

# Example of obsessive compulsive disorder research paper

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## Introduction

Obsessive compulsive disorder is an anxiety disorder of the brain and behavior which causes severe anxiety and involves both obsessions and compulsions which may interfere with the normal activities of a person. People with OCD fall into different categories. They maybe washers, checkers, doubters and sinners, counters and arrangers and hoarders. According to Robinson et al. (2014), washers are those who are afraid of contamination while checkers are those who repeatedly check things associated with danger like gas stoves. Doubters and sinners are those who think that they will be punished if they do not do things right. Counters and arrangers are individuals obsessed with order and symmetry while hoarders are those who do not want to throw away things for fear that something bad will happen if they do so (Robinson et al., 2014). History of OCD

Although there were isolated cases of OCD in the 17th century, it was only in the 19th century when OCD was recognized as a distinct mental disorder. During that time, the causes of OCD were characterized by disorders of the will, emotions or the intellect. Freud, in the early 20th century espoused OCD's etiology as being "faced with conflicts between unacceptable, unconscious sexual or aggressive id impulses and the demands of conscience (superego) and reality, the patient's mind regresses to concerns with control and to modes of thinking characteristic of the anal-sadistic stage of psychosexual development". During the mid-20th century, OCD was explained based on two learning theory concepts, namely, classical conditioning and negative reinforcement. Based on the classical conditioning concept, a neutral stimulus is combined with an anxiety-provoking

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unconditioned stimulus. An example of this is the sight of a plug of a flat iron being paired with the idea of a house on fire, which evokes anxiety on a person. On the other hand, the negative reinforcement concept is when new behaviors are adopted to reduce the anxiety caused by the stimulus. This is the theory that supports the OCD checker category. The checker will repeatedly check whether he unplugged the flat iron to reduce his anxiety that the house will be on fire. As years passed and more research was conducted on OCD's etiology, biological factors were recognized to be contributory to causes of OCD.

## **Causes**

The exact cause of OCD is still unknown; however, researches have shown that it may be caused by a combination of biological and environmental factors. One biological factor which is linked to OCD is the low level of serotonin, a neurotransmitter. The abnormal level of serotonin may be passed on from a parent to a child; thus, the theory that OCD may be hereditary. Another biological factor that may cause OCD is the infection caused by the streptococcus bacteria.

Aside from biological factors, environmental factors are said to contribute to the development of OCD. These factors are abuse, changes in living situation, illness, death of a loved one, work or school-related changes or problems and relationship concerns.

## **Signs and Symptoms**

The symptoms of OCD may be both obsessions and compulsions or just an obsession or a compulsion. Some obsession symptoms are fear of

contamination by shaking hands or by touching objects that have been touched by others; always doubting whether the door has been locked or the stove has been turned off; extreme stress when objects are not orderly or symmetrical; images of hurting oneself or someone else; thoughts about shouting obscenities or acting inappropriately; and distress about unpleasant sexual images repeating in the mind.

Some of the signs and symptoms of compulsion are frequent hand-washing; checking doors repeatedly to ensure that they are locked; checking the stove repeatedly to make sure it is off; counting in certain patterns; silently repeating a prayer, word or phrase; and arranging things to face the same way.

## **Diagnosis and Tests**

The diagnosis of OCD is conducted by healthcare professionals such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, doctor or nurse with special training on the disorder. One tool used by healthcare professionals is the structured clinical interview wherein standardized questions on the nature, severity and duration of symptoms. The American Psychiatric Association has published a manual, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) which sets the criteria to be considered a person with OCD.

## **Treatments**

Although OCD is a serious anxiety disorder, it is treatable. The treatment program for OCD involves psychotherapy and medication. The cognitive behavior therapy is an effective treatment for OCD. In this therapy, the person is taught how to think, behave and react to certain situations to avoid

anxiety or fear. Another type of psychotherapy believed to help people with OCD is exposure and response prevention, which is very effective at minimizing compulsive behaviors.

Doctors usually prescribe anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medications for individuals diagnosed with OCD. Anti-depressants are said to be more effective for OCD patients, rather than anti-anxiety medications. These drugs however have side effects such as headache, nausea or sleeping problems. A more serious side effect of anti-depressants is that it may cause suicidal thoughts; thus, patients who are new to taking these medications should be closely monitored.

## **Future Research**

There are several ongoing researches being conducted on OCD to further understand and develop new treatments for the disorder. One such research is the use of urine tests for the early diagnosis of OCD on children. Another relevant discovery is the use of radiation to relieve severe OCD. Further research is also being done to determine whether deep brain stimulation can help OCD patients who are treatment resistant.

There are other areas of research that can be explored by health professionals. Studies on how OCD is linked to eating disorders like anorexia may be further investigated. Another area of research can delve into the effect of parents' accommodation of OCD behaviors among their children. Looking into the possibility of doing a brain surgery on patients with OCD will also be an appreciated research.

## Conclusion

OCD is a very common anxiety disorder. Having a basic knowledge of what OCD is, its causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment is necessary for every individual. Although one may not be afflicted with the disorder, an awareness of it is valuable because there may be people in one's midst who may have the disorder. One can be of assistance to those individuals and may assist them in getting professional help. OCD is treatable and people with this disorder should not fret because it is not a hopeless case. What is important is to seek professional help immediately in order to get the necessary support in terms of medication and other methods of treatment, so as not to unduly affect one's daily activities.

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