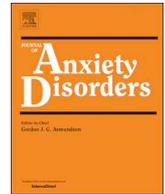




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Editorial

A rose by any other name...How should we refer to the collective of conditions characterized by clinically significant anxiety?



The removal of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), acute stress disorder (ASD), and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) from the DSM-5 anxiety disorders classification has made reference to these conditions as *anxiety disorders* inaccurate. Despite the DSM-5 nosology, and given the significant levels of anxiety involved, these conditions remain relevant to those who research and treat anxiety-related psychopathology. They also continue to fall within the scope of the *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*. But, how should we refer to the collective of anxiety-related psychopathologies if the term *anxiety disorders* is now inaccurate in instances where one or more of DSM-5 PTSD, ASD, and OCD are relevant? We could list each of the various disorders under consideration; but, considering this list would comprise all of the DSM-5 anxiety disorders, two of the trauma and stress-related disorders, one of the obsessive compulsive and related disorders, and possibly select other disorders such as illness anxiety disorder and related conditions (e.g., health anxiety), it would be excessively lengthy. More conveniently, we might refer to the collective using a single term. To this end, the term *anxiety-related disorders* (or, in some instances, *anxiety and related disorders*) has become increasingly common in manuscripts submitted to and published in the *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* as well as in numerous other journals that publish articles on anxiety-related psychopathology.

While use of this terminology is simple and generally straight-forward, some scholars appear to be uncertain about its veracity and appropriateness. For example, use of the term *anxiety-related disorders* has been questioned by reviewers of manuscripts submitted to the *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* on several occasions over the past few years. Likewise, in a manuscript dealing with the collective of adult anxiety disorders and PTSD, my colleagues and I were recently asked by a reviewer to replace the term with the now inaccurate *anxiety disorders* vernacular. Such queries and misguided requests prompted me to explore the use of the *anxiety-related disorders* terminology in more depth and to share my findings with you here.

I initially conducted a simple keyword search for the term *anxiety-related disorders* using the Science Direct database of Elsevier Science, which covers 1800 full-text journals from 1995 through to the present. The search was conducted on August 28, 2019. There were a total of 1791 articles that referenced *anxiety-related disorders* in the article title or text, including 1080 research articles, 294 reviews, 120 book chapters, 119 conference abstracts, 64 short communications, as well as several of various other article types. The first use identified in Science Direct was by Solt, Chen, and Roy (1996) in reference to “panic disorder, and other anxiety-related disorders” (p. 41). They did not, however, elaborate on or define what specifically they were referring to as anxiety-related disorders. Twenty-four articles (excluding three

focused on anxiety-related disorders in dogs) used the term directly in the article title as well as the text. Usage of the term increased steadily from its initial appearance in the Solt et al. article in 1996, at which time it appeared in 10 articles, through to present, at which time it has already been used in 196 articles. As illustrated in Fig. 1, there was a sharp and continuing rise in use of the term beginning in 2014, the year following publication of the DSM-5.

I next sampled the 24 articles that used the term in the article title to see if authors provided a specific indication or definition for the term. The majority of these articles did not provide a definition; but, for those that did ($n = 9$), the *anxiety-related disorders* and *anxiety and related disorders* terminology was used primarily to incorporate PTSD and OCD within the collective of the DSM-5 anxiety disorders. For example, Moore et al. (2015) defined anxiety-related disorders as “disorders classified as anxiety disorders in the DSM-IV” (p. 463), Cox and Olatunji (2016) defined anxiety and related disorders as “including generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder (PD), phobias, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and social anxiety disorder (SAD)” (p. 105), Mason, Faller, LeBouthillier, and Asmundson (2019) defined anxiety-related disorders as “including generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, panic disorder, agoraphobia, and specific phobia” (p. 128), and Asnaani, Benhamou, Kaczerkin, Turk-Karan, and Foa (2019) referred to “adult anxiety disorders (e.g., generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder (SAD), panic disorder, and specific phobias) and anxiety-related disorders (obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD))” (p. 5).

The question that prompted this editorial was, in essence, “Is it acceptable to use the term *anxiety-related disorders* in a scholarly context?” Although my analysis of the use of this terminology is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive, it likely represents general trends in use of the term across various bibliometric databases. Findings indicate that the term has been utilized in research and other article types for several decades, it is most often used in instances where scholars are making reference to a collective of related conditions, and its use is on the rise. As such, there appears little foundation for concerns regarding the veracity and appropriateness of using this terminology.

There is ample evidence that research on clinical conditions characterized by anxiety is burgeoning (Asmundson & Asmundson, 2018; Boschen, 2008). This is particularly true for social anxiety disorder (Heimberg & Bulter, 2018) as well as PTSD (McNally, 2018) and OCD (McKay, 2018). It is, therefore, imperative that researchers and clinicians have a term that appropriately and efficiently characterizes these conditions in instances where they need to make reference to a

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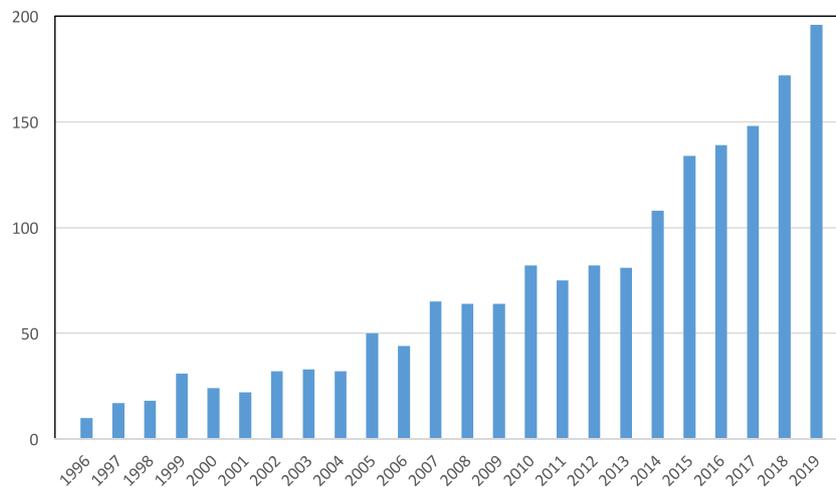


Fig. 1. Rise in use of *anxiety-related disorders* term in articles indexed in the Science Direct database between 1996 and August 2019.

collective comprising the DSM-5 anxiety disorders plus one or more of OCD, PTSD, ASD, as well as illness anxiety disorder and related conditions. Since *anxiety disorders* is now antiquated in this context, I recommend that *anxiety-related disorders* or its variant, *anxiety and related disorders*, be adopted as the standard terminology. Given the frequent use of this terminology in the absence of clear operationalization, I also recommend that scholars define or otherwise identify the conditions they are referring to when they first introduce *anxiety-related disorders* within their text. Use of this terminology and adherence to these recommendations may serve to increase efficiency and parsimony of expression within scholarly work regarding the collective of conditions characterized by clinically significant anxiety.

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