



OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE SYMPTOM DIMENSIONS AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONALITY: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a heterogeneous condition, and dimensional symptom structures for OCD have been increasingly tested and identified to investigate meaningful phenotypic differences. There is a growing body of evidence to support four obsessive-compulsive symptom dimensions: namely, Unacceptable Thoughts (e.g., obsessions often involving violence, sexuality, or religion and compulsions involving mental rituals or thought neutralization), Responsibility for harm (e.g., obsessions related to causing harm and compulsions involving checking and reassurance seeking), Contamination (e.g., obsessions related to contamination and compulsions involving decontamination, such as washing or cleaning), and Symmetry (e.g., obsessions involving something not being “just right” and compulsions involving ordering and repeating). However, the link between these symptom dimensions and measures of negative emotionality (i.e., depression, anxiety, neuroticism, and negative affect) is unclear. We used a meta-analytic approach to examine the correlation between DOCS subscales and dimensional measures of negative emotionality in unselected samples. We found that all four obsessive-compulsive symptom dimensions relate to negative emotionality, irrespective of negative emotionality type (i.e., anxiety, depression, stress, neuroticism, or negative affect). Thus, negative emotionality is an important component of OCD, regardless of phenotype. Unacceptable thoughts and responsibility for harm symptom dimensions, in particular, are more strongly associated with negative emotionality than contamination and symmetry symptom dimensions. Identifying clinical differences, including the presence of negative affect, amongst OC symptom dimensions may be critical in informing the best treatment modality and pharmacological options for varying symptom presentations.



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Valerie Swisher earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Westmont College in December 2021. Valerie's experience includes researching and providing behavior therapy for OCD and other conditions. During her major honors thesis, she examined the impact of mental health literacy and family functioning on help-seeking behavior in adults with OCD. She also worked as a research assistant for the UCLA Child OCD, Anxiety, Tic Disorder Program, where she examined the impact of obsessive-compulsive symptoms on disturbed sleep. She continues to serve as a clinical research coordinator for this program, where she is currently assisting in the examination of Tourette Disorder and disrupted circadian rhythms.