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Characteristics of adults' dreams in the perspective of the concept of passivity in terms of transactional analysis

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The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

Eleonor Roosevelt

Abstract

The text is a report from the author's research concerning adults' dreams in the light of the concept of passivity in terms of transactional analysis. The aim of the research was to define a potential relationship between dreams (their types, approach to them, perceiving them as fantasy/ goal) and passive strategies. The research is quantitative in nature and it shows how real, according to the respondents, realizing their dream is.

Keywords: dreams, passivity, transactional analysis, passive strategies, dream categories.

Introduction

Dreams constitute the source of strength and motivation to act, that is why it is crucial to deepen our knowledge about them. Many people caught up in the

daily rush of life forget about their dreams, cutting themselves off from them. As a result, it makes realizing their dreamed goals difficult. It is the reason to talk about dreams more often than it happens nowadays. Discussions about dreams may not only inspire but also remind us about their important role in life. An open conversation about one's dreams may also help to overcome barriers and anxieties, which keep people from realizing them. The more aware we are of our own dreams, the easier it is to design a plan to make them come true, which may bring about a bigger feeling of fulfillment and life satisfaction.

Theoretical bases of the research

Dreams are things we imagine and desire, reflecting human goals and aspirations. All people in the world, regardless of their social status, age, beliefs or sex, have the right to dream. According to J. C. Maxwell (2014), dreams are the image of future life, which allows for waking the mind and emotions and gives strength to people to do everything they can to make that image real. It is thanks to a fulfilled dream that an individual can reach their desired goal and desire. Dreams have tremendous power which lets an individual become a unique human being in the world (Maxwell, 2014). According to A. Kałużna-Wielobób (2011, p. 161), "a dream is the concretisation of our general desires." Human desires help to form dreams. When a man realises these desires, they achieve self-realisation at the same time. Dreams make human motivation grow, which gives us strength to overcome the events we find difficult. According to T. Nowacki (2010), dreams let people find their path to happiness. It happens because dreams teach us how to strive for our goals. The author also emphasizes the fact that people devote half of their lives to dreaming, and the other half to realising these dreams as it is dreams that motivate people to find life's meaning. A. Adler (1986, p. 220) saw dreams as "an individual part of one's lifestyle." People have very different dreams that let us see their character and who they really are. The author focused on the fact that it is a life goal that characterizes a given individual.

Passivity in transactional analysis is defined as "behaviours consisting in non-solving problems, or, in other words, a way of non-solving different matters or not solving them efficiently" (Stewart, Joines, 2020, pp. 239-240). This concept was created by the Schiffs. It is thanks to them that the subject matter of passivity resurfaced in famous journals devoted to transactional analysis (Schiff, 1971 after: Pierzchała, 2013, p. 213). The authors of "passivity" decided to create its two definitions. The first one says that "passive behaviours are both internal and external activities used by people in order to avoid an autonomous reaction to stimuli, problems and alternatives of choice, to satisfy needs and re-

alise plans within the framework of an unhealthy symbiotic relation” (Schiff, 1975, p. 10 after: Pierzchała, 2013, p. 86). Passivity can be noticed in another person as their passive behaviour distorts the way one looks at reality from the perspective of the Adult ego state, and its origin can be already sought from the level of the Child ego state (Pierzchała, 2013). The other definition offered by the authors of the concept explains that “passivity is a situation in which an individual stops performing certain activities or performs them non-actively” (Schiff, 1975, p. 5; Stewart, Joines, 2009, p. 173 after: Pierzchała, 2013, p. 87). It is worth emphasizing that passivity is more than the passivity definition known and used by everyone. In passive performance, an individual decides to act but they do it in a way that does not bring any effects. J. Jagieła (2012 p. 141) defined passivity as “lack of taking responsibility for one’s thinking, acting and feelings. It is characterized by doing nothing or doing something ineffectively accompanied by providing no information about oneself.” This concept is strongly linked with the thought that a human being tries to hide the truth about themselves from the world. An individual is not in tune with the environment that cheats as they offer improper information about themselves and their needs.

Within the framework of transactional analysis, four passivity strategies were developed by the Schiffs and their co-workers. They studied patients with mental issues, focusing on the analysis of their passive-aggressive behaviours and their predilection for addiction. The following strategies were singled out:

- Passivity – an individual does not undertake any substantial activities which would help them to solve a problem;
- Over-adaptation – an individual adapts to the existing conditions, which makes them forget about their needs and priorities, and even abandon them;
- Agitation – an individual repeats continuously the same activities which do not put them any closer to solving the problem, and what is more, they are devoid of any sense;
- Incapacitation and violence – this strategy occurs when the feeling of anxiety is not controlled at the right time. In case of incapacitation, an individual often freezes motionless. As for violence, there might be outbursts of anger not controlled by an individual.

The author decided to conduct the research that focuses on dreams and passive strategies in the light of transactional analysis. It will be examined whether there is any relationship between the aforesaid variables. Thanks to it, the author will be able to draw conclusions that make it possible to show how people perceive their dreams. The respondents’ answers shall demonstrate which is the dominant passive strategy used by a given individual.

Methodology of own research

The leading topic of the author's research is the characteristics of adults' dreams from the perspective of passivity in the light of transactional analysis. A hundred and five respondents over 18 took part in the research, including 88 women and 17 men. The analyses were to give the answers to three research problems:

- P1. What is the relationship between passive functioning and the respondents' dream categories?
- P2. What is the relationship between the feeling of agency in realizing one's dreams and functioning in passive strategies?
- P3. What is the relationship between perceiving one's dream in the categories of fantasy/ goal and functioning in passive strategies?

The research is also of an exploratory nature as it constitutes the second stage in dream characteristics in the context of the transactional analysis assumptions. The first stage of the analysis was to single out dream categories in order to analyse them qualitatively from the perspective of their relationship with the concept of ego states in terms of functionality and functioning in passive strategies (Oracz, Tworzowska, Jędrczyk, Pierzchała, 2022). In the second stage, the author shall use the tool developed within the framework of transactional analysis – "The teacher's reality" Questionnaire (Pierzchała, 2013, pp. 344-347). The tool was adapted for the activities planned and its scope of analysis shall be broadened, going from the area of education to a broader social context. The original tool addressed the questions to teachers and concerned their work and relations with students. In the adapted tool the questions were transformed into the ones that will test the passivity of all the people. The research was conducted in the group of adult participants.

The research was conducted with the help of a questionnaire whose aim was to determine how real, according to the respondents, realising their dreams is. In order to broaden the group of respondents and obtain credible results, it was decided to conduct the research with the help of an electronic questionnaire system Lime Survey from Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa. A questionnaire for the survey was drawn. The first part of the research tool concerned dreams, i.e. their categorization (Oracz, Tworzowska, Jędrczyk, Pierzchała, 2022), their importance in life, their perception as a goal or fantasy and motivation measures. Semantic differentiation was used to study dreams as life goals or fantasy, while the following questions in that part were analysed by Likert scale. The second part used in the survey's questionnaire is an adaptation of the tool "The Teacher's Reality" by A. Pierzchała (2013). The tool consists of thirty questions based on Likert scale.

The analysis of the research results

Passive functioning and dream categories

The research conducted in cooperation with K. Tworzowska, P. Jędrczyk and A. Pierzchała (2022) on adult persons' dreams was the author's motivation to conduct the studies in question. The authors wrote an article that was to be the first stage of dream characteristics with the use of transactional analysis. They decided to ask the respondents open-ended questions in which they were supposed to determine what they dream about the most. Thanks to their responses, they could distinguish 6 categories of human dreams. For research purposes, these categories were coupled with passivity strategies.

Table 1.
Dream categories and passivity strategies (n=105; p<0,05)

	Non-passive	Passivity	Over-adaptation	Agitation	Incapacitation	Violence
material things	-0.12	0.23	0.18	0.18	0.16	0.27
passion	0.04	-0.10	0.01	0.12	0.03	-0.06
personal development	0.20	-0.07	0.05	0.16	0.07	-0.03
family	0.29	-0.00	-0.01	-0.15	-0.22	0.02
health	0.26	-0.09	-0.01	-0.05	-0.04	-0.05
happiness	0.14	0.08	0.10	0.13	0.01	0.05

Source: own research

Studying the table above, one can draw a conclusion that there is some relationship between dreams about material things and passive strategies such as passivity and violence. People functioning in the passivity strategy more often have dreams linked with material things. It derives from the fact that passive people do not put any effort into achieving their goals. Such goals, in comparison with other categories mentioned above, are more down-to-earth and concrete. However, to make such dreams come true one must find a stable source of income which a job gives. People characterized by passivity depend on others or take up a job only for a short time as they get discouraged and quit fast. Lack of a stable job or frequent job changing make making money impossible, that is why passive people, due to lack or not enough wealth, orientate their dreams in that direction.

People using the violence strategy also dream about material things more often than about the goals mentioned with other categories above. It is because their negative emotions occurring due to failures in achieving their dreams lead to activities which do not render desired results. A strong desire to get money

and failure in that area makes one lose their enthusiasm and control over one's behaviour. As a result, these people might be shunned by their family members, friends, and they might face difficulties at work. M. Hyatt said, "If you have a clear vision, you will eventually attract the right strategy. If you don't have a clear vision, no strategy will save you" (Maxwell, 2014, p. 49). That is why it is worth thinking first about one's goal in life before one starts to act as ill-considered decisions can lead to a series of failures.

People characterized by non-passive behaviours dream to a greater extent about personal development, health and family. Such attitudes foster dream realization as these people are motivated to achieve their goals and believe in their abilities. Such people use available resources to realise their dreams, which puts them closer to fulfilling them. In the area of personal development, they are motivated to get a promotion and achieve success, not stopping but consistently striving for the sense of self-realisation. Dreams about family and health might refer to one's own well-being as well as to one's nearest and dearest. These people think not only about their needs but also about others' needs. Dreams about family can concern starting one's own family or ensuring happiness and safety for one's family members, while dreams about health might regard both one own health and others' health.

The table also shows that there is a correlation between the strategy of incapacitation and dreams about a family. The more an individual is willing to act in accordance with the strategy of incapacitation, the more their dreams about a family diminish. Past failures linked with realizing one's dreams might lead to discouragement, which makes it impossible to go on to further stages of striving for one's goals. Starting a family means a lot of responsibility and life-long obligations. Not everyone feels responsible enough to tackle this task. In case of attempts to start a family, each failure might cause more discouragement and giving up on realizing that dream.

There is a noticeable relationship between dream categories and dominant passive strategies in an individual. Persons who function in the passivity or violence strategy dream more often about material goods. In case of the incapacitation strategy, there is a noticeable decrease in dreams about a family. Persons who do not use any passivity strategies dream most often about health, family and personal development.

Feeling of agency in dream realisation and passivity strategies

The analysis made it possible to show the relationship between the feeling of agency in dream realisation and functioning in passivity strategies. Depending on how the respondents perceive what their dreams' realization depends on, whether it is on themselves, people surrounding them, fate or circumstances, their approach is linked with different passivity strategies.

Table 2.
Relationship between dreams and passivity strategies (n=105; p<0.05)

	Non-passivity	Passivity	Over-adaptation	Agitation	Incapacitation	Violence
on oneself	0.34	-0.04	-0.12	-0.05	-0.11	-0.08
on people around	-0.06	0.13	0.10	0.06	0.13	0.13
on fate	-0.09	0.22	0.19	0.21	0.14	0.10
on circumstances	-0.20	0.19	0.21	0.24	0.17	0.14

Source: own research

Persons displaying non-passive behaviours believe that realising their dreams depends solely on themselves. They take responsibility and engage in realizing their goals, thinking that thanks to hard work and perseverance they can realise their dreams. As a result, they believe that circumstances do not impact the realization of their aspirations. There is a relationship here that states that the more non-passive behaviours an individual shows, the less significance is attributed to circumstances in the context of dream realization.

Dreams whose realisation depends on fate were picked by persons functioning in such strategies as passivity, over-adaptation and agitation. It derives from the fact that these persons do not take responsibility for their own lives and do not see that it is their determination that could lead to dream realization. They accept the status quo and do not want to question it as it would require changing their deeply-rooted habits. Such a step would be linked with discomfort that they do not want to experience. It is more comfortable for them to believe that their actions do not depend on them but on fate. Likewise, they do not want to fully control the realization of their dreams. Treating fate as an external factor absolves them of responsibility for their own actions, and they find it much easier to admit that not realizing their dreams is caused by fate they have no influence on.

Persons thinking that fulfilling their dreams depends on circumstances operate in the strategies of over-adaptation and agitation. Circumstances can be usually perceived as occasions that are linked with special, ceremonial events. That shows that for these persons dream realization is not something which is available every day but something special, rare, kept for a special occasion. Treating dreams in such a way offers a comfortable excuse to pursue them less often. In the strategy of over-adaptation, an individual is not motivated to realise their dreams as these dreams do not belong to them, they were taken over from other people. As for the strategy of agitation, an individual does not believe in their capacities, that is why they shoulder their responsibility for dream realization to circumstances.

Dreams as fantasy or a goal

The research shows that people with dominant passive behaviours, i.e. passivity, over-adaptation, agitation, incapacitation or violence treat their dreams as fantasy.

Table 3.

Dreams perceived as fantasy/ a goal and passivity strategies (n=105; p<0.05)

	Non-passivity	Passivity	Over-adaptation	Agitation	Incapacitation	Violence
Fantasy and a goal	0.49	-0.35	-0.32	-0.26	-0.35	-0.22

Source: own research

It is caused by the fact that people are afraid to take responsibility for their actions and decisions. Nor being ready for this, they often shoulder their own obligations to others. According to Maxwell, "If your dream depends to a large extent on a stroke of luck, you have got a problem. If it entirely depends on a stroke of luck, you live in the world of fantasy" (2014, p. 71). It shows that a person who perceives their dreams as unreal fantasies will never find motivation to fulfil them. Such people rely entirely on luck, believing that dream realisation is like a lottery – it will either bring success or failure. For them, living in the world of fantasy becomes reality.

People characterised by non-passive behaviours treat their dreams as a goal which is possible to achieve. Such people are fully disciplined and they also focus on the path that leads to the established goal. They desire to realise their dreams thanks to their hard work. They generate energy that favours striving for action and teamwork. What is more, they are fully responsible for themselves and their actions. The more an individual functions in the domain of passive strategies, the less they shall perceive their dream as a goal possible to achieve. However, if an individual is characterized by non-passive behaviours, they shall perceive their dreams as something possible to achieve.

Summary

The conducted research made it possible to study the relationships between dreams and passive strategies in the context of the passivity concept, adopting the perspective of transactional analysis. Thanks to the relationships observed, one can draw conclusions on how people perceive their dreams. The respondents' answers show which passive strategy dominates in each case. Such a strategy makes achieving one's goal impossible.

The research analysis shows that the biggest number of people demonstrate non-passive behaviours as far as their dreams are concerned, and they are followed by those demonstrating such passive strategies as over-adaptation, agitation, passivity, incapacitation and violence. The results also prove that there is a relationship between passive functioning and a dream category as persons functioning in passivity and violence most often dream about material goods, whereas persons with the strategy of incapacitation dream about a family much less frequently. On the other hand, persons characterized by non-passive behaviours dream to the largest extent about health and personal development. Thanks to the research the relationship between the feeling of agency in dream realization and functioning in passive strategies came to light. For persons demonstrating passive behaviours, dream realization depends solely on themselves, while for the respondents showing over-adaptation or agitation fulfilling their dreams also depends on external circumstances. The result analysis also provided the answer to the question regarding dream perception in the category of fantasy/ goal and functioning in passive strategies. Persons acting in the passivity strategy perceive dreams as fantasy whereas those non-passive ones perceive dreams as goals. Moreover, for people using different passivity strategies such as over-adaptation, agitation, incapacitation or violence, dreams are also more likely to take the shape of fantasy.

These studies may be useful in therapy, especially in the context of overcoming passivity. In this case, talking about dreams can have a healing effect, helping to counter passive behaviours. The research results may be also precious for people who do not believe their dreams can come true, helping them to understand the reason behind it. What is more, they are useful for psycho-prevention specialists and therapists running group therapy because if certain relationships can be identified, using dreams in therapy can support fighting with passivity.

The presented research constitutes the second stage of exploration based on the assumptions of transactional analysis. It reveals the relationship between adults' dreams and their passive functioning, which is confirmed by particular dream categories linked with passivity strategies. The existing relationships lead to the conclusions showing how people perceive their dreams.

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Charakterystyka marzeń osób dorosłych w perspektywie koncepcji pasywności w rozumieniu analizy transakcyjnej

Streszczenie

Tekst jest raportem z badań autorki dotyczących charakterystyki marzeń osób dorosłych w perspektywie koncepcji pasywności w rozumieniu analizy transakcyjnej. Celem eksploracji było określenie potencjalnego związku pomiędzy marzeniami (ich rodzajem, sposobem podejścia do marzeń, czy postrzeganiem w kategorii fantazja/cel) a strategiami pasywnymi. Poniższe badania mają charakter ilościowy i wskazują na to, jak bardzo realne według respondentów jest zrealizowanie przez nich swojego marzenia.

Słowa kluczowe: marzenia, pasywność, analiza transakcyjna, strategie pasywne, kategorie marzeń.