



Sociology & Cultural Research Review (SCRR)
Available Online: <https://scrrjournal.com>
Print ISSN: 3007-3103 Online ISSN: 3007-3111
Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)



Development of Interview Guideline on Dreaming For Visually Impaired Individuals

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on creating an interview guideline specifically designed for individuals with visual impairments, aiming to delve into their unique experiences and understandings of dreams. Traditional interview methods often rely on visual elements, which can exclude or misrepresent the perspectives of visually impaired participants. To address this, the project employs an inclusive strategy that respects and reflects non-visual ways of interpreting dream content. The development process involved a thorough review of relevant literature, input from field experts, and trial interviews with participants representing a range of visual impairments. The final framework highlights sensory aspects such as sound, touch, emotion, and spatial awareness, allowing for a more nuanced and accessible exploration of dream narratives. This tailored tool equips researchers with a respectful and effective means of engaging visually impaired individuals in dream research, ultimately advancing inclusivity in psychological and cognitive studies.

Keywords: Dream, Visual Impairment, Psychological, Cognitive

Introduction

While dreaming is a shared aspect of the human experience, how dreams are perceived, remembered, and expressed can vary greatly depending on an individual's sensory abilities. For those with visual impairments, dream content may contrast significantly with that of sighted individuals, especially regarding the presence of visual elements. Studies indicate that individuals who become blind later in life often continue to experience visual imagery in their dreams, whereas people who are blind from birth tend to have dreams dominated by sounds, tactile sensations, emotions, and spatial cues instead of visual scenes (Bertolo et al, 2003; Kerr & Domhoff, 2004). These findings highlight the limitations of conventional dream interview techniques, which often rely on visual assumptions and may not be well-suited for engaging visually impaired participants.

Although interest in the neurocognitive and psychological dimensions of dreaming among visually impaired individuals is increasing, there is still a notable gap in inclusive and systematically structured interview methods for capturing these experiences. Many current approaches rely heavily on visual cues and imagery, which can inadvertently exclude or distort the dream narratives of people without sight (Hurovitz et al., 1999). To address this, it is crucial to develop an interview tool that emphasizes sensory channels more pertinent to visually impaired individuals, such as auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, and emotional elements, thereby enabling more accurate and respectful data collection.

Creating such an interview framework demands a nuanced understanding of how dreams are experienced by visually impaired people, as well as a commitment to research practices that are both accessible and responsive to various communication needs. This study draws on knowledge from sensory psychology, disability theory, and qualitative methodology to design a framework that authentically captures these non-visual dream experiences. The resulting tool marks a significant advancement in inclusive dream research, offering a more holistic understanding of how non-visual sensory input shapes dream perception and memory.

In Pakistan, individuals with visual impairments encounter a range of complex barriers involving accessibility, education, and social integration—challenges that also extend into the realms of psychological and cognitive well-being, including the exploration of dreams. While international research has explored dream patterns among blind individuals, there is a noticeable lack of studies specifically addressing these phenomena within the Pakistani cultural landscape. Local interpretations of dreams are often shaped by religious beliefs, cultural norms, and limited understanding of their psychological significance, influencing how visually impaired individuals process and describe their dream experiences.

Informal accounts suggest that, similar to global patterns, congenitally blind individuals in Pakistan often report dreams dominated by non-visual sensory input such as auditory cues, tactile sensations, and emotional content. In contrast, those who lost their sight later in life tend to retain partial visual elements in their dreams, reflecting findings from international literature (Hurovitz et al, 1999; Bertolo et al., 2003). Despite this, the absence of culturally relevant and accessible tools for studying these experiences has left the dreams of visually impaired Pakistanis largely unexplored in academic research. Furthermore, societal stigma surrounding both disability and mental health can discourage open conversations about inner experiences, underscoring the urgent need for a culturally sensitive and inclusive interview framework tailored to this population.

Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative, exploratory approach to design an interview guideline specifically focused on capturing the dream experiences of individuals with visual impairments. Rooted in phenomenological methodology, the study aimed to explore how people with differing degrees of vision loss perceive and interpret their dreams from their own lived perspectives. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure diversity in the participants' visual experiences, including individuals with congenital blindness, early-onset, and late-onset vision loss. Ten participants (five men and five women), aged between 18 and 50, were recruited through schools for the blind, rehabilitation centers, and NGOs supporting visually impaired individuals across Pakistan. Eligibility criteria included the absence of cognitive impairments and the ability to communicate in either Urdu or English.

Development of the Interview Guideline

1. **Expert Consultation:** Insights from psychologists, vision rehabilitation experts, and special education professionals helped shape a scientifically sound and culturally relevant interview format.
2. **Pilot Testing:** The initial version was tested with two participants. Their feedback on the clarity, sensitivity, and comfort of the questions informed subsequent revisions to the language and structure of the guideline.

The finalized Interview guideline combined open-ended and semi-structured questions aimed at exploring sensory experiences, emotional responses, spatial awareness, and personal interpretations of dreams. The design consciously avoided visual language, instead prioritizing prompts related to sound, texture, motion, and feeling—for instance, questions like “What kinds of sounds did you hear in your dream?” or “How did the dream make you feel?”

Each interview was carried out in a quiet, familiar, and accessible setting. Sessions ranged from 45 to 60 minutes and were audio-recorded with the participants’ informed consent. Interviews were conducted in the language preferred by each participant—Urdu or English—and facilitated by trained researchers who were sensitive to the communication needs of individuals with disabilities. All interviews were transcribed word-for-word and subjected to thematic analysis. Using an inductive coding method, the researchers identified emerging patterns and themes, particularly focusing on how non-visual sensory experiences shaped the dream narratives. Two independent researchers performed the coding to maintain reliability, and any disagreements in interpretation were resolved through collaborative discussion.

Results

Table 1: Participants demographics

| <i>Participant ID</i> | <i>Gender</i> | <i>age</i> | <i>Degree of visual impairment</i> | <i>Onset of blindness</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| P1 | Male | 28 | Congenital | Congenital |
| P2 | Male | 35 | Congenital | Congenital |
| P3 | Female | 41 | Congenital | Congenital |
| P4 | Male | 22 | Congenital | Congenital |
| P5 | Female | 50 | Congenital | Congenital |
| P6 | Female | 18 | Partial | Age 6 |
| P7 | Male | 32 | Partial | Age 18 |
| P8 | Female | 40 | Partial | Age 30 |
| P9 | Male | 50 | Partial | Age 41 |
| P10 | Female | 37 | Partial | Age 14 |

Table 2: sensory modalities in dreams

| <i>Sensory modality</i> | <i>Congenital blind %</i> | <i>Late onset blind %</i> | <i>Representative description</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Auditory | 100% | 100% | “I hear voices, footsteps, wind, and sometime music.” |
| Tactile | 90% | 80% | “I feel people touching me or different surfaces.” |
| Visual imagery | 0% | 60% | “I see flashes or memories from the past.” |
| Smell/taste | 50% | 30% | “Sometimes, I smell food or flowers in dreams.” |
| Spatial movement | 100% | 100% | “I move freely. Like walking without obstacles.” |

Table 3: emotional content in dreams

| <i>Emotion type</i> | <i>Frequency mentioned</i> | <i>Examples from participants</i> |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Fear | 6/10 | "I heard someone chasing me in the dark" |
| Comfort/ relief | 5/10 | "I felt peace when I heard my mother's voice." |
| Confusion | 4/10 | "I didn't know where I was, but I wasn't scared." |
| Joy | 3/10 | "I was laughing with friends in the dreams." |

Table 4: Evaluation of interview guideline

| <i>Evaluation criteria</i> | <i>Participant feedback summary</i> |
|--|--|
| Clarity of questions | Clear and easy to understand |
| Relevance of sensory experience | Highly relevant, focused on hearing and touch |
| Comfort during interview | Participants felt respected and comfortable |
| Ability to recall dream details | Prompted detailed and emotionally rich responses |
| Cultural appropriateness | Sensitive to religious spiritual perspectives |

Discussion

This study offers meaningful insights into how visually impaired individuals uniquely perceive and interpret their dreams, emphasizing the necessity of inclusive research tools that reflect these sensory differences. Thematic analysis revealed that for many participants—especially those who are congenitally blind—dream content was primarily shaped by non-visual senses such as hearing, touch, and spatial orientation. These findings are in line with earlier studies (Bertolo et al., 2003; Hurovitz et al., 1999), affirming that vivid and emotionally resonant dreams do not require visual imagery.

An Important pattern that emerged was the continued presence of visual elements in the dreams of individuals with late-onset blindness. Participants with a history of sight described occasional visual impressions, though these seemed to fade with time. This supports neurocognitive theories suggesting that dream imagery draws from past sensory experiences and stored visual memory (Kerr & Domhoff, 2004). Moreover, the strong presence of spatial awareness and emotional intensity in the dreams of all participants indicates that the brain may compensate for the absence of vision by enhancing other sensory and emotional channels.

Crucially, this research demonstrated that conventional dream interview techniques fall short when applied to visually impaired populations. Participants responded positively to the adapted interview guideline, which shifted focus from visual imagery to sensory dimensions more relevant to their experiences—such as sound, physical sensation, and emotion. This tailored approach facilitated richer and more genuine conversations, validating the importance of inclusive qualitative methods that prioritize the perspectives of underrepresented and sensory-divergent groups.

Cultural themes also played a significant role in shaping dream interpretation. In the Pakistani context, participants often framed their dreams through religious or spiritual lenses, frequently interpreting them as divine messages or symbolic signs. This cultural dimension highlights the importance of integrating local beliefs and meanings into psychological

research, especially when working with marginalized communities. Despite the success of the study in developing a customized interview framework, there were limitations. The sample was relatively small and drawn mainly from urban institutions serving the blind, which may not fully represent the broader population. Expanding future research to include participants from rural areas and diverse disability backgrounds would help enhance the scope and relevance of these findings.

In summary, this study reinforces the idea that dreams in visually impaired individuals are rich in sensory and emotional content and introduces a validated, culturally responsive interview tool for future exploration. By centering non-visual perspectives, this work contributes to more inclusive and equitable practices in psychological and cognitive research. Blind people need care and assistance from other people. They have emotions and dreams so we should listen them and talk about their dreams so they can share their internal wishes freely. (Shafique et al, 2024)

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Dreaming questionnaire for visual impairment (DQVI)

Carefully listen the questions and answer honestly.

1. Do you see the dreams?
2. Did you see yourself in your dreams?
3. Which type of dreams that are?
4. Do you see colors or recognize in your dreams? If yes, then elaborate.
5. Do you hear voices if yes which type of voices you hear in your dreams?
6. Do you see family members in your dreams? How they look and talk?
7. Do you see friends in yours dreams? How they look and talk?
8. Did you ever see the people who had been died? How they look and talk?
9. Did you see happy dreams? If yes than Elaborate.
10. How you find the people in your dreams other than family and friends?
11. Did you see sad dreams? If yes than elaborate.
12. What are the effects of your dreams on your relationships?

13. What are the effects of your dreams on your daily life?
14. What you see mostly in dreams?
15. Do you see bright dreams?
16. Do you see dreams full of darkness?
17. What type of events you see in your dreams?
18. Do you see deaths or funerals in your dreams?
19. Do you see horror dreams?
20. Describe any strange dream of yours?
21. How do you find your relationships in your dreams?
22. How much your dreams are reality based?
23. Did you ever try to know your dream interpretation?
24. Did you ever talked to other persons in your dreams?
25. Did you ever fight with anybody in your dreams?
26. Did you ever recognize the music in your dreams?