

Sleep Paralysis: Its Genesis and Qualitative Analysis of Case Histories

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Abstract : Sleep paralysis is a state of sleep disturbance in which people experience hypnogogic or hypnopompic hallucinations marked by an inability to move their bodies or speak out while reporting the consciousness about their surroundings. Philosophical explanation of sleep paralysis has been quoted in the ancient texts in terms of incubus and succubus. However, pathologically, it has been linked to several disorders including narcolepsy, migraines, anxiety disorders, and obstructive sleep apnea but it can also occur in isolation. Some other significant factors may include perceived stress, spiritual and paranormal beliefs, etc. Hence, a qualitative analysis of five such cases reporting symptoms of sleep disturbances with the criterion of sleep paralysis has been reported here. The study considered various psychological factors like stressful life events, feelings of inadequacy, spirituality, and paranormal beliefs. Results disclosed that four of the five cases were inclined towards the paranormal beliefs and the entire sample indicated a noticeably augmented level of spirituality and feelings of inadequacy. Furthermore, three cases reported experiencing greater stress following life events. Among other factors, all the cases were characterized with sleeping in the supine position, sleeping alone, an experience of fear, a sense of pressure on their chest, a presence of someone in the room and increased level of feelings of inadequacy.

Keywords : genesis, inadequacy, paranormal, sleep-paralysis, spiritual, stress

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