Reviewer’s report

Title: Nightmare experience and family relationships in healthy volunteers and nightmare disorder patients

Version: 0 Date: 10 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Michelle Carr

Reviewer's report:

In general the results of the paper are interesting and present an understudied angle to the profile of idiopathic nightmare disorder, specifically that childhood family relationships may play a role in the development of nightmares. However, the text requires English language editing, and revisions to the introduction and discussion are suggested below:

The introduction could be expanded to allow some description of how family relationships are thought to influence psychological function. In the second and third paragraphs of the intro, examples from the literature are listed without providing a broader context or describing the theoretical link between family dysfunction and psychopathology, and how this would then translate to nightmare disorder.

Further, providing more background to existing theories on how nightmares are formed more generally, in development or in response to adversity, would help to frame the research. This context is necessary in order to justify the hypotheses.

Also, when describing the Family Relationship Questionnaire and the Nightmare Experience Questionnaire, it may be necessary to define terms that are used repeatedly throughout the paper, for example freedom release, attachment, horrible stimulation, etc.

The methods are generally straightforward, although it wasn't clear precisely how the recruitment took place. Were these patients already diagnosed in the clinic and subsequently recruited? And the patients were solely diagnosed with idiopathic nightmare disorder? [And those patients who scored quite high on the depressive scale also were not clinically depressed?]

Finally, it is stated that participants were free from "organic brain lesions according to the recent magnetic resonance imaging or computed tomography scans", is it the case that all participants had scans done?

The measures and analyses sections are clear.

In results, please also report the results of the nonsignificant correlations between PVP and other scales (even just to say, all other P > .xx)

Discussion:
There is repetitive use of terms and long sentences that make it difficult to understand overall what is being said, or what the main point of a sentence is.

For example, the following sentence is meant to clarify findings, but it is difficult to follow to the end:
"The neurotic participants reported more nightmare frequency [43], more negative aspects of nightmare such as terror symptoms [44], more physical complaints after waking, and more likely to seek the
dream meaning [45]; and less parental care and more parental overprotection were linked with higher level of neuroticism in adults [16, 46]."

Another example: "Moreover, inappropriate parenting has extremely negative impact on the development of emotional management and behavioral control of a child [38], it might influence the process of people coping with nightmares and induce more nightmare distress such as physical impairment and horrible experience."
I might revise to something simpler such as "Inappropriate parenting has a negative impact on emotional management strategies in children, which might influence a child's capacity to cope with nightmares and the distress caused by nightmares."

In general there were several places like this where I think refining and simplifying phrases to make the main point more clear would be helpful. Another suggestion is to replace repetitive terminology with more descriptive meaning, for example the following sentence : "These results support that General Attachment was negatively associated with Horrible Stimulation found in our healthy volunteers." could be more descriptive... 'The quality of interpersonal relationships, as measured by General Attachment, was negatively associated with nightmare experiences of terrifying activity or violence (Horrible Stimulation) in healthy volunteers.'

Lastly, I would suggest tying in some general discussion of how childhood family relationships may be involved in development of nightmares [eg after the detailed discussion of the current findings, take the discussion more broad], and how this is meaningful from a clinical perspective, eg could this inform treatment of nightmares?

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics
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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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