

distal factors are taken into account, raising the question of gendered differentiated attachment effects on psychobiological regulation

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Attachment anxiety as reflected in dreams

Aspects of attachment insecurity have gained interest in association of sleep parameters, especially sleep disorders. Most studies are carried out on children using subjective measures of sleep assessed by parents. Little attention is given to REM sleep and dreams in relation to attachment security, which could provide a reasonable association considering the presumed role of REM sleep and dreams in emotion regulation and offline emotional reprocessing. According to some studies, daytime distress and trait anxiety measures are directly associated with sleep features and dream emotions, especially nightmare frequency. If attachment insecurity is related to dream affects and negative dream frequency is investigated in this study. Results showed significant connections between negative dream affect and attachment categories, which was especially true for preoccupied and fearful attachment, both characterized by high attachment anxiety. According to post hoc testing attachment groups with high attachment anxiety differed significantly from the groups with low attachment anxiety. Attachment anxiety turned out to be connected to nightmare frequency and the intensity of dream affect's impact on daytime mood. As attachment insecurity is associated with less effective emotional and behavioral responses to stress, poorer coping mechanisms and altered illness behavior, results can be interpreted as the appearance of these qualities in nighttime symptoms. Diminished coping with negative emotions or enhanced negativity in subjects with high attachment anxiety could emerge in form of negative dreaming and higher nightmare frequency. As a consequence, negative dream emotions turn down daytime mood, which is less likely to be regulated by compensatory coping mechanisms. Early traumatization might be a mediator between attachment and nightmares, as both nightmares and insecure attachment are often connected to early trauma of the child. Another possible explanation of the connection between attachment anxiety and negative dreams is rooted in McNamara's attachment theory of REM sleep, which describes diversified evidence to support the essential role of REM sleep in the conformation and subsistence of attachment behavior.