specifically regarding how dreams are perceived.

H3: Anxiety and personality will significantly predict participants' ability to recall emotional life events.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

This study employed a correlational design. In the third-person perspective dreams section, predictor variables included anxiety, personality, and early media consumption, with the outcome variables being the frequency, recall, and vividness of third-person perspective dreams, as well as perceptions of dream content. In the emotional memories section, predictor variables were anxiety and personality, while the outcome variable was the recall of emotional events.

2.2. Participants

A sample of 162 South Carolina residents took part in the study. Participants were gathered by advertising to students at Clemson University. Incentives included SONA research credit for university students and a chance to win one of five

Table 1. Jungian Scales*.

Dimension	Description
Extraversion	Focuses on the outer world of people and things
Introversion	Focuses on the inner world of ideas and expressions
Intuition	Focuses on the future with an emphasis on patterns and possibilities
Sensing	Focuses on the present and concrete information gained from the senses
Thinking	Base their decisions on logic and objective analysis
Feeling	Base decisions primarily on values and subjective evaluations of person-centered concerns
Judging	Prefer a planned and organized approach to life
Perceiving	Enjoy a flexible and spontaneous approach to life

* Definitions retrieved from the article by Jafrani et al. (2017).

$25 gift cards. Participants were only excluded if they did not complete the entire survey. The sample was 26% men and 74% women, with ages ranging from 18 to 25 years old (M = 19.73, SD = 1.41).

2.3. Materials

2.3.1 Early media consumption

The first section focused on early media consumption during childhood (ages 5-10). Participants reported the frequency of various media-related activities during this period, including watching TV, movies, online videos (e.g., YouTube), playing video games, using social media, and reading books or magazines. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never to 5 = Daily). Internal consistency was low (α = .41), which is expected given that these items reflect diverse types of media behaviors rather than a single unified construct. As such, each media type was analyzed separately.

2.3.2 Third-person dreams and general dream content

The second section focused on third-person perspective dreams and dream content. Participants were asked whether they had ever experienced third-person perspective dreams, and if so, how often these dreams occurred, how frequently they were recalled, and the vividness of the recall (α = .87).

Additionally, general dream content was assessed with questions regarding the characteristics of their dreams, including whether they include color, sound, or evoke emotions, and whether participants believed their dreams held personal meaning or helped them solve problems. These items showed moderate internal consistency (α = .68), which is acceptable given that they represent multiple distinct aspects of dream experience. For exploratory purposes, these questions were developed by the researchers, as there is currently limited standardized assessment in this area.

2.3.3 Anxiety

The third section presented the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults (Spielberger, 1977), a well-validated and widely used measure in the United States. This self-report questionnaire assesses how participants feel "right now" (state anxiety) and how they generally feel (trait anxiety) using a Likert scale. Internal consistency coefficients for the scale have ranged from .86 to .95, and test-retest reliability coefficients from .65 to .75 over a two-month interval (Arterberry et al., 2014; Spielberger et al., 1983). Extensive evidence supports the construct and concurrent validity of the measure (Metzger, 1976; Spielberger, 1989). The internal consistency was also high in the current study (α = .96).

2.3.4 Personality

The fourth section included two personality inventories. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John et al., 1991) was used to measure five major dimensions of personality: conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness, and extraversion. This inventory has demonstrated strong psychometric properties within U.S. samples, including internal consistency for each trait ranging from α = .75 to .90 and test-retest reliability ranging from .80 to .90 (John & Srivastava, 2005). The second personality measure was the Open Extended Jungian Types Scales (OEJTS) (Jorgenson, 2015), which classifies participants along the dichotomies of introversion-extraversion, sensing-intuition, feeling-thinking, and judging–perceiving (see Table 1 for definitions). While the OEJTS lacks extensive psychometric validation, it was selected due to limited availability of published alternatives based on the Jungian model.

The current study indicates that the Big Five Personality Inventory and the OEJTS were relatively reliable (Table 2). Additionally, the personality dimensions measured by the OEJTS correlated with the Big Five traits in ways consistent with prior research on the association between Jungian dimensions and the Big Five model (Furnham, 1996; McCrae & Costa, 1989; McDonald et al., 1994), supporting the validity of the measure in this sample. Specifically, introversion-extraversion positively correlated with extraversion, r (160) = .76, p < .001; sensing-intuition positively correlated with openness, r (160) = .38, p < .001; feeling-thinking negatively correlated with agreeableness, r (160) = -.30, p < .001; and judging-perceiving negatively correlated with conscientiousness, r (160) = -.69, p < .001.

2.3.5 Emotional events

The final section focused on participants' recollection of a personally significant emotional life event. Participants were instructed to select one emotional event from their past that was especially memorable and emotionally impactful. The list of example events included experiences such as the death of a loved one, the first day of college, or receiving bad medical news—common situations the average individual might encounter. After selecting their event, participants rated it on five dimensions: clarity of recall, frequency of recall, vividness of details, coherence of the memory, and familiarity. These items demonstrated strong internal consistency (α = .84), suggesting they reflect a coherent underlying construct of emotional memory recall quality.

The most commonly recalled emotional events were a breakup (26%), the death of a loved one (16%), and the first day of college (14%). Other frequently reported events included a first kiss (8%), being told a family member had a serious illness (7%), and saying "I love you" for the first time (7%).

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Reliability for Measures.

Dimension	$M \pm SD$	Reliability[a]
Anxiety	2.23 ± .80	.96
Extraversion	3.38 ± 1.32	.86
Agreeableness	3.90 ± 1.01	.78
Conscientiousness	3.57 ± 1.11	.81
Openness	3.37 ± 1.16	.82
Neuroticism	3.26 ± 1.39	.87
Feeling-Thinking	2.78 ± 1.39	.71
Sensing-Intuition	2.72 ± 1.23	.42
Introversion-Extraversion	2.87 ± 1.68	.76
Judging-Perceiving	2.70 ± 1.48	.81

[a] Cronbach's alpha

2.4. Procedure

The study was approved by an Institutional Review Board at Clemson University (IRB2022-0711). The survey consisted of a consent page that included information about the researchers and their contact information, the purpose of the study, procedures, participation time (approximately 15-30 minutes), risks and discomforts, incentives, and finally, protection of confidentiality. If participants consented to take part and continued with the survey, the first questions involved identifiers in case participants wanted their results later removed, as well as an option to enter their email for a drawing of the monetary reward. This was followed by the questionnaires in the following order: childhood media consumption, third-person perspective dreams and dream content, anxiety, personality, and emotional events. In order to minimize the risk, a warning was provided prior to the emotional event questions. The survey ended with a summary of the purpose of the study, contact information, and available health services. Students who got SONA research credit for their participation were further debriefed.

3. Results

3.1. Third-Person Perspective Dreams

Multiple regressions were conducted to examine the relationship between third-person perspective dreams and the predictors. The dependent variables included (1) frequency of third-person dreams, (2) recall frequency, (3) vividness of recall, and (4) an overall third-person perspective dream score, which was computed by averaging participants' responses across the three items (α = .87). Regression assumptions were met for personality and anxiety variables. However, due to violation of normality and positive skewness, early media consumption variables were excluded from the regression models. Instead, their associations with third-person dream characteristics were analyzed using Spearman's rank correlations. Multicollinearity was not a concern (all Pearson's $r < .80$), and Durbin-Watson statistics were approximately 2 for all models, indicating independent residuals. Post hoc power analysis using G*Power indicated that the regression models had high statistical power ($1 - \beta = .91$) to detect a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.19$) at $\alpha = .05$.

Together, the predictors accounted for a significant amount of variance in how often third-person perspective dreams occur, F (10, 161) = 2.85, $p = .003$, $R^2 = .16$. Anxiety ($B = .51$, $p < .001$), neuroticism ($B = -.41$, $p = .002$), and openness ($B = .16$, $p = .04$) were significant predictors for how often third-person dreams occur, while the rest of the predictors were non-significant ($ps > .05$). There was also a significant correlation between how often third-person dreams occur and playing video games during childhood, r_s (160) = .18, $p = .03$. All other correlations with early media exposure were non-significant ($ps > .05$).

The predictors also accounted for a significant amount of variance in how often third-person perspective dreams are recalled, F (10, 161) = 2.90, $p = .002$, $R^2 = .16$. Anxiety ($B = .41$, $p = .001$), neuroticism ($B = -.37$, $p = .006$), openness ($B = .23$, $p = .008$), and feeling-thinking ($B = -.20$, $p = .03$) were all significant predictors for the recall of third-person dreams while the rest of the predictors were non-significant ($ps > .05$).

Third, the predictors did not account for a significant amount of variance in the vividness of third-person perspective dreams, F (10, 161) = 1.63, $p = .10$, $R^2 = .10$. The correlations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlations between characteristics of third-person perspective dreams and anxiety, personality, and early media exposure.

Dimension	*Frequency of third-person dreams occurring*	Frequency of third-person dreams being recalled	Vividness of recalling third-person dreams	Composite Third-Person Dream Score
Anxiety	.22	.21*	.16*	.21*
Extraversion	.04	.002	.06	.04
Agreeableness	-.10	-.03	-.08	-.08
Conscientiousness	-.06	-.14	-.12	-.12
Neuroticism	.05	.05	.05	.05
Openness	.19*	.24*	.21*	.23*
Feeling-Thinking	.01	.04	.12	-.10
Sensing-Intuition	.06	.13	.04	.11
Introversion-Extraversion	-.10	-.18*	-.05	.03
Judging-Perceiving	.10	.13	.14	.14
How often did you watch TV?	-.03	-.05	.01	-.03
How often did you watch movies?	.15	.09	.12	.11
How often did you watch online videos?	.07	.08	.07	.07
How often did you play video games?	.18*	.13	.15	.15
How often did you spend time on social media?	.05	.03	.03	.04
How often did you read books or magazines?	.10	.05	.02	.04

* $p < .05$

Table 4. Differences between those that have experienced third-person perspective dreams and those that have not.

Dimension	*Yes* *(n = 69)*	No (n = 93)
Anxiety	94.73 (SD = 21.34)	85.16 (SD = 21.14)
Extraversion	26.78 (SD = 6.84)	27.18 (SD = 6.29)
Agreeableness	34.64 (SD = 5.51)	35.50 (SD = 5.33)
Conscientiousness	31.10 (SD = 6.23)	32.85 (SD = 5.61)
Neuroticism	26.57 (SD = 6.34)	25.66 (SD = 7.16)
Openness	35.23 (SD = 6.43)	32.57 (SD = 6.61)
Feeling-Thinking	22.99 (SD = 6.28)	23.00 (SD = 6.32)
Sensing-Intuition	22.16 (SD = 4.34)	21.46 (SD = 3.59)
Introversion-Extraversion	21.57 (SD = 5.57)	22.71 (SD = 5.32)
Judging-Perceiving	22.67 (SD = 6.52)	20.86 (SD = 6.17)
How often did you watch TV?	3.55 (SD = 1.17)	3.65 (SD = 1.20)
How often did you watch movies?	2.59 (SD = 1.03)	2.32 (SD = 0.85)
How often did you watch online videos?	2.64 (SD = 1.47)	2.42 (SD = 1.37)
How often did you play video games?	2.33 (SD = 1.45)	1.88 (SD = 1.16)
How often did you spend time on social media?	2.55 (SD = 1.75)	2.38 (SD = 1.70)
How often did you read books or magazines?	3.17 (SD = 1.43)	2.91 (SD = 1.24)

Lastly, to provide a more comprehensive view of third-person dream experience, an overall third-person perspective dream score was computed by averaging participants' responses across the three items: frequency, recall, and vividness. This composite score demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$), supporting the use of a unified measure. A fourth regression using this composite score as the dependent variable revealed that the predictors explained a significant amount of variance, $F(10, 161) = 2.85$, $p = .01$, $R^2 = .14$. Anxiety ($B = .41$, $p = .001$), neuroticism ($B = -.34$, $p = .01$), and openness ($B = .22$, $p = .01$) were significant predictors, thus supporting the findings from the individual regressions that anxiety, neuroticism, and openness predict third-person dream salience.

Overall, 69 participants said they had experienced third-person perspective dreams and 93 participants said they had not. Those that had experienced such dreams scored significantly higher in openness ($M = 35.23$ vs. 32.57; $SD = 6.43$ vs. 6.61), $t(160) = 2.57$, $p = .01$, $d = .41$. All other differences (see Table 4) were non-significant ($ps > .05$).

3.2. Dream Content

Six multiple linear regressions were conducted to examine the relationship between dream content characteristics and the predictors: personality traits and anxiety levels. The six dependent variables were participants' agreement with the following statements about their dreams: (1) *My dreams have color*, (2) *My dreams have sound*, (3) *I often feel emotions when I dream*, (4) *I think dreams have personal meaning*, (5) *I have dreams that help me deal with problems*, and (6) *If a dream gave me advice, I would follow it*.

Among these models, only one was statistically significant. The regression predicting *emotional experience* in

Table 5. Correlations between dream content and anxiety and personality.

Dimension	My dreams have color	My dreams have sound	I often feel emotions when I dream	I think dreams have personal meaning	I have dreams that help me deal with problems	If a dream gave me advice, I would follow it
Anxiety	.07	-.06	-.10	-.05	-.03	.18*
Extraversion	-.05	-.05	.05	-.05	-.08	-.09
Agreeableness	-.07	-.06	-.13	.04	-.06	-.01
Conscientiousness	-.02	.06	.007	.001	-.04	-.04
Neuroticism	-.006	-.20*	-.15	-.15*	-.05	.04
Openness	-.09	-.10	-.16*	.02	-.19*	-.06
Introversion-Extraversion	-.01	.05	.13	-.06	-.05	-.02
Sensing-Intuition	.07	.03	-.005	-.02	.003	-.09
Feeling-Thinking	.02	.11	.25*	.22*	.16*	.002
Judging-Perceiving	.12	.05	.05	.09	-.005	-.03

* $p < .05$

Table 6. Correlations between emotional event recall and anxiety and personality.

Dimension	Clarity of the event upon recall	Frequency of event recall	Vividness of event details upon recall	Coherence of the event upon recall	Familiarity of the even upon recall
Anxiety	.12	.22*	.14	.08	.11
Extraversion	.04	-.02	.05	.21*	.18*
Agreeableness	.07	-.04	.11	.07	.11
Conscientiousness	.03	-.15	.12	.16*	.10
Neuroticism	.22*	.23**	.20*	.12	.14
Openness	.02	.02	.05	.09	.06
Introversion-Extraversion	.001	-.02	-.04	.07	.09
Sensing-Intuition	-.09	.10	-.07	.02	.004
Feeling-Thinking	-.06	-.14	-.01	.01	-.07
Judging-Perceiving	.03	.09	-.11	-.02	-.06

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

dreams reached significance, F (10, 161) = 2.27, p = .02, R^2 = .13, with the feeling–thinking personality dimension emerging as a significant predictor (B = .22, p = .02). All other predictors in this model were non-significant ($ps > .05$).

The other five models did not explain a significant amount of variance. Specifically, the model for *dreams having color* was not significant, F (10, 161) = 0.82, p = .61, R^2 = .05, nor was the model for *dreams having sound*, F (10, 161) = 1.75, p = .08, R^2 = .10. Similarly, the regressions predicting perceptions of *dreams having personal meaning*, F (10, 161) = 1.32, p = .22, R^2 = .08; *dreams helping solve problems*, F (10, 161) = 1.08, p = .38, R^2 = .07; and *following advice from dreams*, F (10, 161) = 1.33, p = .22, R^2 = .08, were all non-significant. All of the correlations are illustrated in Table 5.

3.3. Emotional Events

A single multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between memory characteristics of emotional life events and the predictors: personality traits and anxiety levels. Given the high internal consistency of the five memory-related items (α = .84), a composite emotional memory score was created by averaging participants' ratings of the clarity, frequency, vividness, coherence, and familiarity of the recalled emotional event. The overall regression model was significant, F (10, 161) = 2.53, p = .008, R^2 = .14, with agreeableness (B = .18, p = .046), conscientiousness (B = .25, p = .03), and neuroticism (B = .38, p = .005) emerging as significant predictors of emotional memory quality. The remaining predictors were non-significant ($ps > .05$). All of the correlations are illustrated in Table 6.

4. Discussion

4.1. Third-Person Perspective Dreaming

The first hypothesis, that early media consumption, anxiety, and personality would significantly predict third-person perspective dream characteristics, was supported. Anxiety, neuroticism, and openness significantly predicted third-person dream characteristics, specifically their recall and frequency. Additionally, individuals who reported experiencing third-person dreams scored significantly higher in openness compared to those who had not. Childhood video game play was also positively correlated with the frequency of third-person dreams. And finally, the feeling–thinking personality dimension negatively predicted recall frequency, suggesting that individuals who score higher in feeling than thinking were more likely to recall such dreams.

Interestingly, while anxiety positively predicted both third-person dream frequency and recall, neuroticism was a negative predictor. This suggests that, although related, these traits influence dreaming in distinct ways. Anxiety, characterized by heightened emotional arousal and persistent worry (Mennin et al., 2005), may enhance both the occurrence and memorability of dreams. In contrast, neuroticism, which encompasses broader tendencies such as moodiness and emotional instability, might interfere with consistent recall or influence how dreams are processed and interpreted.

Openness was consistently associated with third-person dream characteristics. Individuals high in openness have rich imaginations (Zhiyan et al., 1997) and seek out novel experiences (DeYoung et al., 2014), qualities that may foster more unusual dream perspectives, including third-person viewpoints. Their reflective and analytical thinking styles may also lead to greater interest in or awareness of dreams, increasing the likelihood of recall and interpretation.

Furthermore, the finding that individuals with a preference for feeling over thinking were more likely to recall third-person dreams aligns with Jungian theory. Feelers are typically more emotionally attuned, empathetic, and sensitive to interpersonal dynamics (Jung, 2016), which might make them more receptive to dream experiences that involve alternative perspectives.

Finally, the positive correlation between childhood video game play and the frequency of third-person dreams suggests that media exposure may shape not only the content of dreams, as previous studies have proposed (e.g., Gackenbach et al., 2009), but also their structural features, such as visual perspective. Many video games are designed from a third-person perspective, which might prime players to adopt a similar viewpoint in dreams. While other early media exposure variables (e.g., movies, online videos, social media) were not significantly associated with dream variables, participants who reported third-person dreams generally

scored higher on these measures. It may be that the questionnaire did not capture media habits in a specific enough way to detect meaningful differences, especially in terms of how media was experienced (e.g., first- vs. third-person formats). Additionally, the sample's demographic skew, being predominantly female and low in reported early media exposure, may have limited the generalizability of the findings.

4.2. Dream Content

The second hypothesis proposed that anxiety and personality traits would significantly predict how individuals perceive their dreams. Of the six regression models, only one, predicting emotional experience in dreams, was statistically significant, with the feeling–thinking dimension emerging as a significant positive predictor. Correlational analyses supported this, showing that individuals who scored higher on the feeling–thinking scale were more likely to experience emotion in dreams and believe their dreams had personal meaning, suggesting that even those with more "thinking" tendencies may engage emotionally with their dreams in ways typically associated with "feeling" types. Anxiety was not a significant predictor in the regression models but did correlate positively with following advice from dreams. Neuroticism was negatively correlated with experiencing dream emotion, sound, and meaning, hinting that more neurotic individuals may be less engaged with or aware of the sensory and emotional aspects of dreams. Interestingly, openness, despite being associated with third-person perspective dreams, was negatively correlated with emotion, sound, and problem-solving content in dreams. This may suggest that open individuals experience dreams in more abstract or imaginative ways, rather than as emotionally grounded or practical experiences. Of course, these are simply post-hoc explanations, and, thus, further research is needed in order to confidently understand any associations.

4.3. Emotional Event Recall

The results partially supported the hypothesis that personality traits and anxiety influence the recall of emotional life events. Although anxiety was expected to play a significant role, it showed only weak correlations with specific memory characteristics and did not significantly predict overall emotional memory in the regression model. This suggests that while anxiety may contribute to heightened attention toward emotionally charged events, its impact may be less consistent or secondary to more stable personality traits. Importantly, prior research suggests that anxiety may increase rumination and focus on emotionally charged experiences, possibly enhancing their mental replay over time (Olatunji et al., 2013).

In contrast to anxiety, personality traits emerged as stronger predictors. Neuroticism significantly predicted overall emotional memory quality, consistent with prior research indicating that individuals high in neuroticism tend to dwell on emotionally intense experiences and form more vivid and emotionally saturated memories (Toffalini, 2015). These individuals may be more attuned to emotional cues, leading to deeper encoding and more frequent mental rehearsal of significant events.

Beyond neuroticism, other personality traits also contributed meaningfully to emotional memory. Conscientiousness significantly predicted better memory for emotional events, likely reflecting this trait's link to attention to detail and organization. Agreeableness also emerged as a positive predictor, suggesting that individuals who are more interpersonally sensitive and empathetic may form stronger emotional connections to life events, enhancing recall.

5. Conclusions

Overall, the findings provided partial support for the proposed hypotheses, with personality traits, particularly openness, neuroticism, and the feeling–thinking dimension, emerging as significant predictors of dream characteristics, and neuroticism, along with conscientiousness and agreeableness, also predicting emotional memory recall. Notably, while neuroticism enhanced recall of emotional life events, it was negatively associated with emotional and sensory aspects of dreams, suggesting that neuroticism may shape how emotional material is processed differently across waking and dreaming states. While perspective dreaming remains an understudied topic, this study offers preliminary insights into how individual differences and media exposure may shape not just dream content, but dream perspective as well. A key limitation was the homogeneity of the sample, which may limit generalizability. Additionally, the survey's measures, especially those assessing media exposure and perspective in dreams, may have lacked the specificity needed to detect more nuanced effects. Future research should aim to develop more targeted instruments for measuring perspective in dreams and include more diverse populations to capture broader variability. Despite its limitations, this study lays groundwork for further exploration into how personality and early experiences influence the structure and perception of dreams.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to undergraduate research students Karra Gurely and Anna Teague for their contributions to this project.

References

Arterberry, B. J., Martens, M. P., Cadigan, J. M., & Rohrer, D. (2014). Application of Generalizability Theory to the Big Five Inventory. Personality and Individual Differences, 69, 98–103. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.05.015

Blagrove, M. (2007). Dreaming and personality. In D. Barrett & P. McNamara (Eds.), The new science of dreaming: Vol. 2. Content, recall, and personality correlates (pp. 115-158). Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.

Cappadona, R., De Giorgi, A., Di Simone, E., Zucchi, B., Rodriguez-Borrego, M. A., Lopez-Soto, P. J., ... & Manfredini, R. (2021). Sleep, dreams, nightmares, and sex-related differences: a narrative review. European Review for Medical and Pharmacological Sciences, 25(7), 3054-3065. https://doi.org/10.26355/eurrev_202104_25559

Cook, R. F. (2011). Correspondences in visual imaging and spatial orientation in dreaming and film viewing. Dreaming, 21(2), 89–104. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022866

Dang-Vu, T. T., Schabus, M., Desseilles, M., Schwartz, S., & Maquet, P. (2007). Neuroimaging of REM sleep and dreaming. In D. Barrett & P. McNamara (Eds.), The new science of dreaming: Vol. 1. Biological aspects (pp. 95–113). Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.

DeYoung, C. G., Quilty, L. C., Peterson, J. B., & Gray, J. R. (2014). Openness to experience, intellect, and cognitive

ability. Journal of Personality Assessment, 96(1), 46-52. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2013.806327

Diushekeeva, A., Hidalgo, S., & Zadra, A. (2024). Impact of Pre-Sleep Visual Media Exposure on Dreams: A Scoping Review. Brain Sciences, 14(7), 662. https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci14070662

Earles, J. L., Kersten, A. W., Vernon, L. L., & Starkings, R. (2016). Memory for positive, negative and neutral events in younger and older adults: Does emotion influence binding in event memory? Cognition and Emotion, 30(2), 378–388. https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2014.996530

Furnham, A. (1996). The big five versus the big four: The relationship between the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and NEO-PI five factor model of personality. Personality and Individual Differences, 21(2), 303–307. https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(96)00033-5

Gackenbach, J., Kuruvilla, B., & Dopko, R. (2009). Video game play and dream bizarreness. Dreaming, 19(4), 218–231. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018145

Gazzillo, F., Silberschatz, G., Fimiani, R., De Luca, E., & Bush, M. (2020). Dreaming and adaptation: The perspective of control-mastery theory. Psychoanalytic Psychology, 37(3), 185–198. https://doi.org/10.1037/pap0000252

Herrera, S., Montorio, I., & Cabrera, I. (2017). Effect of anxiety on memory for emotional information in older adults. Aging & Mental Health, 21(4), 362–368. https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2015.1093601

Heuer, F., & Reisberg, D. (1990). Vivid memories of emotional events: The accuracy of remembered minutiae. Memory & Cognition, 18(5), 496-506. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03198482

Jafrani, Zehra, N., Zehra, M., Abuzar Ali, S. M., Abubakar Mohsin, S. A., & Azhar, R. (2017). Assessment of personality type and medical specialty choice among medical students from Karachi; using Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) tool. Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association, 67(4), 520–526.

John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). Big Five Inventory (BFI) [Database record]. APA PsycTests. https://doi.org/10.1037/t07550-000

John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). The Big Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research (2nd ed., pp. 102–138). New York: Guilford Press.

Jung, C. (2016). Psychological types. Routledge.

Jorgenson, E. (2015). Open extended jungian type scales 1.2. https://openpsychometrics.org/

Kensinger, E. A., & Ford, J. H. (2020). Retrieval of emotional events from memory. Annual Review of Psychology, 71, 251–272. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010419-051123

McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T., Jr. (1989). Reinterpreting the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator from the perspective of the five-factor model of personality. Journal of Personality, 57(1), 17–40. https://doi.org/10.1111/j .1467-6494.1989.tb00759.x

McDonald, D. A., Anderson, P. E., Tsagarakis, C. I., & Holland, J. H. (1994). Examination of the relationship between the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator and the NEO Personality Inventory. Psychological Reports, 74, 339–344. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1994.74.1.339

Mennin, D. S., Heimberg, R. G., Turk, C. L., & Fresco, D. M. (2005). Preliminary evidence for an emotion dysregulation model of generalized anxiety disorder. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 43(10), 1281-1310, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2004.08.008

Metzger, R. L. (1976). A reliability and validity study of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 32(2), 276–278. https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679(197604)32:2<276::AID-JCLP2270320215>3.0.CO;2-G

National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). Any anxiety disorder. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/any-anxiety-disorder.

Olatunji, B. O., Naragon-Gainey, K., & Wolitzky-Taylor, K. B. (2013). Specificity of rumination in anxiety and depression: A multimodal meta analysis. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 20(3), 225–257. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0101719

Raduga, M. (2021). Optimal sleep duration and its deviation outcomes from perspectives of REM sleep dissociative phenomena. Dreaming, 31(3), 244–251. https://doi.org/10.1037/drm0000179

Reisberg, D., & Hertel, P. (Eds.). (2003). Memory and Emotion. Oxford University Press.

Rosen, M., & Sutton, J. (2013). Self representation and perspectives in dreams. Philosophy Compass, 8(11), 1041-1053. https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12082

Schredl, M., & Göritz, A. S. (2017). Dream recall frequency, attitude toward dreams, and the Big Five personality factors. Dreaming, 27(1), 49–58. https://doi.org/10.1037/drm0000046

Schwitzgebel, E., Huang, C., & Zhou, Y. (2006). Do we dream in color? Cultural variations and skepticism. Dreaming, 16(1), 36–42. https://doi.org/10.1037/1053-0797.16.1.36

Siedlecka, E., Capper, M. M., & Denson, T. F. (2015). Negative emotional events that people ruminate about feel closer in time. PloS one, 10(2), e0117105.

Soper, B. (1999). A comparison of daydream and dream perspectives. College Student Journal, 33(2), 217.

Soper, B., Rosenthal, G. T., & Milford, G. E. (1994). Gender differences in dream perspectives. Psychological Reports, 74(1), 311–314. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1994.74.1.311

Spielberger, C. D. (1977). State-trait anxiety inventory for adults. Mind Garden.

Spielberger, C. D. (1989). State-Trait Anxiety Inventory: Bibliography (2nd ed.). Consulting Psychologists Press.

Spielberger, C. D., Gorsuch, R. L., Lushene, R., Vagg, P. R., & Jacobs, G. A. (1983). Manual for the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. Consulting Psychologists Press.

Toffalini, E., Mirandola, C., Coli, T., & Cornoldi, C. (2015). High trait anxiety increases inferential false memories for negative (but not positive) emotional events. Personality and Individual Differences, 75, 201–204. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.11.029

World Health Organization. (2022). Mental disorders [Fact sheet]. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders

Zhiyan, T., & Singer, J. L. (1997). Daydreaming styles, emotionality and the big five personality dimensions. Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 16(4), 399-414. https://doi.org/10.2190/ATEH-96EV-EXYX-2ADB