'I'm so OCD': A study on language and stigma in OCD

Participant Information Sheet

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study.

Introduction

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a serious mental health condition involving intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviours (compulsions) that are carried out to relieve distress.

This study aims to explore how people living with OCD experience casual language relating to their difficulty (e.g. people saying "I'm so OCD") when it is used by other people in their everyday lives. By focusing on participants' lived experiences, the research hopes to provide insights that could improve public awareness, challenge misconceptions, and support more compassionate approaches in society and healthcare.

You are invited to take part in this study if:

- You have received an OCD diagnosis from a Healthcare Professional at any point in your life.
- You live within the UK.
- You are aged over 18.
- You are currently feeling well enough to talk about your experiences & not going through a period of psychological distress.

Before you decide if you would like to participate, take time to read the following information carefully and, if you wish, discuss it with others such as your family, friends or colleagues.

Please ask a member of the research team, whose contact details can be found at the end of this information section, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information before you make your decision. Further information on this study is provided in the next few sections with the consent form provided at the end.

Why is this study important?

Very little research has examined how the casual misuse of OCD-related language contributes to stigma. By better understanding these experiences, the study has the potential to:

- Contribute to raising awareness of the impact of language on mental health.
- Provide evidence that can help advocacy groups, charities, and professionals reduce stigma.
- Encourage more accurate and supportive communication around OCD.

What will I have to do if I take part?
If you agree to take part in this study, please follow through to complete the consent form. The consent form requires you to provide some of your personal details (such as your name and email address) and asks you to confirm your consent to take part in this study.

After this, we will contact you via email to arrange a suitable time and date for an online meeting on Microsoft Teams. You will receive the link to the Microsoft Teams meeting via email. It is advised that you attend this meeting in a safe and confidential space. The interview will be carried out across one session lasting around 40-60 minutes. You may also take breaks at any point during the interview, if required. The interview will be audio-recorded for research purposes. Following the interview, participants will receive a debrief form via email that includes guidance on accessing further mental health support if needed.

During the interview, you will be asked about your experiences of living with OCD and how everyday language, such as phrases like "I'm so OCD," has had any impact on you. We will talk about whether this kind of language has influenced how you feel about yourself, how others see you, and your experiences with friends, family, work, or healthcare professionals. The questions are open-ended, so you can share as much or as little as you feel comfortable with, and there are no right or wrong answers - we are simply interested in hearing about your personal experiences.

Do I have to take part?
No. You decide whether or not you want to take part. Upon signing the consent form, you would still have the right to withdraw from the study up until 2 weeks after the interview takes place. You can stop taking part in the study at any time, without giving a reason. Withdrawing from the study will not affect your legal rights. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your audio recording and any personal details will be deleted promptly and securely.

What are the possible risks with taking part?
All studies involve some level of risk and inconvenience. It is understood that sharing personal experiences about mental health difficulties is a sensitive topic, which can sometimes feel distressing. Please do not take part if you would be uncomfortable talking about your experience of mental health and treatment. Our interview questions are open-ended and exploratory, and there is no intent or expectation that they will be upsetting.

It would be beneficial to the research if you were able to answer all the questions, but you are not obliged to do so. You have the choice to skip questions that you do not wish to answer, and can withdraw from the interview at any point, without reason. However, once the interview has finished, withdrawal is only possible until 2 weeks after your interview takes place.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Through taking part, you will be contributing to a doctoral research project. You will be contributing to important research on an underexplored area of OCD.
The results should help our understanding of how OCD is understood and discussed in society. This, in turn, if published, has the potential to be beneficial in informing the development of tailored interventions, thereby potentially reducing the barriers to accessing timely mental health support.

What happens when the study stops?
A lay summary of the study findings will be available from the research student.

What will happen to the information given during the study?
The research team, and anyone else that the participant chooses to tell, will know that they took part in this study. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, if anything is discussed within the interview which may give me cause for concern for your safety or the safety of others, this is something that the researcher will discuss with the academic supervisor in the first instance to deliberate on how best to proceed. Your identity will remain confidential, except in an instance where a possible risk of harm to yourself or others has been identified or if you disclose any serious malpractice, in which case the researchers would have to breach this confidentiality.

Participant data will only be available to researcher and supervisor. Participants' real names, or any real names of any people or places that they mention, will not be used in the final report. Pseudonyms will be used in place of real participant names when writing up results, in order to maintain confidentiality.

The data will be collected by the researcher (student). The data will be stored on a private channel on Microsoft Teams. The study will adhere with GCU data security and data protection/GDPR legislation. The data will be destroyed confidentially after 5 years.

The data controller is Glasgow Caledonian University. Information is being processed on the basis of Article 6(1)(e) of the General Data Protection Regulation and to perform a task carried out in the public interest.

Enquiries specifically relating to data protection should be made to the University's Data Protection Officer (DPO). The DPO can be contacted by email: dataprotection@gcu.ac.uk. If you are unhappy with the response from the University, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO can be contacted by email: casework@ico.org.uk.

GDPR also gives study participants the right to ask for their personal data to be erased. If you would like us to stop using your personal data, then you can contact the research team (contact details provided at the end of the sheet) and ask for your personal data to be erased. However, it will only be possible to erase data that has not been anonymised and/or published. Further information about your rights can be found at: https://www.gcu.ac.uk/dataprotection/rights/

Who is organising and funding the study?
This study is being organised by Jeeva Johnson and is not funded.

What will happen to the results of the study?
The study results will primarily be used for a doctoral dissertation project. However, it could also be available to a range of people including e.g. health professionals, researchers, and the public. The results of this study may be published in scientific journals and/or presented at conferences. It will not be possible to identify any individual participant from these reports or publications.

A lay summary of the results of the study will be available for participants when the study has been completed, and you may ask the researchers if you would like to receive a copy.

Who has reviewed the study?

All studies involving human participants carried out at Glasgow Caledonian University are reviewed by an ethics committee. The role of the ethics committee is the protect the safety, rights, wellbeing, and dignity of study participants. This study was reviewed by the School of Psychology departmental committee and given ethical approval on 24/10/2025 with the approval code HLS/PSY/25/002.

What happens next?
If you are interested in participating, then please follow through to the consent form on the next page.
If you have any further questions, then please contact Jeeva Johnson (student researcher) by email: jjohns304@caledonian.ac.uk

What if there is a problem?
If you are concerned about your participation in the study and would like to speak with someone out with the study team, please contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee, Lindsey Gilling HLSethicsPSWAH@gcu.ac.uk

How do I make contact with the study team?
Please speak to the research team and they will do their best to answer your questions.
If you are interested in taking part, then please contact the researcher:

Jeeva Johnson (Student at Glasgow Caledonian University)
Email: jjohns304@caledonian.ac.uk

Alternatively, you may also contact:

Prof Simon Hunter (Professor at Glasgow Caledonian University & Academic Supervisor)
Email: simon.hunter@gcu.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

If you are willing to partake in this study, please continue to the next section to complete the consent form.