Reviewer's report

Title: Associations between (sub)clinical stress- and anxiety symptoms in mentally healthy individuals and in major depression: A cross-sectional clinical study

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In this study, the authors assessed possible associations between stress and anxiety symptoms, patients with major depression and mentally healthy individuals of different age clusters and occupations. They found that stress levels were related to clinical anxiety while neither group identity nor age exerted any influence on anxiety levels. The study pointed out the putative relevance of mild stress as a target for early interventions to prevent the onset of anxiety disorders.

The study is well designed and the manuscript well written. It's a cross-sectional study that enrolled students and employees from the University Of Patras as controls as well patients suffering from depression.

In the methods section, the authors should clarify inclusion and exclusion criteria for healthy subjects as well the selection procedure for this study. Please see below, the relevance of this for discussion.

The results are presented in a correct way.

The discussion addresses and discusses the results of the study as well its main limitations.

My main concern relates with control group characterization, inclusion and exclusion criteria as well the absence of depression evaluation in the control group. I think that this issue should be clarified and added to the limitations of the work. The absence of a measure of depressive symptoms in the control group reduces the generalizability of the results. How did the authors ensure there weren't depressive patients among the control group?

I think that it should be improved by discussing adding a paragraph about the potential overlap between depression and anxiety. Other studies in university students (Vanessa Silva et al, 2017) have found that high anxiety trait is a predisposing factor for persistent high depression levels. As mentioned before, this overlap could have influenced the results of the present study since depression levels were not assessed in the study.

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Yes

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

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If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

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