Psycho-Theological Integrative Model of Dream for Psycho-Spiritual Therapists in Kenya

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DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.909000140

Received: 26 August 2025; Accepted: 01 September 2025; Published: 02 October 2025

ABSTRACT

Dreams are a universal experience, remembered or not remembered, believed or not believed, but with lots of complexities surrounding the understanding and interpretation. This study explores the multifaceted phenomenon of dream experiences from psychological, theological, and cultural perspectives. Using a phenomenological research design, the study engaged with twenty-five psycho-spiritual therapists in Kenya in individual interviews for fifteen, and ten others in a focused group discussion. The data collected with semi-structured interview guides for individual and group interviews were analyzed and presented narratively and thematically. The findings show that most psycho-spiritual therapists have had clients with dream concerns in therapy sessions, show understanding of dreams from psychological, theological, and cultural perspectives, and have supported dreamer clients through an integrative approach. The study proposed an integrative model that combines psychological, theological, and cultural understanding of dreams towards enhanced therapeutic outcomes that address clients' diverse needs and promote holistic healing.

Keywords: Dream, integration, psychological dream, spiritual dream, cultural dream, dream understanding, dream interpretation, integrative psycho-theological model.

INTRODUCTION

Dreams are a complex human phenomenon experienced by everyone but interpreted differently. For psychologists, they can be seen as neuro-adaptive or a disorder. For Biblical theologians, they are among the ways God communicates with humans. These perspectives are shaped by cultural understanding. This study explored an integrative model for psycho-theological understanding of dreams within a cultural context. The article presents the background of the study, examining psychological, theological, and cultural frameworks related to dreams. It discusses the statement of the problem, research methodology, findings leading to the integrative model, discussions, and concludes with suggestions for an integrated approach for psycho-spiritual therapists.

BACKGROUND

Dreams are a universal experience with lots of complexities in their understanding, interpretations, and living out. Everyone dreams (Cherry 2022), but not everyone remembers their dreams (Domhoff 2003). This is because dream recall varies significantly from person to person, and is influenced by many factors, including sleep patterns, stress levels, dream interest, spirituality, and neurobiological activity.

Among those who remember their dreams, much of the dream story and its meaningfulness vary depending on the contributing factors (Schredl 2005). While for some it is vivid, for others it may be fragmented or disconnected (Hobson 1988; Hartmann 2011). Yet only a bit of the dream is usually remembered, especially those that raise concerns (Malinowski and Horton 2014; Domhoff 2003). The attitudes towards dreams are also different. According to Schredl (2002), whether one sees dreams as meaningful, foolish, spiritual, or scientific, these views and attitudes significantly influence recall frequency and the attention given to dreams. Moreover, cultural, personal, and religious factors shape how people understand, interpret, and value their dreams (Bulkeley

2008).

The term "dream" is frequently used in both everyday language and academic discourse, even in the awake state, as found in Martin Luther's 1962 iconic speech, "I have a dream" (1986, 218). This was a speech presented as a dream while not dreaming.

What is a dream? Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2024) defines "a series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep." Savary, Berne, and Williams (1984, 4),

A night dream is a spontaneous, symbolic experience lived out in the inner world during sleep. Such dreams are composed of a series of images, actions, thoughts, words, and feelings over which we seem to have little or no conscious control. The people, places, and things of our dreams can sometimes be related to remembered life experiences or images that remain in our memory, but often they seem to come from sources to which we have little or no conscious access.

The symbols, images, thoughts, emotions, and actions of dreams have been examined through psychological, theological, and cultural frameworks. Each of these frameworks also stems from different philosophical and religious standpoints.

Psychologically, dreams are understood as the product of unconscious desire, the process of the mind, and emotional expression. Many psychological theories have attempted to understand and interpret dreams.

For the psychoanalysts led by Sigmund Freud, dreams reveal unconscious desires and conflicts and serve as a form of wish fulfilment by using symbols to disguise true meanings (Freud 1900). Carl Jung rather emphasizes collective unconscious and archetypes relating to dreams as a reflection of personal and universal themes which promote self-discovery and individuation (1964a). He also addressed archetypal symbols in dreams where individuals could achieve an in-depth understanding of themselves and where they stand in the universe (1964b).

Cognitive behavioral therapists view dreams as reflections of thoughts and concerns during the wake time. In this case, dreams serve as information processing and problem-solving mechanisms of daily life experiences, Dreaming is a process where memories are consolidated and resolve life issues as the brain rehearses and refines cognitive skills and strategies (Hoss and Valli 2019). However, for the neuroscientists who examine brain activities during sleep, dreams may be a result of random neural firing, attempting to organize into a coherent narrative according to the activation-synthesis hypothesis developed by Hobson and McCarley (1977).

Although psychologically, dreams are considered normal and natural, they are also presented as a form of psychological disorder. Clinically, one may suffer from dream disorders, one of which is a nightmare disorder, also known as dream anxiety disorder, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5, 2013). This is a psychological diagnosis assigned to individuals who experience frequent, severe nightmares that are characterized by a wider range of emotions, including joy, fear, and anxiety (Levin 2000). Nightmares can indicate underlying psychological distress and often require interpretation. Dream disorder falls under the parasomnia category of sleep disorders, which is characterized by abnormal events or experiences.

From psychological perspective, dreams are understood as symbolic expressions of the unconscious mind which can be interpreted by utilizing Freud's (1900) dreamwork or Jungian analysis (1964). Through these interpretive approaches, it may be possible to uncover repressed thoughts, unresolved emotional conflicts, daily life's unfinished business. In contrast, nightmares, especially recurrent or trauma-based ones, may not benefit solely from interpretative approaches. They often require psychiatric or clinical intervention, particularly when they interfere with sleep quality, indicate trauma, or are symptoms of mental disorders like PTSD (Krakow and Zadra 2010).

Theological framework, however, view dream experiences differently. This framework represents diverse religious traditional views of dreams, but generally as an experience which can be divinely initiated. According to Jung (1961) who identifies religiously as a pantheist, dreams are a bridge between the conscious and

unconscious mind, divine communication that reveal depth truth that can serve as a spiritual guidance.

In the exploration of how diverse religious traditions understand and interpret dream symbolism and messages, Hoss and Valli (2019) hold that the symbolic messages of dreams offer spiritual wisdom which are used in religious practices to gain insight into one's spiritual path. Like Jung, they hold that the symbolic interpretation of dreams can be understood from the belief that dreams reveal hidden truth and promote spiritual growth.

Dreams are understood from karma perspective in Hinduism, and they serve the purpose of spiritual development. Hindus see dreams not just random experiences but as reflections of past action (karma), omens of future events, or insights into one's inner spiritual condition. These understandings are found in the *Upanishads* and classical Ayurvedic texts, which classify dreams into different types: those caused by diet, dreams caused by mental states, spiritual dreams, and dreams which are karmic revelations (Charaka Samhita, Sharira Sthana 4.58).

In Buddhist's Tibetan and Zen traditions, dreams are regarded as manifestations of the mind and instruments for cultivating awareness. These are parts of illusory nature of reality known as *maya.* Being aware while dreaming is imperative to spiritual practice. In Buddhism, dream yoga or lucid dreaming is a practice which helps to realize the illusory nature of self while practicing mindfulness and non-attachment (Norbu 2002).

Islam categorizes dreams into three types. According to Sahih Muslim, Book 29, Hadith 5621, the first type is true dreams (*Ru'ya Sadiqah*), which are considered visions from Allah. They may carry spiritual insight, moral guidance, or glimpses of future events. The second type is identified as False Dreams known as *Hulm* from *Shaytan* (Satan) with the purpose to disturb or confuse the believer. The third type are dreams for *Nafs* (self), which originates from individual's thoughts, emotions, or life experiences. These may be without meaning.

For Prophet Mohammed, dreams can be prophetic (*wahy*), for according to a well-known hadith (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book 87, Hadith 112), *"Nothing is left of the prophethood except glad tidings." They asked: "What are glad tidings?" He replied: "True dreams."*" Hence, the need for interpretation, which became a significant discipline in Islamic scholarship, was grounded in Qur'anic examples (e.g., the dreams of Prophet Joseph/Yusuf in Surah Yusuf, Qur'an 12:4) and expanded upon by classical scholars like Ibn Sirin.

In Christian religion, dreams are of great theological importance, and of spiritual significance. They are understood as means through which God communicates with his people. There are countless examples of dream experiences in the Bible where God, through dreams, communicate his will, warn and guide individuals and community, convey prophetic insights, or affirm covenantal purposes.

Two notable dreamers in the Bible are the dreams of Joseph, son of Jacob (Genesis 37; 40–41) whose personal dreams revealed his future exaltation (Gen 37:5–11), and whose interpretation of Pharaoh's cupbearer, baker, and Pharaoh himself (Gen 40–41), emphasized God as the true interpreter of dreams (Gen 40:8). The second is the dreams of Joseph the husband of Mary (Matthew 1–2) who received four prophetic dreams (e.g., Matt 1:20–21; 2:13, 2:19, 2:22) guiding him to protect the Christ child. These dreams are often prophetic, requiring discernment and interpretation, either directly by the dreamer or by another person gifted in the interpretations, as a spiritual charism.

The Bible also speaks of double dreams or paired dreams that confirm a divine message, as seen in Joseph's binding sheaves dream in Genesis 37:7, where his sheaf rises, and his brother's sheaves bow to it; and his second dream in Genesis 37:9, where the sun, moon, and eleven stars bow to him. The two dreams predicted his family serving him. Though Joseph's family did not believe in his dreams. A similar double dream is evident in Pharaoh's double dream (Gen 41:1-7), which Joseph interprets as God's way of emphasizing certainty and urgency (Gen 41:32).

The Bible recognizes and warns of false dreams and false prophets who claim divine authority for personal or deceptive agendas. The Book of Prophet Jeremiah alluded to this saying, *"I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed! I have dreamed!'"* (23:25), *"Do not listen to the dreams they dream. They are prophesying lies to you in my name."* (29:8–9). So, while dreams can be an

authentic divinely factored, discernment is highly encouraged. The discernment involves scriptural grounding, spiritual direction, or prophetic testing. St Paul warns the Thessalonians in his first letter, "*Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good"* (5:20-21, NIV).

Culturally, dreams hold an important and sacred place. Dreams are treated with spiritual significance as guidance, warning, or divine communication. Many indigenous African traditions view dreams as portals to the spirit world, through which ancestors communicate with the dreamer in form of warnings, or special calling (Bulkeley 2008). In other words, dreams are sacred messages from God or ancestors imbued with cultural, prophetic, or moral lessons.

Among the Native Americans, dreams is part of their spiritual identity and vision quest (Znamenski 2007). In Aboriginal Australian cultures, the "Dreamtime" represents both the spiritual past and a living framework for existence (Stanner 1979; Tonkinson 2006). In Asian religious systems (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism), dreams are linked to karma, dharma, or inner consciousness (Bulkeley 2008; Kohn 2001). And among many African communities, dreams are interpreted by elders or diviners and often considered morally instructive. Meaning that, every culture interprets dreams according to its worldview that what may be dismissed as a meaningless dream in a Western psychological framework could be revered as divine communication in another (Tedlock 2005; Thorpe 1993; Ngubane 1977). Thus, Krippner (2000) stated that dreams reflect not only inner psychic processes but also the cultural assumptions a people hold about time, spirit, death, and the human soul.

Kenyan cultural understanding and interpretation of dream experiences are shaped by spiritual and religious beliefs. Like many other cultures, dreams are a means of communication between the living and the spirit world. Dreams can serve as means through which the ancestors, spirits, of God communicate with individuals. Through dream messages, individuals are warned, guided, or blessed (Nwoye 2017). For instance, dreams are central elements in prophetic manifestation among the Luo of Nyanza, Kenya. They are means through which supernatural or divine communication occur, influencing religious and societal dynamics (Omondi 2025). Certain individuals, called prophets, seers, or diviners, are known for their ability to experience meaningful and purposeful dreams that are prophetic. These dreams influence individual and community decisions in farming, rituals, and conflict resolution (Ngugi 2019).

Owing to the fact that majority Kenyans practice Christianity (85.5%) and Islam (11%) (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2019; US Department of State 2023), a syncretic approach is not uncommon, where traditional African dream beliefs are blended with elements of Christian or Islamic beliefs. Many Christians and Muslims in Kenya value dreams and seek interpretation through the lens of the Bible, Quran, and tradition (Adeyemi 2025). How dreams are used for receiving names, treatment, counseling, and communication with the ancestors is evident among Luo community (Omondi 2025; Adeyemi 2025). This reveals that dreams points to the aspects of the Luo ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical outlooks. Although traditional beliefs are stronger in local communities, they are also evident in the cities. Yet, a person's utilization of cultural dream interpretations varies based on education, religious affiliation, and person experiences and beliefs.

Dream interpretation is symbolic and it is often transmitted by the elders through oral traditions. For instance, dreaming about a snake can be interpreted as a warning about an unknown enemy or a spiritual challenge. Dreaming about a flood may signify emotional overwhelm or spiritual attach according to Adeyemi (2025). In some situations, dream interpretation is influenced by Arabic dream books and Islamic practices as found among the Swahili on the Kenyan coast. Dreams are generally perceived as legitimate means of divine revelation with their impact on societal resistance, religious practices, and establishment of independent religious movements. For many Christian Kenyans, these experiences are instrumental in shaping personal response to Christianity and colonialism (Omondi 2025).

Attempts have been made to integrate psychological, theological, and cultural frameworks in understanding and interpreting dreams. There have been several practices, traditions, and contemporary approaches that integrate psychological, theological, and cultural understandings of dreams, especially in some pastoral counselling and spiritual direction practices, cross-cultural psychology, indigenous healing traditions, and certain schools of depth psychology. For instance, Practitioners of Transpersonal Psychology, like Jeremy Taylor (1992),

incorporate religious symbolism, personal transformation, and sociocultural narratives in interpreting dreams, holding that dreams speak the universal language of the soul that is filtered through the vocabulary of our personal and cultural experience. Barry and Connolly (1982) noted that Spiritual directors sometimes pay attention to dreams as a way of discerning God's movement in the directee's life, while being mindful of psychological processes and cultural symbolism. John Stanford (1968), an Episcopal priest who was also a Jungian, made efforts to combine biblical theology and psychological dreamwork, believing that the psyche speaks to us through dreams, through which it carries messages from God, soul, and culture. Also, in traditional societies, healing through dreams involves the community, the ancestors, spiritual realities, and the individual's emotions and story (Tedlock 2005).

The cultural context for dream understanding and interpretation is such that the interpretation of dreams, whether psychological or theological, cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural context in which those dreams arise. According to Krippner **(**2000), what Jung or Freud might call a symbol of the unconscious could be seen as an ancestral message or spiritual instruction in another context. Also, Bulkeley (2008) holds that dreams are interpreted in line with a society's beliefs about the nature of the divine, the soul, and the afterlife, making spiritual dream interpretation culturally embedded.

The ideas of Krippner (2000) and Bulkeley (2008) will perfectly fit the frame of practice of psycho-spiritual integration, where psychology and spirituality are integrated within the context of culture (Egunjobi 2024). Thus, in each context, the meaning of dreams is shaped by philosophical, psychological, and spiritual worldviews, cosmologies, and communal rituals. These are visible when clients bring dream concerns to psychotherapy.

Research has shown that dreams can be used in therapy, with 74% of therapists having worked with dreams at some point (Hill, Thompson, and Cogar 2000). Therapists with psychodynamic or integrative orientations are more likely to use dreams, and their interest and training in dreams strongly influence their use. In a study by Pesant and Zadra (2004), dreams occurred in 55% of sessions analyzed. Dreams are often addressed when clients bring them up or during major transitions. Dream content often reflects real-life emotional challenges and is effectively integrated into therapeutic goals. Therapists trained in analytic or Jungian models use dreams frequently, while CBT and behaviorist practitioners are less likely to incorporate dreams unless related to trauma, sleep disorders, or nightmares (Kiel and Behr 1995). Dreams are used effectively in both creative problem-solving and clinical therapy, often emerging involuntarily during periods of high stress or transition (Barrett 2001).

Although dreams are shaped by a multiplicity of factors such as psychology, theology, and culture, there seems to be no universally standardized model that fully integrates these frameworks in understanding or interpreting dreams. It is this integration that this study seeks to present. By doing so, the psycho-spiritual therapists who are faced with clients' experiences of dreams will be able to adequately assist without over-psychopathologizing, over-theologizing, or neglecting the importance of dreams in their clients' lives.

Statement of the Problem

Dream experiences have been met with different reactions. While for some dreams mean nothing, others see dreams as either a symptom of underlying psychological disorders, or as revelatory, depicting divine communication from God or the devil about the past, present, or the future. Any of these views can be shared by the psycho-spiritual therapists who find themselves now and then listening, understanding, and relating to clients' experiences of dreams. Yet, all these views may have something in common or overlap, needing a proper understanding of the differences and the similarities. These views can be integrated to make discernments for proper intervention or support offered to the dreamer. Literature in the integrative approach is rare. This is the gap this study seeks to bridge.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to design an integrative model through which Christian psycho-spiritual therapists might assist clients who present concerns from their dream experiences without over-psychopathologizing, over-theologizing, or disregarding these experiences. It is to present a holistic view of dream experiences to assist

clients in achieving a holistic understanding and healing of a psycho-spiritual nature.

Research Question

How might dreams be understood psychologically, theologically, and culturally, to support dreaming clients in an integrative psycho-theological approach?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the dream understanding and experiences encountered in psycho-spiritual therapy. Twenty-five psycho-spiritual therapists in Kenya were purposively sampled to participate in the study. Fifteen psycho-spiritual therapists (six males, nine females, two to sixteen years of practice with at least a Master's Degree) participated in the individual interviews (II), while ten (five males, five females, two to four years of practice with Master's Degrees) participated in the focus group discussions (FGD). The data collected with semi-structured interview guides for individual and group interviews were analyzed and presented narratively and thematically.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study cover the encounter of a dreamer client, the psycho-spiritual therapists' understanding of dreams, distinguishing psychological dreams from theological dreams, the forms of integration practice, and the support offered to the dreamers.

Encounter of Dreamer Clients

The findings revealed that the majority of psycho-spiritual therapists have at one time or the other in their practices encountered clients who bring issues of dreams to therapy. Among the participants in the individual interviews, all had dealt with clients' issues relating to dreams, while only about half of the focus group discussants had encountered such situations in psycho-spiritual therapy sessions.

Psycho-Spiritual Therapists' Understanding of Dreams

Everyone dreams, but not everyone remembers. Dreams are "*a series of images, thoughts, sensations that occur in the mind during sleeping*" (Discussant 4). Dreams are part of us that are buried inside our unconscious self and become alive when we are asleep, using symbols, images, and words to reveal to us another side of life lived and yet to be lived. That is, they are unique subjective experiences that occur in an unconscious state while sleeping. They can relate to what has happened in the past or what may happen in future. According to Discussant 2, the content of dreams may relate to "*what one was thinking before going to bed, and it can also be a spiritual way of revealing things to the person.*"

These happen to us in an unconscious state when we are asleep, and most often, we are able to recall some part of them and sometimes not able to recall them. They are things that predict to us about the future in some cases. (Discussant 5)

Dreams can also be a way the human body or mind tries to regulate itself. This was expressed by Discussant 7, who stated that

In my understanding, a dream is a way the body or human mind is trying to release itself from stress caused by conflicts in physical reality. For example, what you want to do in real life that you cannot do because of the societal norms may be experienced in a dream when the unconscious takes over; you see yourself doing those things.

In other words, "*dreams are expressions of what I wanted to address but I haven't, like an unfinished business which I put at the back of my mind and reflect in my dreams*" (Discussant 1).

Dreams also come as revelations. As a gift. "*People normally are gifted that they dream and what they dream comes about, or they have been revealed what has happened – either what will happen in the future or what has already happened*" (Discussant 5). Participant 12 shares a client's experience,

A particular client shared that most times incidents going to happen in her life come in a dream. For example, she once fought a spiritual battle in her dreams. On getting to her place of work, a staff member who had constantly met her in the office came in and, in her mind, she said a binding and casting prayer and the next day, this staff fell sick, and that was the last visit of the staff to her office. So, there are both physical and spiritual human presence features.

Discussant 1 substantiated how dreams can be revelatory of past events when he expressed, There is a reality that I personally experienced that dreams may not always be about something that will happen, but it may be about something that has happened in the past that God just want to reveal to the person. A brother of mine had an accident two weeks prior to my dream. I had a dream of the accident with the name of the person concerned. I had to call my brother, and when I called him to say that I would like to speak with him, I asked, 'Are you planning to travel?' He responded, 'I have had an accident.' So, it does not mean that it concerns something that may happen, it may be something that has been hidden, that, through inspiration, even when the person has not thought about it before, just comes to play.

Also, Participant 1 gave some factors that can influence her dream experiences:

I am one of those who dream. I dream, and I take my dream seriously. I believe that there are three aspects that influence my dreams: (1) my childhood influences my dreams a lot, (2) my unconscious desires that have not been met also influence my dreams, (3) my desires for the future also influences my dreams, and (4) my fears influence what comes out in my dream. So, what I do is that if I remember when I wake up, if I remember the dream, then I try to process it… I believe dreams are tools that one can use to understand the subconscious better and then see what to do for the better.

Participant 15 also shared her personal experience where she recently dreamed of her father on three consecutive days, telling her that he was going somewhere and if she was not prepared, he was going to leave her behind. On that same third day of having similar dreams, she got the news that her father had died. She called this a "*premonition."* This experience can be related to the experience of *double dreams,* like the dreams of Pharaoh. Pharaoh's dreams can be found in Genesis 41:1-7, where in the first dream, Pharaoh was found standing by the Nile River. There he saw seven healthy and well-fed cows emerging from the river, followed by seven thin cows. The thin cows devoured the healthy ones, yet they remain as thin as before. In the second dream, Pharaoh saw seven plump and good heads of grain on a single stalk. Then, he saw seven thin and scorched heads of grain sprout, which swallowed up the plump heads of grain. Joseph's interpretation of the double dreams showed a *premonition* of what was to come, which indeed happened.

But for Participant 14, dreams can originate from the Devil. She stated,

Most of the time, you can find the way, the way I… I used to be taught, it is the devil who carries your spirit and frustrates you wherever you go. So, if you have not, if you have not prayed enough, then the spirits will come, the spirits will come and take your spirit, and they will move you whatever they want because it is time for darkness, and in that moment the devil can guide you. So, you have to pray a lot.

Dreams are also seen as a consequence of cultural interactions in society. Participant 1 noted,

Dreams can also be cultural. Some cultures believe that as you grow older, you begin to have more dreams because the ancestors are trying to speak to you as a fellow elder in a way that you will hear and then communicate the dream message to the rest of the family.

This cultural aspect of dreams cannot be overlooked in understanding and interpreting dreams. Participant 4 stated,

Dreams need interpretation. The cultural context of the dreamer is imperative. This is not just interpreting the dream, going to read a book, and saying Oh, the person dreamed about this, so this is what it means. No, rather, the person's dream should be interpreted by asking, What does it mean? What would it mean in the culture, in the context of the dreamer? So, I will say these are the things, apart from a general and deeper understanding of dreams, you should look at - the interpretation of dreams in specific cultures of the dreamers.

Despite the beliefs and understanding of dreams as a meaningful part of the human experience, Participant 14 neither takes dreams seriously nor believes in them. She said,

I dream every now and then, even very scary dreams, that I do discuss with my mother. You know…Ok, most of the time, the dreams are not a reality. First thing that comes which the dreams bring, you are in bed OK. In the dream, you can find yourself (that) you are near a river, you are working, you are doing this, the waters have taken you, you are stuck in water, you can find yourself screaming and asking for help, and with all those things, you're still in bed. How can you believe something like that? It has no meaning. OK I have bad experiences with dreams, it is all about killing people, finding myself in the tombs, on the graves or… all those things or sometimes I find myself with people with blood they have died, all those things. And those things make me not believe mostly in dreams. Why? Because I find myself in bed. I am OK. I found that where I was, many people have died or have killed someone, but not killed (in real life). Why should I believe in those things? For me, they have no meaning. Another reason that I don't believe, I don't count myself on believing in them, most of the time, I know that they are just thoughts, like a belief, if I can call it that.

About revelatory dreams, Participant 14 continues to hold that,

The person I share mostly with is my mom. I share with her, and she also shares her dreams. In most of her dreams, she tries to interpret. I can give an example. One day she told me that she saw that our firstborn was walking in a green place, a nice place, and it reached a moment when there was a dry way that he entered, and he started walking that dry way. She tried to call him…to come back, and it was impossible. And because he couldn't, he couldn't hear him responding to her,…he was talking to her, but she couldn't hear what he was saying. So from that moment, she lost her hearing. So she can hear, but a little far. And from that moment, my brother started suffering. So it was like, oh, yeah, this dream came true. But for me, I told my mom, that was just a dream. Yes, God can show you, or something can be shown to you… but this person was walking nicely, and in that moment he had entered into some challenges… but that one is, if you had thought about it during the day, OK, you have to dream. But if you had not thought about it, OK, it's just a dream. For me, it's just a dream, just forget about it and continue. For me, it has no meaning.

Psychological Perspectives on Dreams

Dream experiences of clients were attributed, in part, to unconscious subjective experiences of some psychological neuroadaptive experiences. They are a series of images, symbols, and sensations that occur in the mind during sleep. Sometimes, dreams are ways in which the human mind tries to relieve itself of stress caused by conflicts in physical reality. Participant 13 described these experiences as "*post-traumatic experiences with vivid story lines."*

Different psychological theories or frameworks were identified by the interview participants and focus group discussants as helpful in understanding visions and/or interpreting dreams. The following theoretical frameworks were mentioned:

1. Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic
2. Transpersonal Analysis
3. Cognitive Behavioral Approaches
4. Existential and Humanistic Approaches
5. Gestalt Therapy
6. Narrative Therapy
7. Integrative Model

Theological Perspectives on Dreams

This study also sought the understanding of the psycho-spiritual therapists of dreams from a theological, biblical, or spiritual perspective and how this understanding helps in assisting clients with dream experiences. This section thus looks at how biblical texts and teachings address the concept of dreams as related by the participants, how these perspectives are incorporated into psycho-spiritual therapy, their understanding and interpretation of dreams, and the spiritual practices or rituals that are used to address the dream experiences.

All the participants and discussants agreed that dream experiences are biblical. These experiences are both evident in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In a more meaningful way, Biblical texts present dreams as forms of revelation or ways in which God communicates His will to human beings. As stated by Participant 1, "*dreams are tools of spiritual communication."* Some of these dreams require interpretation by a prophet or a person God has given the gift of dream interpretation, like the biblical Joseph, the son of Jacob. Yet, revelatory dreams are not experienced by everyone. God communicates with certain chosen people for specific purposes. It was also noted by the focus group discussants that the Bible also addressed concerns about false prophets who related visions and dreams that are not from God. False prophets distort the truth, claiming, "Thus says the Lord," even when the message did not come from God. Hence, it is important to distinguish between dreams from God and those that are not.

The participants expressed some criteria for distinguishing true and false prophecy. The criteria include

1. Alignment with Scripture
2. Consistency with the character of God
3. Fulfillment of the prophecy
4. Impact of the prophecy on individuals and the community.

In the Old Testament, Joseph, the son of Jacob, had prophetic dreams, as did Pharaoh. This aligns with Muindi (2017), who hypothesized that all forms of prophecy are intuitive divine-human intermediatory phenomena characterized by "the immediacy of a revelatory impulse from the world of divinity to a human recipient and are received without any prior rationalization or reflection on the part of the recipient" (2). Hence, it can be said that visions and dreams are from God for a given purpose to reveal God's plans. Examples of revelatory/prophetic dreams are:

1. Jacob's dream of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven with angels descending and ascending on it (Genesis 28:10-17).
2. Joseph's dreams in Genesis 37:5-7 where in two dreams Joseph saw his brothers' sheaves of wheat bowing down to his sheaf, and the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him.
3. Solomon's dream which he asked God for wisdom, was granted him (1Kings 3:5-14)
4. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue made of different metals, which Daniel interpreted (Daniel 2:31-45).

God condemned false prophets who claimed to have dreams but spoke lies (Jeremiah 23:25-32). These prophets also claimed that God spoke to them through this when, in fact, God did not.

Similarly, the New Testament is replete with dreams. Notable dreams in the New Testament are

1. Joseph, the husband of Mary, had multiple dreams about the Annunciation and the protection of the Child Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-15)
2. Maji's dreams with the warning not to return to Herod, who sought to kill the Child Jesus (Matthew 2:12).
3. The dream of Pilate's wife encouraging Pilate to free Jesus (Matthew 27:19)

There is the understanding that dreams are not necessarily linked to any problem. This was made clear by Discussant 3 when she contributed that,

Dreams are not always linked to problems. In some cases, the client may simply want to understand the meaning of the dream. My role as a therapist is to guide the client in identifying any patterns and then help them understand the potential spiritual or psychological significance.

Dreams may, however, be linked to spiritual things as Participant 6 stated, "*First, I consider the possibility that dreams may originate from the Divine or Higher Power."* So, incorporating Biblical insights about dreams requires openness to the direction and guidance of God and the Holy Spirit, coupled with using different spirit-led principles. According to Participant 9, to incorporate Biblical or spiritual insights about dreams in psycho-spiritual therapy, "*I always ask God to take the lead and inspire me to listen attentively to His directives in my understanding and interpretation of visions and dreams."* This was supported by Participant 13, who stated that,

The scope of the interpretation of dreams requires listening to God's voice in the presenting images, types, symbols, and shadows. This is informed by the economy of our salvation in God's revelation in the Old Testament and God's reality in the New Testament, where God now deals with his people through the person of Jesus Christ. The types, shadows, and promises of the Old Testament were revealed in dreams and visions, but their fulfilments are seen in the person of Jesus Christ. This is very important for the interpretation of dreams, especially when considered from the perspective of our salvation history.

So, for Participant 12, the Bible serves as the foundation for understanding and interpretation. Participant 10 buttressed this by saying that "*I incorporate spiritual perspectives into my understanding and interpretation of dreams by appropriating standard Biblical understanding of certain images, animals, or numbers."*

Within the therapeutic setting, the following experiences shared by the interview participants and focus group discussants are also important in incorporating biblical insights into psycho-spiritual therapy. Participant 6 said,

I look out for images in the dreams and what they may mean for the client according to their religious and spiritual belief system. I also try to study and gain insights into different spiritual traditions. In very complex cases, I may refer or consult with spiritual teachers.

Some, however, avoid interpretation of the visions and dreams and only allow clients to make meaning of their experiences. For instance, Participant 1 stated,

I don't provide direct answers but instead guide them on a journey of self-awareness to help them discern what God may be communicating. The interpretation of a dream should ideally come from the individual, who knows their heart better than anyone else. I help facilitate this self-reflection process.

This was supported by Discussant 2, who disclosed that,

> *I don't provide the interpretation, but I help the client explore and discern the meaning for themselves. I may use spiritual practices or psychological insights, but ultimately, the client should feel empowered to interpret their own experiences. If the dream is truly from God, it will be confirmed through the client's ongoing spiritual journey, prayer, and reflection.*

Different was Participant 14, who would take an outright dismissive approach. When asked how she would handle clients' experience of dreams, she verbalized that she had not had any serious dream encounter in therapy. However, outside therapy,

> *If someone is telling me about dreams, most of the time I disconnect. I just disconnected and I found myself thinking about other things except when someone was sharing a dream experience, telling me, You see what, you see what, and the person was enjoying the narration. But for me, because I don't enjoy it, so, I just shift my mind.*

When asked what she would do if a client asked her to help him or her dream, she said,

> *OK, most of the time I don't just say anything, I will say just consult another person, why, because for me, it is something which has been has been disturbing me for so long. I've never got help with it, so I can't help this person either. But what is there for me, I just tell the person I don't believe in dreams…. Most of the time, I found many people who knew how to interpret their dreams, but for me, I had fear to know what it means, because the dreams are bad…. So, with that, how can you expect someone to come and interpret for you?*

Cultural Understanding

Dreams are cultural with underlying cultural influences. Dreams can also be seen as consequences through which the ancestors communicate with some individuals. For instance, Participant 1 noted,

> *Dreams can also be cultural. Some cultures believe that as you grow older, you begin to have more dreams because the ancestors are trying to speak to you as a fellow elder in a way that you will hear and then communicate the dream message to the rest of the family.*

Dreams are also understood and interpreted culturally, for the cultural context of the dreamer is imperative. Participant 4 stated,

> *Dreams need interpretation. The cultural context of the dreamer is imperative. This is not just interpreting the dream, going to read a book, and saying, oh the person dreamed about this so this is what it means. No, rather the person's dream should be interpreted by asking, what does it mean? What would it mean in the culture, in the context of the dreamer? So, I will say these are the things, apart from a general and deeper understanding of dreams, you should look at the interpretation of dreams in specific cultures of the dreamers.*

From the focus group discussion, it was also noted that "c*ultural worldview may bring about psychological automatic responses of reactions to arriving at certain conclusions that may filter in dreams, and resort to varied images or symbols in dreams."* Also, Participant 1 noted that

> *…sometimes, a psychological issue could be misinterpreted as a spiritual experience if the person's cultural beliefs strongly influence how they viewed it. If someone is experiencing anxiety, for example, it might manifest as dreams, but this could be a psychological issue, not a spiritual one.*

Integrative Psycho-theological Model

The research question of this study aims at exploring how dreams are understood psychologically, theologically, and culturally by psycho-spiritual therapists to support dreaming clients in an integrative psycho-theological manner. The previous section has presented the understanding of dreams from psychological, theological, and cultural perspectives.

Integrative Psycho-spiritual Therapists

On achieving effective integration of psychological and spiritual approaches to handling the client's experiences of dreams in psycho-spiritual therapy, it was found that the integration begins from the psycho-spiritual therapist him/herself. As Participant 1 noted,

> *Integration begins with the therapist themselves. You must understand what you are integrating. For example, if I have a client whose dream is connected to high levels of anxiety, I will first introduce relaxation exercises and encourage the client to practice them outside of therapy. If the person's religious experiences are tied to negative self-talk, I would address that negative self-talk using psychological techniques. At the same time, I would look at their spiritual understanding and cultural beliefs, so by the time I've addressed these layers, integration has taken place. It's not only in the techniques, but also in the mindset of recognizing that various aspects need to be brought together to address the whole person—mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.*

Participant 2 buttressed this, saying that,

> *To integrate psychological and spiritual perspectives, therapists need a strong understanding of both psychological theories and spiritual practices. This includes knowledge of dream analysis techniques and spiritual approaches to help clients navigate their experiences. Psychological issues may sometimes influence spiritual experiences and vice versa, so it's crucial to understand both realms. For example, a therapist may address anxiety through relaxation techniques and, if necessary, explore the spiritual or cultural beliefs influencing the client's dreams. Combining both psychological and spiritual tools helps clients gain a more holistic understanding of their experiences.*

The psycho-spiritual therapist's own integrative awareness and operation from both psychological and spiritual/cultural frameworks will allow for a holistic approach, especially seeing the client as a whole. This was expressed by Participant 3, who stated that,

> *To integrate psychological and spiritual perspectives, therapists should treat the person as a whole. The individual is both a psychological and spiritual being, and these aspects must be considered together. A psychospiritual therapist should be well-equipped in psychological, spiritual, and cultural matters. Understanding multiculturalism and interculturalism is essential to providing effective care. Integrating these perspectives will help the therapist meet the unique needs of each client.*

Considering the client's experience from a holistic perspective means that the client's own beliefs and worldview of dream experiences are not overlooked. For Participant 6, therefore,

> *To integrate both perspectives, therapists first need to understand the client's belief system, including their understanding of dreams within their spiritual context. For instance, therapists should explore what these visions mean to the client about their faith, whether it involves a belief in God, a supreme being, or another spiritual framework. Once this is understood, the therapist can then explore the psychological aspects of the client's experience. The integration of both psychological and spiritual perspectives ensures that neither is dismissed and both are addressed.*

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Participant 1 substantiated this with her profound experience, revealing the benefits of an integrative approach

> *I think the benefits are best expressed through client experiences. For instance, one of my directees shared that when his colleagues go for spiritual direction, they find it burdensome, but when he comes to me, he feels like it is a gift. I told him this is because I use a psychospiritual approach—not just focusing on spiritual direction but also addressing psychological aspects when needed. This approach allows me to work holistically, addressing spiritual, emotional, and cultural aspects of the person's life, which leads to healing. These different dimensions are interconnected and should not be treated in isolation.*

Navigating the overlap between psychological and spiritual vision and dream experiences

It was found that there could be some overlaps between frameworks for distinguishing psychological and spiritual dream experiences. In dealing with this, Participant 13 utilizes a holistic approach when he stated,

> *As a psycho-spiritual therapist, clinical interviews and assessment from the perspective of culture, spirituality, and psychology give an added value to hearing deeply the presenting story of the client and realizing the salient points. Also having an integrated clinical background enables me in the clinical space to explore the client's childhood experiences, object relations, spiral behaviors, client's environment, the inner world of the client, clients world view, drives, pulls as well as existential vacuums, needs being met and needs unmet, the clients religious, cultural and perception of the external realities/ spiritual connections. All these give a big source of content to navigate these overlaps, should they arise. But the by and large clinical diagnosis has often landed on the clients' inner theatre, especially when it has to do with psycho-traumatic stress.*

This was also supported by Discussant 3 when she stated that *"I start by understanding the client's presenting concerns and their emotional and spiritual history. This guides me in identifying whether the dream is more connected to psychological or spiritual aspects."* For Participant 9, conducting psychological and spiritual assessments in an integrative manner helps. She stated,

> *I first build trust and rapport, which are essential in every client-counsellor relationship. While exploring the clients' narrative, I may conduct psychological and spiritual assessments to understand the factors. I also try to avoid reducing the clients' experience to a single framework of either psychological or spiritual. Thus, I try to embrace integration while working with the client.*

Some psycho-spiritual therapists displayed their professional humility when they recognized their inadequacy or incompetence in distinguishing between psychological and spiritual experiences of visions and dreams by engaging in further studies, consultation, and making referrals. This is evident in the interview with Participant 5, who said,

> *I continuously study and seek guidance to navigate this overlap. I read spiritual literature, such as works by Teresa of Avila and the journal "God's Journal of the Cross," to deepen my understanding of both spiritual and psychological experiences. I also take courses on hypnosis and other therapeutic methods to broaden my perspective. Additionally, I consult with more experienced colleagues, including Jesuit priests and other therapists, to discuss challenging cases. They help me to clarify what therapeutic approach might be most appropriate.*

Participant 1 stated, "*Sometimes, I refer clients for assessments when I suspect there may be a deeper psychological issue at play, but I approach this with sensitivity and transparency, explaining the process to the client."* Participant 12 puts this simply, "*When I feel it is not clear, I refer."* Referral is a skill that promotes interdisciplinary collaboration.

Collaboration with other professionals is crucial when providing comprehensive care for clients with visionary or dream-related experiences. Since no one person holds all the knowledge, working with other experts can lead to a more complete understanding of the client's condition. This could include consulting psychiatrists to rule out medical causes, neurologists for potential brain-related issues, or even pastors to offer spiritual perspectives. Interdisciplinary collaboration ensures a well-rounded care plan. It came out clearly from the focus group discussions that not every psycho-spiritual therapist may be competent in handling dream-related issues. In these cases, referring the client to someone with expertise in this area is important. Dreams and visions are experiences that everyone may have, but their significance varies. It is crucial not to dismiss a client's experiences simply because you don't understand or value them. Normalizing the experience can help the client feel less isolated, as they may not realize that their dreams are part of the human experience. Hence, one may collaborate with other professionals. Participant 6 concurred,

> *Yes, collaboration is important. If a therapist feels that a client's issues are predominantly spiritual and incompetent in addressing this, they may refer the client to another spiritual director who specializes in deeper spiritual matters. Similarly, a therapist might refer a client to a clinical psychologist if psychological issues are suspected. This interdisciplinary collaboration ensures that the client receives well-rounded care.*

Participant 10 added,

> *When psycho-spiritual therapists work with other professionals like medical doctors, spiritual leaders and other psychologists in specialized roles, it creates an environment where the client is empowered. It also fosters personalized treatment plans. In this case, every client is considered unique, and tailored interventions are formulated to address the client's unique needs. By consulting medical professionals, the therapist can help the client address any medical condition that contributes to the issue. Also, by consulting spiritual leaders, the therapist can offer guidance on the spiritual dimensions of dreams and visions, thus helping the client integrate their experience of dreams into their spirituality.*

"This leads to a more thorough understanding of the client's experiences and needs and allows clients with vision or dream experiences to benefit from a network of diverse supports" (Participant 13).

Forms of Integration Practice

To integrate spiritual practices into the therapeutic process, Discussant 7 stated that,

> *I use various spiritual practices to support the therapeutic work. One approach is centering prayer, where I guide the client to reflect on what God may be saying through their dreams or visions. This practice helps the client connect spiritually and reflect on the meaning behind the dream.*
>
> *Another key practice is forgiveness, which can help release any negative emotional ties that might be influencing the client's dreams. Sometimes, the distress in a person's life is reflected in their dreams, and forgiveness can help resolve that.*
>
> *I also use biblical passages to help the client process past experiences. If they had a traumatic event or a distressing situation, I may guide them to reflect on how it affects their current emotional and spiritual life.*

Participant 6 added,

> *Yes, I find the use of guided imagery, which helps clients tap into their subconscious mind to reveal hidden meanings in dreams, very relevant. The guided imagery technique I have utilized is the focusing technique. I also find the use of journaling, gratitude practice, and discernment exercises helpful. Prayer in therapy helps the client submit the images and themes in the dream to the Divine.*

Other spiritual practices or rituals that emerged are:

1. Scriptural prayers
2. Meditation on Scripture
3. Guided meditation
4. Lectio Divina
5. Nature contemplation
6. Liturgical celebrations
7. Reconnection therapy (with self, with others, with God and with environment and with purpose and meaning of life)

Benefits of an integrative approach

When integrating psychological and spiritual approaches, the client benefits in several ways as thematized from the focus group discussions supported by the interview responses:

1. **Self-awareness:** Clients gain a deeper understanding of their reality and the meaning behind their dreams. As expressed by Participant 2, "*The primary benefit is improved self-understanding for clients. Many clients struggle with their dreams or visions, viewing them as burdens."*

2. **Anxiety Reduction:** The approach can help alleviate anxiety and depressive moods by offering clarity on their spiritual experiences. Participant 12 noted that, "*Integrative approach to helping clients with their dream experiences reduces client's anxiety, gives them a sense of psychological and spiritual stability, and prevents them from being exploited by impostors."*

3. **Discovery of Gifts:** Clients may uncover unique spiritual gifts or talents they didn't realize they had. For Participant 2, "*therapists can help clients understand their experiences, see them as gifts, and potentially use them to help others. This leads to greater satisfaction, happiness, and a sense of gratitude for their experiences."*

4. **Holistic Approach:** This integration promotes a holistic understanding of the client's experiences, both psychologically, spiritually, and culturally.

Designing an Integrative Model

Figure 1 Psycho-Theological Integrative Model

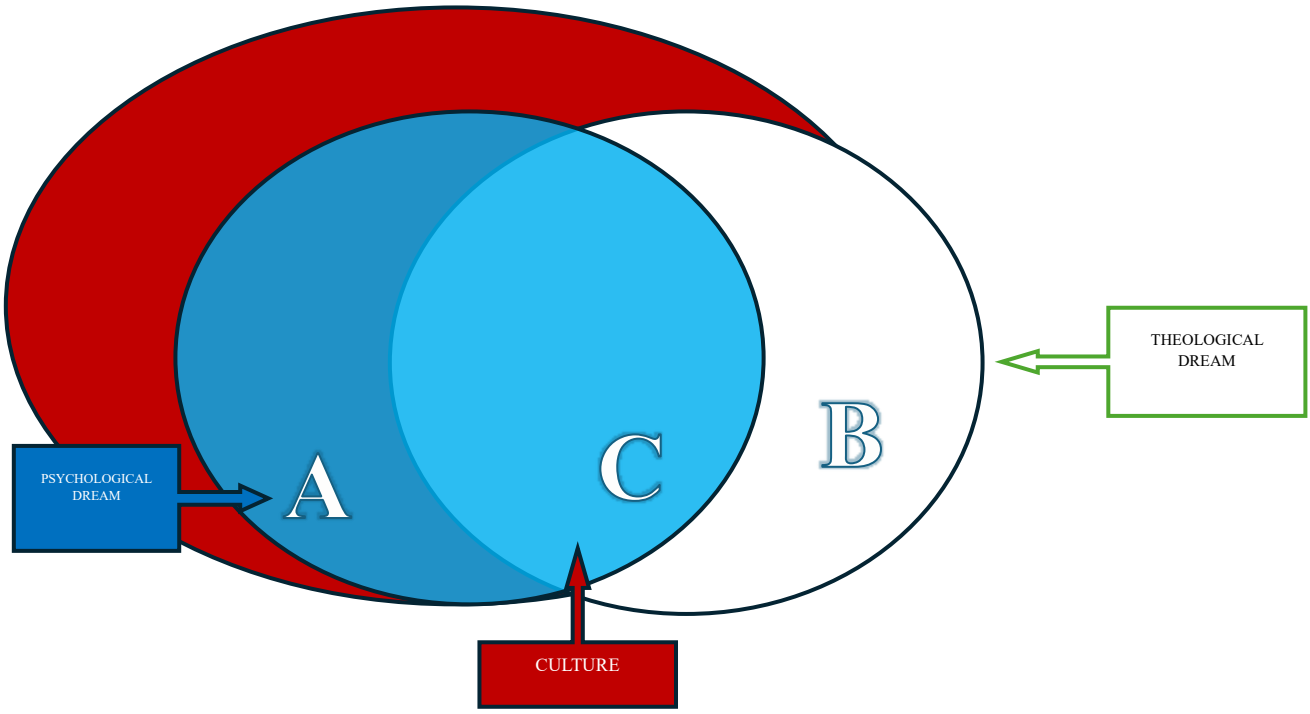

Figure 1 is a representative of the integrative model, where Circle A is the psychological dreams and Circle B is the spiritual dream overlapping at "C". The psychological Part A of dreams is the experiences that result from psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, or trauma. These play out in nightmares. Part B consists of dreams, which are either messages from God or the devil. These need spiritual attention for proper discernment. Part C presents the psycho-theological integration, where dream images and symbols are considered and interpreted from psychological and spiritual perspectives. Exploring personal experiences, spiritual discernment, and psychological assessment can be of help to distinguish and integrate psychological and spiritual dreams. Note that not all psychological dream understanding can be integrated into the theological dream understanding, and

not all theological dream understanding can be integrated into psychological dream understanding.

The integrative psychological and theological frameworks show that psychological or theological understanding of dreams occurs within a cultural context (label 'culture') and is interpreted within the cultural framework of the individual. Noteworthy is that dreams are also influenced by the social-cultural context of the individual, reflecting collective cultural experiences, reinforcing cultural identity, transmitting cultural knowledge, precipitated with cultural symbols, and maintaining the continuity of cultural traditions.

DISCUSSION

This study on the psycho-theological integrative model of dreams for the psycho-spiritual therapists in Kenya explores the complex phenomenon of psychological, theological, and cultural understandings of dreams. The findings outline the encounters of dreamer clients, the psycho-spiritual therapists' understanding of dreams from psychological, theological, and cultural perspectives, the integrative approach and its benefits, and a proposed psycho-theological model of dream understanding.

Dreams are a reflection of personal and universal themes that aid (Jung 1964a) and speak the universal language of the soul that filters through the vocabulary of our personal and cultural experiences (Taylor 1992). Everyone dreams (Sperry 2022), but not everyone remembers (Domhoff 2003), and among those who remember, not everyone believes in dreams. For those who believe in dreams, there is usually an interest in wanting to know what the dream means by seeking interpretation. This can make a dream experience a presenting issue in therapy, whether to address the distress caused by the dream, especially in a recurring nightmare, or seek spiritual guidance if considered as revelatory. The study revealed that it is not strange for psycho-spiritual therapists to encounter clients who bring issues of dream experiences to therapy. As common experiences, dreams can be influenced by many factors, including unconscious desires, past experiences, and spiritual and cultural beliefs. Just as people view and relate to dreams differently, the psycho-spiritual therapists also have different views about dreams, and some are not adequately prepared to deal with dream experiences in therapy.

The psycho-spiritual therapists' understanding of dreams is multifaceted. They view dreams as a series of images, thoughts, and sensations that are experienced while asleep. These experiences can be influenced by psychological, spiritual, and cultural factors. While it is believed that dreams are ways the mind tries to regulate itself, release stress, and address unresolved life issues, it is also believed that dreams can be revelatory. That is, it can be a form of divine revelation from God or Satan. But more profoundly, it is that God can communicate to human beings through dreams (Stanford 1968), especially about past or future events. Those dreams from Satan can be linked to the prophetic warning about the false prophets with false or lying dreams (cf. Jeremiah 23:25; 29:8-9).

The psycho-spiritual therapists generally perceived dreams as a series of images, thoughts, and sensations that occur in the mind during sleep. both psychological and theological/spiritual understanding of dreams. The contents of a dream are factored by lived experiences, what one was thinking before going to bed, or the expression of what one wants to address, a kind of unfinished business. These understandings are in alignment with the dictionary definition of dreams as "a series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2024), which are related to remembered lived experiences that seem to come up while sleeping without our conscious access or control (Savary, Berne, and William 1984). Apart from the general understanding of dreams, psycho-spiritual therapists also understand dreams from psychological, theological, and cultural frameworks.

Psychologically, dreams were understood as an unconscious subjective experience of a neuroadaptive nature. Dreams are a way the mind tries to relieve itself of stress or a symptom of some psychological disorders arising from traumatic experience. These views can be found in several psychological theories, such as psychoanalysis/psychodynamics, transpersonal analysis, cognitive behavioral theory, existential and humanistic approaches, gestalt therapy, narrative therapy, and integrative models. And according to DSM-5 (2013), a dream can be a disorder if it is experienced as a nightmare or dream anxiety.

The theological understanding of the psycho-spiritual therapists stems mainly from a Christian perspective. This is a result of the fact that the participants in this study, who hold at least a master's degree in psycho-spiritual therapy and counselling, are all Christians. These therapists are familiar with biblical dream experiences, as evident in both the Old and New Testaments. From this perspective, dreams are viewed as tools of spiritual communication, either from God or the Devil. Nevertheless, not all dreams are spiritual. Some individuals are thought of as having the gift of dreams and dream interpretation, like some biblical figures such as Jacob (Genesis 28:10-17), Joseph, the son of Jacob (Genesis 37:5-7), Joseph, the husband of Mary (Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-15), Magi (Matthew 2:12). The Bible, however, warns against false dreams and false prophets who claim divine authority for personal or deceptive agendas. To have a better understanding and interpretation of dreams, one needs to discern by listening to God in the light of the Bible. This understanding is supported by numerous views of Christian theologians like Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Calvin, and others. Augustine (1991) acknowledges dreams from God and those from earthly desires and anxieties. He holds that dreams can be from God and should serve as instruments for God's guidance. This is similar to Aquina's (1947) claim that God could use dreams to communicate truths about the future or divine will, emphasizing the importance of discernment in interpretation. Although dreams may be divinely inspired, they must be evaluated against scriptural truths and the teachings of the Church. For "If a dream or vision is contrary to Scripture, it is a deception" (Luther 1999, 282). Hence, the need to beware of those who, under the pretense of dreams, bring forth doctrines that are contrary to the Word of God (Calvin 1960).

The culture of dreamers plays a crucial role in the understanding and interpretation of dreams from either a psychological perspective or a theological perspective. This is so true because different cultures have unique beliefs and practices related to dreams. Dreams hold an important and sacred place in many cultures across the world, and in many indigenous African traditions, for example, dreams are viewed as portals to the spirit world, through which ancestors communicate messages, warnings, or callings to the dreamer (Bulkeley 2008). The study resonates with DSM-5's (2013) recommendation that dreams should be understood bearing in mind the cultural context of the dreamer, because cultural beliefs can shape the meaning and the significance of dream images and symbols.

Since dreams can be understood and interpreted from different frameworks, an integrative approach appears to be more beneficial. For psycho-spiritual therapists, integration begins with therapists themselves. There is a need to first understand what is integrated. That is, to integrate psychological, spiritual, and cultural understanding of dreams, the psycho-spiritual therapists need a strong understanding of these frameworks, which include the knowledge of dream analysis, spiritual approaches, and the cultural context. This is important because psychological issues may sometimes influence spiritual and cultural experiences. By this, a holistic approach that allows for a relationship with the client as a whole is undertaken. Meaning that the client's own beliefs and worldviews about dream experiences are not taken for granted. Most especially, the potential overlap that exists within psychological, theological, and cultural frameworks calls for an integrative model. This also calls for therapeutic humility on the part of the psycho-spiritual therapist who may not be competent enough in the particular framework of the dream understanding to collaborate with other professionals or make a referral. An integrative approach allows for integration of psychological assessment or diagnosis and spiritual practices, including scriptural readings, meditation, and prayers. The client is the one who benefits most in this approach as s/he gains a deeper understanding of self in relation to the meaning of their dreams. The client is relieved of his/her anxiety or depressive mood and provided a sense of psychological and spiritual stability. The client may uncover unique spiritual gifts or talents they didn't realize they had. And it offers a holistic understanding of dream experiences. The integrative approach practiced by the psycho-spiritual therapists affirms the findings of Pargament et al. (2000) that individuals who actively engage in spiritual practices, such as prayer and meditation, often report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, and that spiritual experiences provide meaning and purpose, which are crucial for mental health. This is similar to the findings of Wong et al. (2016), which suggest that dreams serve as a medium for divine communication, aligning with theological views on the sacred nature of dreams. The examination of psychological profiles of individuals who report frequent revelatory dreams shows that they often exhibit higher levels of spirituality and lower levels of psychological distress compared to those who do not report such experiences (Hood et al. 2001).

This study concludes by proposing a holistic understanding of dream experiences from psychological, theological, and cultural perspectives in an integrative manner. The integration is such that understanding of psychological and theological dreams is best achieved when examined within a cultural context. The model emphasizes the need for psycho-spiritual therapists to be well-versed in theological theories, spiritual practices, and cultural sensitivity. By so doing, psycho-spiritual therapists can provide comprehensive support to clients by addressing their psychological, spiritual, and cultural needs.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the importance and significance of dreams in the therapeutic process by emphasizing the need for psycho-spiritual therapists to adopt an integrative model that considers psychological frameworks of dream understanding, the theological framework of understanding dreams, and the importance of cultural understanding and context of dreams. This holistic approach can enhance therapeutic outcomes that address the client's psycho-spiritual well-being. The proposed integration model offers a holistic framework to support clients effectively.

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