

Peer Review

Review of: "Clowns, Clown Doctors, and Coulrophobia: A Scoping Review"

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Major Concerns

1. Absence of Quality Appraisal of Included Studies

Although scoping reviews do not always require methodological appraisal, the manuscript reports prevalence data and draws epidemiological conclusions. Without quality evaluation, interpretation of prevalence ranges may be misleading.

Suggested Revision

Provide at least a brief methodological quality commentary.

Consider including a descriptive quality grading of key prevalence studies.

2. Heterogeneity of Included Evidence

The included studies vary widely in design, population, and measurement tools. Editorials and commentaries were analyzed alongside empirical studies, which may dilute scientific validity.

Suggested Revision

Separate empirical epidemiological evidence from narrative or conceptual literature.

Clarify which findings are supported by quantitative data.

3. Over-Interpretation of Prevalence Estimates

The reported prevalence range in adults (18.6%–53.5%) is extremely broad and may reflect methodological variability rather than true epidemiological distribution.

Suggested Revision

Discuss limitations of prevalence heterogeneity.

Highlight differences in measurement instruments and sampling strategies.

4. Diagnostic Classification Ambiguity

The manuscript suggests coulrophobia is a specific phobia but acknowledges the absence of distinct diagnostic recognition.

Suggested Revision

Clarify the distinction between:

Clinical specific phobia

Fear/discomfort response

Cultural aversion

This will improve conceptual clarity.

5. Limited Consideration of Neurodevelopmental Factors

The explanation of coulrophobia in preschool children focuses mainly on cognitive immaturity but does not sufficiently explore neurodevelopmental or attachment factors.

Suggested Revision

Expand the discussion to include developmental psychology models.

Consider sensory processing and stranger anxiety literature.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.