Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 22 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Heather Gunn

Reviewer's report:

The purpose of this study was to determine how family relationships relate to individuals with and without nightmare disorder. The authors report findings that individuals who are recruited from a clinic with nightmare disorder have overall poorer relationships with family members. Family characteristics predicted nightmare experiences for individuals with nightmare disorder. The results are interesting in that they add to the literature on nightmare disorder. However, the several theoretical and methodological concerns temper the significance and implications of this research.

Major Comments:
1. The overall question of whether family relationships are associated with nightmare disorder lacks some substance. Nightmare disorder is comorbid with many psychiatric disorders. And there is strong evidence linking family relationships with psychiatric problems. It's not clear from this paper how clarifying that family relationships also relate to nightmare disorder adds or furthers the field on family relationships, sleep, and psychiatric problems. What are the mechanisms linking family relationships, mood, and nightmare disorder? The authors may not be able to answer this question with their current analyses, but the theoretical basis could be clarified to increase the impact of this study.

2. Were participants seeking a diagnosis or treatment for nightmare disorders specifically?

3. Given the high correlation between nightmares and neuroticism, the significance of the study would improve with some measure of arousal—daytime vigilance, alertness, anxiousness, presleep arousal, etc. The authors refer to neuroticism in the discussion as a way of explaining their findings, but neuroticism was not measured.

4. How does the scale reliability in the current study compare to other studies? Some of the alpha values are relatively low (e.g., .60)

5. Likewise, depression is included but does not contribute to the significance of the manuscript. If depression is thought to mediate or moderate the association between family and nightmares, additional analyses would be appropriate.

Minor Comments:

Introduction:

According to Swart et. al. (2013), the prevalence of nightmare disorder in anxiety disorders is 15.6%, not 1.6%.
Tillery et.al. (2014) studied children's anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms, but their discussion of vulnerability does not appear to be consistent with the current study.

Results:

In the second ANOVA, it is difficult to determine which two groups are being compared- is it the depressed participants vs. non-depressed participants or is it healthy vs. nightmare disorder group?

The first sentence in the second paragraph seems to imply that the nightmare group scored higher on all the scales.

Discussion

It is unclear what the authors mean when they say "free from depressive mood."

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

No

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.

No

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

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published
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