

ABSTRACT

This study is based on the premise that the experience, expression and manifestation of psychological symptoms of a disorder are influenced by cultural, social and linguistic factors as well as the particular nature of the disorder. This investigation is an attempt to study Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in our culture through a phenomenological approach.

The study was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, the presenting symptoms of OCD are elicited from twenty firmly diagnosed patients through a semi structured interview schedule. To further validate the symptoms, 10 experienced Clinical Psychologists were asked to rate each symptom on a four-point scale to assess the frequency of occurrence and diagnostic significance of each symptom. The findings show that while diagnosing, practitioners consider compulsions as diagnostically more significant than obsessions for OCD and they consider obsessions as more common than compulsions among OCD clients.

The final list of 36 symptoms along with measures of Anxiety, Depression and another OCD symptom checklist (subscale of Symptom Checklist -R was given to 83 OCD and 67 Non-OCD out-patients. Obsessive Compulsive Symptom Checklist clearly differentiated between OCD and Non-OCD groups. Within the OCD group it was found that while the compulsions were similar to reported in other studies, the form and the content of obsessions were influenced by social, cultural and religious background. Moreover, in the contamination category the concept of “Napak” was found to be an additional variation where usually dirt, germs, and impurity are included. Such cultural differences may have implications for clinical, differential diagnosis and practice.