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Investigating the Relationship Between Lucid Dreaming and Equanimity: A Potential Path to Inner Peace

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ABSTRACT

Background: Lucid dreaming (LD) is a state in which individuals become aware that they are dreaming and can exert control over their dream content. Equanimity (EQU) refers to a state of psychological stability, where one remains calm, balanced, and non-reactive in the face of stress or adversity. While LD has been linked to emotional regulation, its predictive relationship with EQU remains underexplored.
Aim: This study examined whether LD predicts EQU, providing insights into the link between dream awareness and emotional stability.
Methods: A correlational design was used, with 200 participants (64% female, 36% male) aged 18–65 years completing an online questionnaire. The Lucid Dreaming Scale (Voss & Hobson, 2015) and Equanimity Scale-16 (Rogers et al., 2021) measured LD and EQU, respectively. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product moment correlation, and regression analyses.
Results: LD was positively and significantly correlated with EQU ($r = 0.519$, $p < 0.001$). All eight LD subdomains namely Insight, Control, Thought, Realism, Dissociation, Memory, Positive Emotion, and Negative Emotion also correlated positively with EQU. Regression analysis showed that LD positively and significantly predicted EQU, explaining 39% of the variance ($p < 0.001$).
Conclusion: The findings suggest that lucid dreaming is associated with enhanced equanimity, potentially fostering emotional mastery, resilience, and inner peace, which may further contribute to better stress tolerance, decision-making, and overall well-being. Integrating LD techniques into therapy, mindfulness, and performance training may lead to enhanced well-being. Future research should establish causality, explore neural mechanisms, and develop standardized LD training for emotional stability, stress management, and trauma recovery.
Keywords: Lucid dreaming, Equanimity, Emotional Regulation, Inner Peace

INTRODUCTION

Investigating the Relationship Between Lucid Dreaming and Equanimity: A Potential Path to Inner Peace

Dreams constitute a fundamental aspect of human experience, serving critical functions in emotional processing and psychological adaptation (Hobson, 2009). During REM sleep, the brain consolidates emotional memories and facilitates mood regulation, contributing to overall psychological well-being (van der Helm & Walker, 2009).

Research consistently shows that positive dream experiences are associated with improved emotional regulation and adaptive psychological functioning (McCorristine, 2021), highlighting dreaming's essential role in maintaining emotional equilibrium and mental health.

Lucid dreaming (LD) represents a unique variation of the dreaming experience in which individuals become aware that they are dreaming while remaining within the dream state. Eeden (1913) formally defined LD as "a condition in which the sleeper is aware that he is dreaming and is often able to direct or control the dream content" (Brown et al., 2022; Holzinger, 2009). This conscious awareness allows individuals to actively navigate and manipulate dream environments, creating opportunities for deliberate practice and skill development during sleep.

Empirical research has identified several defining characteristics of lucid dreaming. Neuroimaging studies reveal increased activity in the prefrontal cortex during lucid dreams, particularly in regions associated with self-awareness, metacognition, and executive control (Dresler et al., 2015; Voss et al., 2009). This heightened prefrontal activity distinguishes lucid dreams from ordinary dreams and suggests enhanced cognitive control processes. Frequent lucid dreamers demonstrate elevated levels of metacognitive awareness and cognitive flexibility compared to non-lucid dreamers (Filevich et al., 2015), indicating that lucid dreaming may enhance general cognitive abilities that extend beyond the dream state.

Multiple techniques have been developed to increase LD frequency and control. The Wake Back to Bed (WBTB) method involves awakening after five to six hours of sleep, remaining awake briefly, then returning to sleep while maintaining heightened awareness (La Berge et al., 1981). Mnemonic Induction of Lucid Dreams (MILD) uses prospective memory training, where individuals rehearse becoming lucid upon recognizing dream signs (Erlacher & Stumbrys, 2020). Wake-Initiated Lucid Dreaming (WILD) requires maintaining consciousness while transitioning directly from wakefulness into REM sleep (Adventure-Heart, 2020). These techniques consistently demonstrate efficacy in controlled studies, with WBTB and MILD showing particular promise for increasing lucid dream frequency (Adventure-Heart et al., 2017).

The therapeutic applications of lucid dreaming have also been widely explored. LD training can reduce nightmare frequency and intensity in individuals with PTSD and trauma-related conditions (Holzinger et al., 2015). The ability to consciously alter frightening dream content provides individuals with a sense of agency and control, which may generalize to waking-life coping strategies. Additionally, lucid dreaming has shown potential in enhancing motor skill learning, creative problem-solving, and overcoming phobias through safe exposure within the dream environment (Erlacher & Schredl, 2010).

Equanimity: A State of Balanced Awareness

Beyond dream-related phenomena, constructs from contemplative science, such as equanimity offer a complementary perspective for understanding emotional balance and metacognitive awareness. Equanimity represents a psychological state characterized by emotional balance, mental stability, and non-reactive awareness in the face of changing circumstances. Derived from the Latin "aequanimitas" (even-mindedness), equanimity has deep roots in contemplative traditions, particularly Buddhism, where it is considered one of the four "Brahmaviharas" or divine abodes alongside loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy (Shulman, 2025). In Buddhist psychology, equanimity (upekkhā) refers to a balanced state of mind that remains stable regardless of whether experiences are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (Jijina & Biswas, 2022).

Contemporary research operationalizes equanimity as a construct distinct from

related concepts such as emotional regulation, mindfulness, and resilience. Whereas emotional regulation focuses on managing emotional responses, equanimity emphasizes accepting emotions without reactive engagement (Desbordes et al., 2015a). Neuroscientific studies reveal that individuals high in equanimity show decreased activity in the default mode network and increased activity in attention regulation networks, suggesting reduced self-referential processing and enhanced present-moment awareness (Brewer et al., 2011; Feldman et al., 2011; Westphal et al., 2021). Longitudinal research further demonstrates that equanimity is associated with reduced stress reactivity, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced psychological well-being (Desbordes et al., 2015b; Hanley et al., 2015).

Theoretical Framework: Connecting Lucid Dreaming and Equanimity

The potential relationship between lucid dreaming and equanimity is grounded in shared cognitive mechanisms and experiential qualities, particularly heightened metacognitive awareness. In lucid dreams, individuals observe and manipulate dream content consciously, while equanimity involves observing thoughts and emotions without automatic reactivity. Prefrontal cortex activation in lucid dreamers parallels neural patterns seen in equanimity, suggesting that cognitive skills developed in lucid dreaming may transfer to waking-life emotional regulation (Feldman et al., 2011; Voss et al., 2009; Westphal et al., 2021). Techniques such as WILD require sustained attention and calm awareness, akin to meditation practices that cultivate equanimity, reinforcing the potential experiential overlap. Cognitive flexibility developed in lucid dreaming, such as recognizing and altering dream content, may also contribute to equanimity by enabling individuals to respond adaptively to emotions and stressors.

Despite these theoretical connections, empirical research directly examining the relationship between lucid dreaming and equanimity remains limited. While lucid dreaming has been studied in the context of emotional regulation and metacognition, and equanimity has been linked to meditation and well-being, no studies have specifically investigated their interrelation. Exploring this connection has implications for therapeutic applications, integration of dream work with contemplative practices, and understanding the continuity between sleep and waking consciousness.

The present study aims to address this gap by empirically investigating the relationship between lucid dreaming frequency and equanimity levels. The study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Lucid dreaming frequency will be positively correlated with equanimity levels.

Hypothesis 2: Lucid dreaming frequency will significantly predict equanimity levels, controlling for potential confounds such as meditation experience, personality traits, and sleep quality.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample

In the present study, a correlational research design was employed. Prior to participation, all individuals were informed about the purpose and potential risks of the study. Informed consent was obtained from each participant in compliance with ethical research guidelines. Data was collected online, incorporating an online survey containing a detailed questionnaire. The online survey allowed participants to complete the questionnaire at their convenience, providing an opportunity for more in-depth exploration of participant responses. A total of 200 individuals participated in the study, including 74 males and 126 females. Individuals aged between 18 and 65 years, with no restrictions regarding gender or socioeconomic class, were included. However, individuals diagnosed with mental disorders as outlined in the ICD-11, were excluded from participation.

Assessment tools

1) **The Lucid Dreaming Scale (LDS):** The LDS, developed by Voss and Hobson (2015), is a 28-item Likert-type measure (1–5) assessing the quality and frequency of lucid dreaming. It captures both cognitive and emotional dimensions of the construct. Cognitive domains include Insight (6 items; awareness of the dream state), Control (5 items; ability to influence dream content), Thought (3 items; logical processing), Realism (3 items; vividness of experience), Dissociation (3 items; detachment from dream events), and Memory (4 items; dream recall and metacognitive monitoring). Emotional domains include Positive Emotion (2 items; joy and pleasant affect) and Negative Emotion (2 items; fear, anxiety, or distress). Higher scores indicate more frequent, vivid, and controlled lucid dreams. The LDS demonstrates good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically ranging from 0.80 to 0.90.
2) **The Equanimity Scale-16** (EQ-16; Rogers et al., 2021) is a 16-item self-report measure designed to assess emotional balance, resilience, and mindfulness. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale demonstrates good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85.

PROCEDURE

Prior to the commencement of data collection, participants were provided with comprehensive instructions outlining the study's purpose, the procedures involved, and their respective roles in the data collection process, as the data collection process was carried out online via the use of google form thus, before filling out the questionnaire, participants were asked for their consent within the form itself with assurances given regarding the confidentiality of their data. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. Clear instructions for each assessment were provided. Assessments were conducted individually, with each participant evaluated independently. Data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 21 (released in 2012, Armonk, New York, USA)

RESULTS

Table 1: Showing sociodemographic profile of the participants. (n=200)

Variable	Categories	Frequencies
Age (in years)	18-24	146
	25-34	19
	35-44	8
	45-55	23
	56-65	4
Gender	Male	74
	Female	126
Occupation	Business	24
	Engineer	4
	Educationist	5
	Job	22
	Home-maker	11
	Student	125
	Consultant	9

The descriptive statistics provide insights into the sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants (n = 200). The age distribution indicates that the majority of participants were young adults (18–24 years, n = 148), followed by smaller proportions in the 25–34 years (n = 19), 35–44 years (n = 8), 45–55 years (n = 23), and 56–65 years (n

= 4) categories. The gender distribution shows that 126 participants were female, while 74 were male. The occupational distribution reveals that a significant proportion of participants were students (n = 125), followed by individuals in business (n = 24), employed in jobs (n = 22), homemakers (n = 11), consultants (n = 9), educationists (n = 5), and engineers (n = 4).

Table 2: Showing Descriptive Statistics for Variables (N=200)

variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Lucid Dreaming	87.10	14.950	-0.121	0.845
Equanimity	47.97	7.842	0.081	1.976
Insight	19.244	3.913	-0.455	0.214
Control	14.80	4.552	-0.123	-0.572
Thought	9.57	2.680	-0.188	-0.256
Realism	9.38	2.390	0.010	-0.116
Memory	12.42	2.882	-0.319	0.661
Dissociation	8.91	2..423	0.053	-0.182
Negative Emotion	6.40	1.569	0.017	0.492
Positive Emotion	6.28	1.971	-0.177	-0.257

Furthermore, as shown in Table 2, descriptive statistics for the sample (N = 200) indicate that the Skewness and Kurtosis values for all variables were well within the accepted limits. Therefore, the data were deemed approximately normally distributed, justifying the use of parametric statistical analyses.

Table 3: Showing Pearson's product moment correlation results between domains of Lucid-dreaming and Equanimity

Variables	Equanimity
Lucid Dreaming	.519*
Insight	.422*
Control	.300*
Thought	.354*
Realism	.307*
Memory	.379*
Dissociation	.417*
Negative Emotion	.429*
Positive Emotion	.359*
*$p < 0.001$	

In line with Hypothesis 1, which predicted a positive association between LD and EQU, results (Table 3) showed that LD was strongly correlated with EQT ($r = 0.519$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals with higher tendencies toward lucid dreaming also tended to report higher levels of equanimity. In addition, all LD subdomains were positively correlated with EQU, including Insight ($r = 0.422$, $p < .001$), Control ($r = 0.300$, $p < .001$), Thought ($r = 0.354$, $p < .001$), Realism ($r = 0.307$, $p < .001$), Memory ($r = 0.379$, $p < .001$), Dissociation ($r = 0.417$, $p < .001$), Negative Emotion ($r = 0.429$, $p < .001$), and Positive Emotion ($r = 0.359$, $p < .001$). These correlations indicate that both cognitive and emotional aspects of lucid dreaming are associated with higher equanimity.

Table 4: Showing results of regression analysis between lucid dreaming and equanimity

Criterion	Predictor	*T*	β	*p*
Equanimity	Lucid Dreaming	73.135	.519	<0.001
R	.625			
$R^2 = .390$, $F = 15.284$, $p < .001$				

In support of Hypothesis 2, which proposed that lucid dreaming (LD) would significantly predict equanimity (EQU), regression analysis (Table 4) revealed that LD was a significant predictor of EQU ($\beta = 0.519$, $p < .001$). The overall model was statistically significant, $F(1, 198) = 15.284$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 value of .390, indicating that LD accounted for 39% of the variance in EQU. These findings suggest that higher levels of lucid dreaming tendencies are associated with greater equanimity.

In summary, the results indicate a strong positive relationship between LD and EQU. Correlation analyses showed significant associations between EQU and multiple facets of LD, while regression analysis demonstrated that LD significantly predicted EQU, accounting for 39% of its variance. Together, these findings suggest that both the overall tendency to experience lucid dreams and specific cognitive and emotional components of LD are closely linked to, and can serve as predictors of, higher levels of equanimity.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between LD and EQU. The findings reveal a strong positive association between these variables. Correlation analyses indicated that several domains of LD were significantly linked with EQU, suggesting that individuals who experience greater awareness and control in their dreams tend to exhibit higher levels of psychological balance and emotional stability. Specifically, the strong positive correlation between LD and EQU ($r = 0.519$, $p < 0.01$) highlights the potential role of lucid dreaming in fostering calmness, emotional regulation, and overall mental resilience. Furthermore, regression analysis demonstrated that LD significantly predicted EQU ($\beta = 0.519$, $p < 0.001$), with the model accounting for 39% of the variance, reinforcing the notion that lucid dreaming may contribute meaningfully to higher levels of equanimity.

Several studies support the link between lucid dreaming and emotional well-being. Previous research has shown that lucid dreaming enhances emotional regulation and cognitive flexibility, similar to mindfulness practices (Stumbrys et al., 2014). Voss et al. (2018) found that individuals with higher lucid dream frequency exhibit better self-reflection and emotional stability. Additionally, studies on equanimity suggest that mindfulness-based interventions improve emotional resilience, a trait also linked to lucid dreaming (Stumbrys & Erlacher, 2017). The present study's findings align with these results, reinforcing the idea that lucid dreaming may serve as a tool for enhancing psychological balance and mental well-being.

The observed relationship between lucid dreaming and equanimity can be further understood by considering the specific subdomains of the Lucid Dream Scale. Greater Insight in dreams may enhance self-awareness and reflective thinking, allowing individuals to observe their emotions without reactivity (Srivastava, 2024). The ability to exert Control over dream content could foster a sense of mastery and emotional regulation in waking life (Gazzillo et al., 2020). Engagement of clear and logical Thought processes during dreams may strengthen cognitive flexibility, supporting balanced responses to stress (Sheehy, 2025). Experiencing realistic scenarios in dreams may help individuals practice adaptive coping strategies, thereby promoting emotional stability (Tang, 2024). Enhanced Memory of dreams may facilitate metacognitive monitoring, enabling better awareness and regulation of emotional states (Noreika et al., 2010). Mild Dissociation experienced in dreams may allow individuals to detach from negative emotions, potentially fostering non-reactivity (Scarpelli et al., 2019). Likewise, consciously encountering and managing negative emotions in dreams may provide a safe context for practicing emotional acceptance and resilience, while consciously experiencing positive emotions in dreams can reinforce mood regulation and

contribute to a calm, balanced disposition (Scarpelli et al., 2019).

Together, these cognitive and emotional components of lucid dreaming provide a plausible mechanism by which LD may be associated with higher levels of equanimity in individuals. This suggests that LD is not just a passive experience but may have practical implications for mental health and emotional stability. These results reinforce the potential use of lucid dreaming as a psychological tool, particularly in interventions aimed at reducing anxiety, improving emotional regulation, and enhancing mindfulness.

Overall, the present study provides empirical evidence for a significant relationship between LD and EQU. Both correlation and regression analyses revealed that higher levels of LD, as well as its specific cognitive and emotional subdomains, are associated with greater equanimity, highlighting the potential role of lucid dreaming in fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and psychological stability. These findings contribute to the literature by elucidating the nuanced ways in which distinct facets of lucid dreaming such as: insight, control, thought, realism, memory, dissociation, and emotional experiences, may enhance emotional resilience in waking life.

Despite these promising results, the study has several limitations, including reliance on self-report measures, a cross-sectional design that precludes causal inferences, and a sample drawn from a limited demographic. Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal or experimental designs, using objective sleep measures (e.g., EEG, polysomnography), and exploring diverse populations. Additionally, investigating the mediating or moderating roles of mindfulness, emotion regulation strategies, or stress resilience could further clarify the mechanisms linking lucid dreaming to equanimity.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between LD and EQU in adults, investigating both overall LD frequency and its specific cognitive and emotional subdomains. Employing correlational and regression analyses on data collected via the Lucid Dream Scale and an equanimity measure, results revealed strong positive associations between LD and EQU, with LD accounting for a substantial proportion of variance in equanimity scores. The findings illuminate potential mechanisms underlying these relationships, demonstrating how subdomains including insight, control, thought, realism, memory, dissociation, and emotional experiences may contribute to psychological balance and emotional stability. These results suggest that lucid dreaming may serve as a promising tool for enhancing emotional regulation, mindfulness, and psychological resilience. Despite limitations inherent in the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-report measures, this study establishes a foundation for future research to explore causal relationships, longitudinal effects, and potential applications of lucid dreaming in psychological interventions.

Use of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies

During the writing process of this article, the authors used ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com) for assistance in drafting, polishing, and structuring text. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content on their own and take full responsibility for the published article.

Declaration by Authors

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