

The challenges of obsessive compulsive disorder sociology essay



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A recent survey across America suggests that roughly 2-3% of Americans suffer from OCD. (Citation) That's approximately over 5 million people. Until recently OCD was considered a rare illness and little was known about how people coped with the sometimes completely debilitating symptoms. Today it has been recognized as one of the most common disorders in our society, and it is likely that it remained unrecognized for so long because of the fear individuals had of being thought of as "crazy". In some cases, these individuals modified their lifestyles to mask their symptoms, some so well as to even keep them secret from their spouses for decades.

Thesis:

OCD affects a wide range of people. One out of every forty people are affected by OCD. (Citation) There is no certain race or gender of people that are affected by OCD, but it is more common in urban areas. This may be due to the fact that there is a higher concentration of people in urban areas than in rural areas. OCD is more prevalent in people with less education or people in poverty. This may be due to the fact that treatment is less available for them or their income is not sufficient for the treatment. OCD is more common in adolescents to young adults. One percent of people affected by OCD are in elementary school. Stress and psychological factors seem to help accelerate the development of OCD in adolescents. Men generally start showing symptoms at an earlier age than women. OCD can affect family members. If a family member has OCD, there is a twenty-five percent chance that another member of the family will also develop it.

Obsessive compulsive disorder has been so widespread throughout recent years that we are now entering a cycle for which this condition is present
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and doesn't discriminate different class systems. We can point out that an increase in the number of OCD patients has risen because of its newly discovered branches which include and are not limited to washers and cleaners, eating disorders, fear with homosexuality, anxiety disorders, rituals, etc... With so many cases, one can only imagine falling within a category.

“ OCD is a neurobiological anxiety disorder. It equally affects men, women and children of all races, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. OCD is the fourth most common psychiatric disorder, after phobias, substance abuse and major depression, affecting about one in 40 adults and one in 100 school-aged children..”-OCDChicago. org

Since anybody can be affected by OCD it is not limited to one specific group in American Society. OCD can range from poor people to the richest people in the world, it doesn't matter how much status you have obtained throughout your life or what class you are categorized in. For poor people it would be harder to pay for the medicine needed to help cope with OCD. This condition is a complicated disease that affects the person who has it mentally and emotionally. It also affects their social life, their love life, their friends, and occupations. OCD can completely affect a person desire to maintain any sort of social life as the become embarrassed and insecure about their illness and fear the symptoms would surface while interacting with others.

People whom have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder are protected by laws in which are tied into the educational system in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

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(section 504) and The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDEA). These laws were set in place to protect the children that are in the educational system in ways that keep them able to perform in the “normal” school system even though they have a mental illness that hinders their ability to learn. These laws have proven to be helpful to students; however, there are also people with OCD that are suffering to survive in society. These people are being pressured in the labor force and some of these people are also represented in the present celebrity world. An example of this pressure in the work force is represented in the case of *Humphrey v. Memorial Hospitals Association*, 2001 WL 118432 F. 3d - CA, when a woman whose employment was terminated because of her mental illness that hindered her ability to arrive to work on time and complete her tasks.

People with OCD constantly have issues at the work place. Although it is illegal to discriminate against people due to medical conditions, they are indirectly discriminated against. The majority of people who have OCD do not tell their companies that they have this mental disorder because they do not want to be pitied and feel special. When people do let everybody know that they have OCD, they are treated differently by their co workers and boss, forcing them to become uncomfortable in their work environment. There is also an issue with getting a job. In today’s economy, people are becoming unemployed at great rates, including those who are qualified and have college degrees. This puts people who have OCD at a disadvantage if they choose to disclose this disease. Managers will know that once hired, these people have the tendency to miss work and they will be unable to terminate them because of this mental condition. This leads to

discrimination against people with OCD if they choose to let people know that they have the disease. It is very direct discrimination because if it is disclosed, the companies look at the negativities which come along with the disease and choose not to hire these people. Ocd. about. com tells people to “ Try and get a sense of what your employer’s track record is in accommodating OCD patients.” But to be able to do this, people would have to disclose that they have OCD and a majority of the companies would choose not to hire these people, and finding an understanding employer is rare. One personal story from [www. neuroticplanet. com](http://www.neuroticplanet.com) was put up by an employee who was recently terminated. He kept going to the bathroom to wash his hands because he was a washer and cleaner. When questioned about his constant breaks, the employee had no choice but to tell that he had the disorder. Upon finding out, the employer gave him a bunch of new tasks in which he could not handle and laid him off because he could not “ keep up” with the company. Many people who try to deal with OCD at work end up being discriminated against. Although there are rights stating that employees cannot be fired based upon mental illnesses, it is hard to prove that they were fired for this cause when employers find different ways to deal with it.

Biases do exist against people with OCD, mainly cultural biases. Although they are legally protected, there are many ways around these issues. Hoarders are one group of people who are culturally biased against. They are seen as odd people because their houses are full of junk that normal people would not collect. These hoarders are legally biased against because people have to keep their house clean and orderly. If a person were to have

a yard that looks like a junkyard, the city would force them to clean up or set rules against them. Some people hoard animals, and this goes against many legal issues. There are legal biases against these people because they are seen as animal abuses and unsanitary to a point where it has become a health issue. They own many animals to the point where they are unable to maintain them, and feces are all over the house. Eventually, they are legally forced to get rid of their animals and clean up after themselves.

An example of cultural biases is against the obsessional OCD group. They do things which society sees as weird such as repeating words, counting, or constantly praying to themselves. We have been taught that the norm is for people to think in their heads, not out loud in society, so these people are culturally incorrect. For somebody to be sitting in a corner and mumbling to themselves is seen as deviance. Checkers are also culturally biased against. When people see their daily ritual of running back and forth to their door and making sure they are locked, it is seen as incorrect.

C. How is the inequality of this group being addressed by law, policy, social movements?

Today, resources, information and support organizations have changed the stigma of individuals with OCD and has opened opportunities for a healthier lifestyle that allows these people to better manage their illness. Improved educational, career, and treatment opportunities are greater than ever. It was not long ago that the benefits of advanced communication strategies via technology, was not as far reaching as it is today. Only a few decades ago individuals with OCD in more rural areas faced the challenge of accessing

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information about their particular illness and where they could find the help they needed. They were left unaware, uneducated, and untreated and did not have an equal opportunity to benefit from early diagnosis by a professional.

Modern communication technologies, primarily like that of the world wide web, have huge impacts in the availability and access to the latest research about Obsessive Compulsive Disorders. Access to these sources of information is elevating levels of awareness that had never existed before. Today, people can access resources that allow them to respond to questionnaires, surveys, and or simply review symptoms of OCD in order to help them detect the illness in its earlier stages. Access to this information can improve the likelihood of seeking treatment. For example, at the website of The Westwood Institute of Anxiety Disorders, concerned individuals can review the "OCD Symptoms Checklist" which guide them through a questionnaire describing symptoms they might be experiencing. After all the questions are reviewed, an individual might then consider a treatment plan where otherwise they may have simply disregarded their initial concerns and attempt to manage their illness alone.

Charitable organizations have also played a huge role in influencing social movements towards the further awareness and treatment strategies of OCD, and helping to bring effective influence to those who have the illness. At the Awareness Foundation for OCD and Related Disorders, an online resource that provides brochures and links to professional associations and locations and contact information to various treatment facilities. They have made it their mission to educate and guide families of individuals with OCD. They <https://assignbuster.com/the-challenges-of-obsessive-compulsive-disorder-sociology-essay/>

offer links about educational seminars, public speaking events, and other educational brochures and pamphlets. These support groups have led to dramatic changes in the stigma and challenges individuals with OCD face as they try to live a normal life and encourage the support of immediate family of people with OCD as it impacts their entire families.

One of the social institutions that has made great efforts to meet the needs of OCD challenged individuals, is that of public education. Often times at an early age the signs of OCD are not as apparent and educators and parents are unable to distinguish between disruptive behavior and the early signs of OCD. This is a difficult challenge to school personnel and can even have a greater negative impact on the confidence of the child. This major issue has been tackled head on by organizations such as The OCD Education Station, an organization that specializes in providing various resources for school personnel. The OCD Education Station educates school personnel on issues such as; helping teachers and counselors recognize OCD symptoms, helps them learn how to communicate to the parents of children that are suspected of having the illness, and also provide tools and programs, such as custom curriculum's that are tailored to meet the educational needs of children with OCD.

The workplace has also been a difficult challenge and concern in maintaining a normal lifestyle with OCD. Different levels of severity and types of OCD directly impact on an individuals effectiveness at the workplace. It can reduce levels of productivity, attendance, judgement, and even their ability to work with others. In the workplace it is ever more important for

employees and employers to recognize the symptoms of OCD early in an <https://assignbuster.com/the-challenges-of-obsessive-compulsive-disorder-sociology-essay/>

individuals career. It is important that these individuals are honest with employers and have the security of securing their employment without any unnecessary discrimination.

One of the most difficult challenges for people with OCD, is overcoming their fear of losing their jobs as they might be seen as unfit to handle the responsibilities should the boss and other employers learn of their illness. As described earlier, there have been many instances in which employees have been inappropriately dismissed from their employment.

Fortunately, with the growing support of OCD organizations, laws and policies a protect the employment rights of individuals with OCD. Once an individual has sought treatment they can then disclose their illness to their employer. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects these individuals from discrimination and requests that the employer make slight accommodations to meet the needs of the individual with an illness, such as eliminating tasks that trigger the symptoms, offering flexible schedules, and making job expectations as clear as possible. (VZ-Life).

Today charity events by various support organizations are leading the advancement for future treatment programs by helpign raise the funds needed to conduct the necessary research. The list of current treatment provided today is a long one, a few include; counseling, cognitive-behavior therapy, psychosurgery, and even deep brain stimulation. Future treatments are expected to be less evasive and more effective than ever. In an recent article, " St. John's Wort: Future Treatment for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?", posted by The Herb Research Foundation, Nancy Hoegler

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suggests that after a study conducted using St. Johns's Wort, significantly reduced the levels of anxiety and other symptoms of OCD.

Research for new treatment programs requires lots of funding, today more and more organizations are surfacing and becoming effective in raising money for these types of projects. In 2011, what is commonly recognized as The London Marathon, will be hosted by the OCD-UK, the leading United Kingdom charity for people with obsessive compulsive disorders. OCD-UK is the nation's leading charity and works with and for individuals with Obsessive Disorders. The organization was founded in November 2003 by two OCD sufferers, former IT consultant Ashley Fulwood and businessman Steve Sharpe. Both felt that OCD was still not widely recognized and that a more proactive approach was needed to bring the problems faced by people suffering with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder into the public spotlight. On the 14th of April 2004, OCD-UK became an officially registered charity.

Today, the organization continues to grow with volunteers and participants at their fundraising events. They continue to provide support to over 4000 people with OCD through telephone information lines, email support services, and facilitated support groups through fully moderated online discussion forums. OCD-UK continues to respond to hundreds of requests for support and information, which they provide free of charge.

Summary and Conclusion:

-what did we identify as the answers to each question we were asked

-What is the future of OCD patients outlook

-Close with a quote or interesting description of the latest and innovative treatment for OCD, maybe it is expected to be cured.