

# Predicting the number of spiritual dreams based on the locus of control and reflective thinking

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**Summary.** This research has been done to predict the number of spiritual dreams of individuals based on the locus of control, and reflective thinking. In this study, in addition to examining the effect of the locus of control, and reflective thinking on the intensity of spiritual dreams of individuals, the relationship between the following components of reflective thinking has also been investigated. Participants were 200 men, and women over 30 years old in Shiraz. Measures were, Rutter locus of Control (1966), the California Critical Thinking Tendency Questionnaire (Facion, 1992), and the Spiritual Dreams Questionnaire (Askari, 2020). We designed this questionnaire with the help of Bulkeley (2009) and Casto (2001) Spiritual Dream Scales. Finally, this questionnaire was designed as a 6-point Likert in 17 questions. Its validity and reliability were also measured. Cronbach's alpha was 0.9. The results showed that there was no significant positive relationship between locus of control, and spiritual dreams ( $P>0.05$ ). This means that the type of, locus of control, of individuals can not predict the extent of their spiritual dreams. But there was a significant positive relationship between reflective thinking, and spiritual dreams ( $P<0.05$ ). In examining the sub-components of reflective thinking, a significant positive relationship was found between the dimensions of questioning, criticism, and open-mindedness with the number of spiritual dreams. Therefore, the results of the tests showed that reflective thinking skills in dimensions (questioning, open-mindedness, and criticism) can predict the intensity of spiritual dreams in individuals. But other dimensions of reflective thinking, as well as the type of locus of control of individuals, can not predict the extent of the spiritual dream.

**Keywords:** Spiritual dreams, locus of control, reflective thinking

## 1. Introduction

The topic of dreams has been considered for a long time. So much research has been done on the dream. Nevertheless, there are still many unanswered questions on this subject. Dreams come in a variety of categories in this research we deal with one of these categories named spiritual dreams. In the prehistoric view, people associated dreams with the world of superhuman beings and considered them to be inspired by gods or demons. Also, it was obvious that dreams had important meanings and usually predicted the future. (Baluchi, Rahimi, 2015)

The modern dream theory was invented by Sigmund Freud. Freud called dream interpretation the 'royal road' to the unconscious. It is the 'King's highway' along which everyone can travel to discover the truth of unconscious processes for themselves. According to him, dreams are driven by ambitions and desires which are not fulfilled in the state of consciousness thus, they are sent to the unconscious. These suppressed desires are manifested in a dream during sleep. (Freud, 1900)

According to Carl Gustav Jung's view, the subconscious aspect of events in a dream is manifested in the form of rational thought, not a symbolic index. He believed that dreams

often have a definite structure and meaning and express latent ideas and desires. However, in general, these ideas and desires are not immediately understood. Jung refrained from pursuing associations far removed from the text of the dream, and by accepting that the dream expresses what the subconscious is trying to say, he decided to focus more on the direct associations of the dream itself and to develop a new approach to the subject. He created a dream interpretation that was different from Freud's method. Jung (1964) in recent research on dreams, researchers have concluded that other factors may be involved in dreaming, especially the causes of spiritual dreams. These components do not fully confirm Freud and Jung's ideas about dreams, who believed that the dream originated entirely from the subconscious mind. And these new findings do not support the ideas of Freud and Jung. (Bulkeley, 2009, 2019, Paquette, 2018)

Spiritual dreams mean, a person sees angels in a dream, or finds himself in a spiritual place of worship, or sees spiritual people in a dream who give him a message or warning that will bring about a positive change in his life. He is either warned of danger, or, he is presented with an epistemological dream that also affects him when he wakes up, or, he sees in his dream the dead people who give him a special message, which may come later, or any spiritual feeling in a dream and after that could call a spiritual dream. It happens in waking. For instance, I have an example from one of our participants spiritual dream:

*My aunt was at the hospital, and she was comatose because of her cancer. In my dream, I found myself in a very big white and luminous mosque with a very high ceiling with a door. Many people were wearing special green dresses, and some of them were going out from that door. I saw my aunt there. She was wearing a green*

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*dress too. She told me I want to go through the door. I told her no please, do not go! She told me I am forgiven and it is time to go, and passed the door. Tomorrow her aunt passed away.*

### Mystical and religious views

In the book *Tanbih al-Naeimin* written by Sultan Mohammad Gonabadi, 1994, which is one of the Iranian Sufis and mystical books is written about spiritual dreams as follows: It has been seen that a spiritual teacher interprets a dream and then gives advice to the dream viewer which causes him to evolve in the moral path. Or sometimes it predicts psychological dangers for him.

In the method of Sufism, there is a subject as induction in the dream in this way, the great master appears in the dream of his disciple and gives him spiritual instincts, and creates the best states in him rather it may instill religious conscience into him. It may also be inductive to moral matters, and therefore in some cases, it can be considered effective in this treatment. As it is written in this book a disciple can reach the highest mystical position, because his master repeated for him the religious inspiration. It was said to that disciple that you hear the sound of heavenly music and you are among the angels, and as a result of these inductions, the effect of joy and happiness was found on his face. Then he was told that you are now in the presence of God, and you see the manifestation of God, suddenly his posture and face changed, and spiritual radiance was found in his face. (Gonabadi, 1994)

The Qur'an and the Torah also refer to the dream of Prophet Joseph and how his dream comes true.

In the Quran, we can read this story about Joseph's dream: Joseph had the knowledge of dream interpretation. And Pharaoh dreamed that seven lean oxen would eat up seven fat cows, and the seven dry branches of wheat destroy the seven green branches of wheat. Pharaoh summoned all interpreters to interpret this dream. But everyone fails to interpret it. Then he remembers Joseph and asks him to interpret it. Joseph states that there will be seven rainy years, and then seven years of drought. Therefore, part of the wheat must be stored for the first seven years, so that people do not go hungry during the drought. He was released from prison and replaced by Potiphar. And thus, attains position.

There is some scale for measuring spiritual dreams. one of them is 'mystical dreaming' presented by Bulkeley (2009), who found the following eight motifs in one study: 'death, Christianity, the light, precognition, reassurance, nightmare, epistemological uncertainty, and impact—no memory (p. 35)'

And on the Casto scale (Krippner, Jaeger, & Faith, 2001), spiritual dreams are divided into six categories:

- Spiritual objects/objects of focus and reverence
- Spiritual characters/beyond knowledge inspires reverence
- Spiritual settings/associated with reverence
- Spiritual activities/beyond understanding inspires reverence
- Spiritual emotions/associated with reverence
- Spiritual experiences/direct contact w God, sacred

According to research, researchers have concluded that every person could not see spiritual dreams. And there may be

certain components in people who have spiritual dreams. One of them is having spiritual beliefs. (Bulkeley, 2009, Paquette, 2018)

In this study we intend to investigate whether there is a relationship between the number of spiritual dreams of individuals with the type of their locus of control (internal or external), and also the thinking of individuals (their tendency to reflective thinking) or not, and of course given the assumption we have made through the research literature, people who have spiritual dreams are not necessarily religious, but they have spiritual beliefs, and in some cases, spiritual dreams led one to spirituality (Bulkeley & Schredl, 2019, Paquette, 2018).

The expression "Locus of Control" represents attribution of reasons of events that the people determine in their life, which are regarded as a kind of volitional action (Phares, 1965). According to the social learning theory by Rotter (1975), behavior potential is influenced hardly in the way the people accept the situation and the stimulus, but also it is based on the expectations of realization of actions that satisfy the needs. Rotter focuses in his work on the content of two generalized expectancies – internal and external control of reinforcement, which describe the perception of human life events as contingent upon one's behavior or as under the control of unpredictable others. One of the basic suggestions in Rotter's theory is that people aim to keep up their positive self-image (in Thompson, Davidson, & Barber, 1995), that is why their expectations to challenge are mostly bonded with one's efforts and possibilities to deal with. On the other hand, when people expect failure or bad dealing, they believe it depends on factors that they cannot control. (Velichkov, 2001) These generalized expectations are supported by certain beliefs – the world is well-intentioned and the life has a meaning, and the Self has a value and deserves respect (Angelova, 2016)

Religion, age, level of education, physical health, mental health is among the influential factors in the source of control. (Koushki & Khalilifar, 2019)

But various researches have been done regarding the influence of religious and spiritual beliefs on the locus of control. In some of them, they did not find a connection between the locus of control, and religious, and spiritual beliefs. (Mohammadi & Mehrabi zade, 2019)

And in some of them, the results of the research have been reported in such a way that having religious and spiritual beliefs does not create a center of external control. And it does not cause a person to completely lose his power and responsibility that is related to his work. On the other hand, belief in God also gives man strength, and the followers of many religions learn that they are not alone in the face of difficulties, and God is their helper. (Koushki & Khalilifar, 2019)

Another variable that we intend to examine the relation of the number of spiritual dreams in individuals is reflective thinking. Reflective thinking is the active, continuous, and accurate study of any hypothetical form of knowledge.

One of the most influential people in this field of research is Jack Maziro. He used a practical important reasoned, and conceptual framework for evaluating this concept. Maziro separated reflective activity from non-reflective activity. In his view, not every awareness of thoughts and feelings is contemplative. He distinguished two types of activities: Without reflection: It is a normal action, such as typing and driving.

Reflective thinking: includes a selective review of previous learning to deliberately evaluate what we have learned (Navidi & Toysatkani, 2011). Four sub-categories are considered for reflective thinking: normal action, understanding, reflection, critical thinking.

In this study, we focus more on critical thinking, which is the highest level of reflective thinking. Critical thinking is a form of thinking that some scholars, such as Fisher and Dewey, have proposed as the definition of logical or contemplative thinking, that is, actively, continuously, or accurately examined an idea or a hypothetical form of knowledge in the light of the areas which supports. (Yazdanpanah, 2012)

The main concern of critical thinking is to replace distorted thinking with thinking based on research methods. From the point of view of critical thinking. A critical personality is something like a critical consumer. It is information, which seeks reason, and evidence. In this view, the aristocracy of individuals on intellectual skills. A special emphasis is placed on a list of things a critical thinker should know or be able to do. (I.e., cognitive and practical skills) are provided. In recent years, another dimension has attracted the attention of critical thinkers, and that is to create special tendencies in individuals to search for wisdom, truth, and evidence. (Yazdanpanah, 2012)

Critical thinking has 7 components of truth-seeking, open-mindedness, and critique, analysis, questioning, maturity, organization, and self-confidence. In this study, we examine its dimensions and 5 of its most important sub-components (truth-seeking, open-mindedness, and criticism, analysis, questioning, maturity) and its relationship with the intensity of spiritual dreams.

This research is of the basic research type. Since the category of dreams is an important category that humans deal with every day almost every human experiencing it every day since recognizing dreams, and analyzing them can be useful in the field of psychoanalysis, and psychoanalytic methods. Also, this research can be helpful to recognize dreams, and their relationship with the type of thinking, and the view of a person towards himself, and the world, and the type of control center of people.

Research questions include: Can the locus of control of individuals (internal and external) predict the extent of their spiritual dreams? Can reflective thinking in people predict the extent of their spiritual dreams?

## 2. Method

This research is a kind of survey type. Because by conducting field studies, it measures the prediction of the number of spiritual dreams of individuals based on the locus of control, and reflective thinking and is also of the correlation type. Its statistical population consists of all men and women over 30-year-old in Shiraz, Iran.

The sampling method of this research is available. The sample size is calculated based on the components of the research variable (subscales of each variable) became 200 people. Library resources, journals, articles and scientific journals, Latin journals, and Internet resources have been used to gather information about the theoretical and thematic literature of the research.

Data collection tools: Rutter locus of Control Questionnaire (1966), And California Critical Thinking Trend Questionnaire (Facion, 1992), And the Spiritual Dreams Questionnaire (Askari, 2020) has been designed in this research. the questionnaires have been placed at the disposal of 200

men, and women over 30 years of age in Shiraz who have been selected as available to answer.

**The Rutter locus of Control questionnaire** was developed by Rutter in 1966 to assess a person's expectations for internal or external control. This test has 29 items, and each item has a pair of questions (a and b) that indicate the source of internal and external locus of control. Subjects are asked to choose one of each pair of questions and mark it.

23 items of this questionnaire have a specific purpose to clarify people's expectations about the source of control and the other 6 items are distract, and lie detector items. (Mohammadzadeh, 2017)

Questions 1, 8, 14, 19, 24, 28 are distract, and lie detector items. The total score will be obtained from other questions. In the 23 items assigned for scoring, questions A get 1 score, and questions B get a score of zero. Of course, in Articles 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 22, 26, the expressions B are given 1 score and the expressions A are given zero score. The questions that give 1 score are indicate external locus of control, and Because the total score of each person indicates the type and source of control of individuals, so people who score 9 or higher is a sign of external control, and a score less than 9 is a sign of internal control. (Mohammadzadeh, 2017)

Reliability and validity of this questionnaire in Rutter studies. The retest coefficient was reported between 0.40 to 0.83. (Rutter, 1966). Saburi Moghaddam also obtained the reliability coefficient of the Rutter scale using the composition method of about 0.81.

**The California Critical Thinking Questionnaire:** Critical Thinking is a type of thinking that some scholars, such as Fisher and Dewey, have defined as the definition of logical or contemplative thinking, that is, actively, continuously, or accurately examining an idea or hypothetical form of knowledge. (Yazdanpanah, 2012)

This questionnaire contains 75 questions. At the discretion of the supervisor, due to the non-necessity of some sub-components to measure the variable of reflective thinking, which is in line with critical thinking, two sub-components (self-confidence and organization) were removed and, the components of truth-seeking, open-mindedness, and criticism, analysis, questioning, maturity remained, and the number of questions became 55. With the Likert scale (Strongly agree, Agree, A little agree, A little disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree) Scored from 1 to 6 according to the questionnaire guide. In this way, the questions with a negative nature, (I completely agree) with the score 1, and (I completely disagree) with the score 6, and the questions

Table 1. How to distribute the frequency of California Critical Thinking Questionnaire questions

Variables	Number of questions	Questions
Truth-seeking	12	4,9,13,16,24,27,30,35,44,51,53,55
Open-mindedness	12	1,7,10,14,18,20,25,28,32,34,46,54
Criticism & analysis	11	5,15,21,26,29,38,40,42,45,48,50
Questioning	10	2,12,18,23,31,33,36,39,41,47
Maturity	10	3,6,8,11,19,22,37,43,49,52

with the positive nature (I completely agree) with the score 6, and (I strongly disagree) with the score 1. Accordingly, the lowest score is 55. The highest score is 330. The interpretation of the test is calculated based on the obtained score as follows (Yazdanpanah, 2012):

- 55- 160: Negative
- 160-210: Unstable
- 210-260: Positive
- 260-330: High and stable

A score above 50 in each subgroup indicates a high, and stable trend, a score of 40-50 indicates a positive trend, a score of 31-39 indicates an Unstable trend, a score below 30 indicates a negative trend. This questionnaire was developed by Facion (1992). The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha for the whole scale of 0.91. He also used the factor analysis method to assess the validity and based on the results, all the questions of the main questionnaire were approved.

**Spiritual dreams questionnaire:** After much research, a questionnaire was not found to measure the number of spiritual dreams. As a result, we designed the Spiritual Dreams Questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed in 17 questions, which is a 6-point Likert (not at all, very low, low, often, much, very much) and the scoring method is from 1 point for not at all to 6 points for very high. Accordingly, the highest score is 102, and the lowest is 17. So how to interpret the scores is as follows:

- Score 7-59 low
- Score 59-102 high

The design of the questions was based on two scales, Bulkeley (2009) and Casto (2001). After the questionnaire was designed and reviewed with the help of these scales. To assess the degree of reliability. The test was presented to a fixed group of 30 people. After calculating Cronbach's alpha, it was calculated as follows in SPSS software. And Cronbach's alpha was 0.913. Then, in the next step to calculate the retest and validity of this test, after two weeks, the test was presented again to the same group of 30 people to answer and Cronbach's alpha results were obtained after calculating 0.910. Thus, after the approval of the supervisor, a questionnaire was presented to the main sample group to conduct the dissertation research.

This research has been done by descriptive statistics and inferential statistics by Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis tests by SPSS software.

### 3. Results

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the components of critical thinking and its dimensions. Table 3

*Table 2.* Mean and standard deviation of critical thinking components (N = 200)

Variables	Average	Standard deviation
Finding the truth	43.35	68.4
Open-mindedness and criticism	57.42	98.4
Analysis	41.41	4.79
Questioning	42.53	4.82
Maturity rate	35.17	4.11
Thinking style (total)	214.87	14.16

*Table 3.* Mean and standard deviation of spiritual dreams and locus of control (N = 200)

Variables	Average	Standard deviation
Spiritual dream	41.1	14.41
Locus of control	9.45	3.84

shows the mean and standard deviation of spiritual dreams and the locus of control.

In the locus of control: People who get a score of 9 or higher are a sign of the external locus of control, and a score less than 9 is a sign of the internal locus of control. So according to the average which is more than 9, the tendency is towards the external locus of control.

The first hypothesis: Can the locus of control of individuals (internal and external) predict the extent of their spiritual dreams? To test this hypothesis, the first Pearson correlation coefficient between research variables was calculated, the results of which are reported in Table 4.

As can be seen in Table 4, the significance level is greater than 0.05, so there is no significant relationship between the locus of control and spiritual dreams. Therefore, there is no need to perform multiple regression analysis statistical tests. The result is that the locus of control does not predict the number of spiritual dreams.

Hypothesis 2: Can reflective thinking predict the extent of a person's spiritual dreams?

To test this hypothesis, the first Pearson correlation coefficient between research variables was calculated, the results of which are reported in Table 5. As can be seen, there is a positive and significant relationship between reflective thinking and spiritual dreams. There is also a positive, and significant relationship between the components of thinking (open-mindedness, and criticism, questioning) and spiritual dreams. But there is no significant relationship between the dimensions of truth-seeking, analytics, and the degree of maturity with spiritual dreams.

To test this hypothesis, multiple regression analysis with a simultaneous input method was used. The results are given in Table 6. As can be seen, the coefficient of multiple correlations (R) between reflective thinking and spiritual dreams is equal to 0.319. And the coefficient of determination is equal to 0.10. This means that 10% of the changes in spiritual dreams are predicted by reflective thinking. Thus, the components of reflective (critical) thinking are able to predict spiritual dreams. Also, according to the value of the regression coefficient (beta), it can be concluded that questioning style is the strongest predictor of spiritual dreams. Also, free-thinking, critical, and questioning styles are able to predict spiritual dreams alone and by controlling other dimensions. So, the second hypothesis is confirmed.

*Table 4.* Correlation coefficient between Locus of control and spiritual dreams

Variable	Correlation coefficient with spiritual dreams	p-value
Locus of control	0.07	0.99

Table 5. Correlation coefficient between reflective thinking and spiritual dreams

Variables	Correlation coefficient with spiritual dreams	p-value
Finding the truth	0.141	0.06
Open-mindedness and criticism	0.202	0.006
Analysis	0.08	0.25
Questioning	0.264	0.001
Maturity rate	0.05	0.44
Thinking style (total)	0.254	0.001

#### 4. Discussion

The first hypothesis of the research was as follows: Can the style of the locus of control of people (internal and external) predict the extent of their spiritual dreams? To test this hypothesis, the first Pearson correlation coefficient between research variables was calculated, the results of which were reported according to Table (4) that the significance level of the relationship between the variables was 0.99. As a result, since it is  $P > 0.05$ , there is no significant relationship between the type of locus of control and the number of spiritual dreams of individuals. And, since no research background was found for this hypothesis, this hypothesis was raised as a question, so the answer to this question was negative.

According to research by researchers such as (Bulkeley 2019, 2009, Abdullah 2019, Paquette 2018, O. Salem & Deccicco 2013), people who have spiritual dreams are spiritual people at the time they are awake, and in some cases, spiritual dreams led one to spirituality. According to this assumption, in this study, we sought to discover the relationship between the type of locus of control of individuals, and the number of their spiritual dreams, and in fact, this could measure indirectly the type of locus of control of spiritual people. Finally, there is no significant relationship between these two variables.

The second hypothesis of the research was as follows: Can reflective thinking predict the extent of a person's spiritual dreams? Based on the California Critical Thinking Orientation Questionnaire, we examined the components (fact-finding, open-mindedness, and criticism, analysis, questioning, maturity) by SPSS software, and this result was obtained. To test this hypothesis, the first Pearson correlation coefficient between research variables was calculated. Based on Table (5), the results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between free thinking, and criticism ( $0.005 > 0.006$ ) as well as questioning ( $0.005 > 0.0001$ ), with the number of spiritual dreams. Also, to test this hypothesis, multiple regression analysis with a simultaneous input method was used. The results were described in Table (6) in such a way that the coefficient of multiple correlations (R) between reflective thinking and spiritual dreams was equal to 0.319. And the coefficient of determination was equal to 0.10. This means that 10% of the changes in spiritual dreams are predicted by reflective thinking. Thus, the components of reflective (critical) thinking can predict spiritual dreams. Also, according to the value of the regression

Table 6. Results of multiple regression analysis of reflective thinking with spiritual dreams

Variable	Spiritual dreams		
	Beta	t	p-value
Finding the truth	0.06	0.75	0.45
Open-mindedness and criticism	0.15	2.05	0.04
Analysis	-0.08	-1.04	0.29
Questioning	0.24	3.05	0.003
Maturity rate	0.06	0.89	0.37
Model: $R^2 = 0.102$ , $F = 3.94$ , $p = 0.002$			

coefficient (beta), it can be concluded that questioning style is the strongest predictor of spiritual dreams.

Also, the components of free-thinking, criticism, and questioning can predict spiritual dreams alone and by controlling other dimensions. So, the second hypothesis is confirmed. And since no research background was found for this hypothesis, this hypothesis was raised as a question. So, the answer to the hypothesis question is yes.

Based on this finding and, the researches which have been done by researchers such as (Bulkeley 2019, 2009, Abdullah, 2019, Paquette, 2018; O. Salem & DeCicco, 2013), people who have spiritual dreams are spiritual people at the time they are awake, and in some cases, spiritual dreams led one to spirituality. Of course, they may not be religious people, because many religious people do not have spiritual dreams.

So, there is a connection between being spiritual and seeing spiritual dreams. According to this assumption, in this study, we sought to discover the relationship between the amount of reflective thinking and the number of their spiritual dreams, and in fact, this could indirectly measure the level of reflective thinking of spiritual people.

In a conclusion, there is a significant positive relationship between these two variables. And based on the results of this research, the components of open-mindedness, criticism, and questioning can predict the number of spiritual dreams. And since spiritual people are free-thinking and inquisitive, and always seek to discover the truth and secrets of life, and are usually free from prejudice, we can say that the result of this research on spiritual people can be true. Consequently, it also predicts spiritual dreams.

The limitations of this research such as the use of a questionnaire which has been considered as the only measurement tool and, also the lack of the questionnaire to measure the number of spiritual dreams, causes the questionnaire has been designed by us.

Future researchers are encouraged to use other measurement methods such as interviews and dream databases. This research can be done repeatedly to create better conclusions. In future research, more variables related to spiritual dreams can be examined. Also, the design of the spiritual dream questionnaire by us in this research can be used by other researchers in the field of dreams, as the first questionnaire to measure the number of spiritual dreams.

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