

Research Proposal and Ethics Application Form

Please carefully complete this form and send it to your supervisor for checking over. Keep in mind the following:

1. Once your supervisor has checked over the form, they will either send it back to you with comments on items that require fixing or they will send your application for moderation.
2. You should keep your sections concise but ensure you include enough detail so that the reader understands the core points of each section.
3. You **MUST** submit your proposal and ethics form before you collect data
4. You **MUST** await approval before you can begin collecting data

This form contains three main sections. The first section is your ethics and research proposal. The second section includes the additional documents needed to support your application. Both these sections need to be completed by you. Section three is reserved for the supervisor and moderator to approve your application.

SECTION 1: PROJECT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: Joshitha Arvind

Supervisor Name: Elizabeth Dent

About Your Project

Preliminary Title:

The effect of OCD on Gastrointestinal Symptoms: A recount of the lived experiences

Background (no more than 500 words):

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, commonly known as OCD, is a mental health condition characterized by intrusive thoughts, ritualistic behaviors and compulsions (Krebs & Heyman, 2015). Roughly 1-3% of individuals suffer with OCD according to studies analysed by (Brock et al., 2024). There are many facets to OCD and various factors impacting the onset and continuation of OCD.

Gastrointestinal diseases are disorders associated with the Gastrointestinal system, from the esophagus to the intestines and organs such as the stomach and gallbladder according to studies analysed by (Lee & Kim, 2022). An example of a Gastrointestinal disorder is Irritable Bowel Syndrome. The common symptoms of Gastrointestinal diseases are vomiting, stomach bloating, issues with passing stool such as diarrhea and constipation according to the John Hopkins website cited by (Lee & Kim, 2022). In a study by Almario et al. (2018) 61% of the participants claimed to experience at least one Gastrointestinal symptom during the course of one week.

In a study by Grassi & Ilenia Pampaloni (2024), the researchers reviewed the literature related to OCD and gastrointestinal microbes, IBS and IBD. The researchers found that gut microbes had an impact on the traits and *symptoms* of OCD. The researchers stated in their discussion, according to the research analysed, a greater quantity of microbiota that promotes inflammation was linked with OCD and claims that the assessment of gastrointestinal symptoms should be included in the assessment of OCD. The researchers also stated in their discussion, based on the studies analysed, that it was important to look into eating and food habits in those with OCD as they may avoid eating food or only eat food prepared in a specific way due to fear of contamination and due to fear of having to follow their obsessive compulsions. These behaviours along with the food consumed may result in the individual developing Gastrointestinal symptoms due to the impact this has on the digestive system and gut.

Many recent studies have looked into the role of gut microbiota and its impact on the gut-brain axis and the bidirectional relationship between these factors and OCD. However, not many studies have focused particularly on how traits of OCD itself impacts people's Gastrointestinal symptoms. Therefore, this study aims to understand which traits of OCD in particular have an impact on and cause Gastrointestinal symptoms through interviews with those with lived experiences.

The use of medical treatments focusing on medications to restore gut microbes and modifying and monitoring food regimes could be useful for these affected individuals according to the studies analysed by (Grassi & Ilenia Pampaloni, 2024). This may be the best first step and targeting OCD symptoms and traits in particular would not only be less invasive but also help reduce OCD symptoms. Therefore, this study aims to focus on which traits and symptoms of OCD impact Gastrointestinal symptoms in order to target these in an efficient and effective way.

Describe the study

OCD is a common mental health condition affecting a number of the population. The researcher aims to understand the experiences of those with OCD and how this has impacted or triggered their Gastrointestinal symptoms. Due to the nature of the compulsions and rituals associated with OCD as well as the anxiety and stress factors, this study will aim to gain a better understanding of which factors affect Gastrointestinal symptoms.

The study will be a qualitative study. Interviews will be carried out with individuals with OCD experiencing Gastrointestinal symptoms. In order to fully understand which particular factor or trait of OCD affects their Gastrointestinal symptoms, participants will be asked a series of questions surrounding their journey with OCD, being careful to avoid any topics the participants feels uncomfortable discussing. These sensitive topics will be stated prior to the interview to avoid any emotional distress.

The questions will be semi-structured with answers dictating which route of questions to follow. If the participant claims to experience GI symptoms frequently, but for example has contamination fears, the questions will be directed towards these contamination fears and avoidance.

The interviews will be one-to-one and the audio will be recorded for transcription purposes. These meetings can be in-person or online via Teams depending on the participants' needs. Participants will not need to turn their camera on if they do not wish to. The interviews will then be transcribed and stored on a password protected laptop. The audio will be deleted

immediately after it has been transcribed. The transcription and data will be kept for teaching and research purposes or if the study is published. Any consent forms and the sheets containing the special code and their dedicated pseudonym will be stored in a locked cabinet draw.

A Reflexive Thematic Analysis will be completed in order to code and understand the transcripts better. A reflexive Thematic Analysis was chose due to the researcher's close link to the research topic. This will enable the researcher to understand the main themes surrounding OCD and how it affects the Gastrointestinal system.

Aims

This study aims to get a deeper understanding of how OCD can impact Gastrointestinal symptoms. This will be done through interviews with affected members of the population in order to understand the link better.

This study aims to bridge the gap in data regarding which traits of OCD and how the effects of OCD impact Gastrointestinal symptoms. Currently research has focused particularly on the presence of Gut microbiomes and their impact. However, OCD itself is characterized by many ritualistic behaviors that can directly (Food and water restrictions) and indirectly (anxiety and counting) affect the gastrointestinal system.

Objectives

This study has no hypothesis as it is not possible to predict interview outcomes. However, through this study, the researcher aims to understand the effects of OCD, in particular the traits and characteristics associated with OCD. In the long-term this research should hopefully aid in the understanding of how to effectively manage and target these characteristics and traits of OCD in order to prevent the development and worsening of Gastrointestinal symptoms.

Research Questions

- *Introductions , name, age, how are you, gender, where are you from?*
- *Are there any particular topics or particular OCD traits and Gastrointestinal symptoms that you would prefer that we do not discuss?*
- *If you are comfortable, please would you mind describing your OCD in terms of traits, behaviours and compulsions*

Any compulsions to do with hygiene, dietary, foods

YES

NO

Are you ok to describe these compulsions in a bit more detail if that is ok?

If you feel comfortable to do so, can you please describe your GI symptoms?

How often do you feel these symptoms and when? Is there a particular OCD that affects your GI symptoms?

If you feel comfortable to do so, can you please describe your GI symptoms and what you think causes these?

What types of foods do you mostly eat and what do you drink?

Can you describe your eating habits and patterns and your drinking patterns?

Is there any OCD that you feel starts your gastrointestinal symptoms?

- *Do you notice your GI symptoms changing at any point?*
- *When do you think your GI symptoms began? After the OCD, with the OCD, before OCD?*
- *Is there anything else you want to state regarding OCD and GI symptoms?*

Methodology:

In this study, the effects of OCD on gastrointestinal symptoms will be understood through interview questions. This will then be analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Semi-structured interview questions will be asked and the direction the questions take will be dependent on the participants' symptoms and OCD.

In order to collect data, OCD support groups will be contacted and participants who are eligible will be able to access the study via SONA.

A few examples of OCD groups I will attempt to contact:

- OCD Support Group for Tyne & Wear, and Northumberland
- OCD Action

Data Analysis:

A Reflexive Thematic Analysis. This is because it enables the researcher to identify common themes between participants and understand the umbrella traits and characteristics of OCD that affect gastrointestinal symptoms, and what the common symptoms are. A reflexive thematic analysis was chosen in particular as the researcher is strongly connected to the topic.

Potential Participants

This study will aim to continue recruiting participants until the interview answers start to contain similar themes, the information being discussed are similar in nature and the aims of the research have been met.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Participants must be over 18 when the interview is being conducted
- Participants must have or had a diagnosis of OCD
- Participants must be experiencing or must have experienced Gastrointestinal symptoms. These symptoms include anything that is felt from the mouth to the bowel, inclusive of the stomach and intestines.

Exclusion criteria:

- Anyone who feels uncomfortable discussing their OCD journey and symptoms
- Anyone who feels uncomfortable discussing Gastrointestinal symptoms and conditions and physical health issues.

Recruitment Strategy

- Participants will be recruited via OCD support group organizations either in-person or via the phone.
- I will call different support groups and ask if they would be able to ask if anyone in the group would be willing to participate in the study and I will send a digital copy of the information sheet or give one in-person if they are ok with this.
- Any university participants will be recruited via SONA

Ethical Considerations

Risk Assessment

Confirm you will abide by the BPS research on humans (2021) code: YES/NO

Confirm you will abide by the data protection act (2018): YES/NO

Does your project contain any of the risk factors stated in the [“risky research” document attached here](#) or found on the canvas page below the ethics application form

If yes, please specify

Yes

Will the research involve the use of visual/vocal methods that potentially pose an issue regarding confidentiality and anonymity?

- The interviews will be transcribed and stored on a password protected laptop. The audio will be deleted immediately after it has been transcribed. The transcription and data will be kept for teaching and research purposes.
- The interviewees will be able to create a special code and this code will be assigned to their pseudonym.
- Any consent forms and the sheets containing the special code and their dedicated pseudonym will be stored in a locked cabinet draw.
- The raw data will be stored separately from the participant consent forms. They will be kept in separate password protected files.

Does the research involve participants who are potentially or in any way vulnerable or who may have any difficulty giving meaningful consent to their participation or the use of their information?

- The study will include participants who have had or currently have OCD and they may find certain topics or OCD behaviors to be triggering.

Potential Harm

In this section, please detail any potential harm (physical or psychological) which may come from the study. You should also discuss the solutions to these problems.

- The study will include participants who have or had OCD. In order to prevent any psychological harm due to the nature of the mental health condition, I will ask the participants to state or write down any topic they would like to completely avoid

discussing at the start of the interview in order for me to exclude asking any questions on these topics. For example, if someone finds the topic of eating disorders triggering, I will make sure not to mention any eating disorders.

- Participants will not need to answer any questions they do not wish to.
- Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview and up to 4 weeks after their allocated Interview day.

Deception

In this section, please state if you intend to deceive participants. Describe how and why this occurs and what you will do to address the deception after the study is finished.

No

Data storage and confidentiality

Please state how you will ensure confidentiality, how you will store data and for how long, and when you will destroy participant data

I will ensure that all interview audio recordings and transcripts are saved onto a password protected laptop and not shared via email. Any paper consent forms and the sheets containing the special code and their dedicated pseudonym will be stored in a locked cabinet draw. The audio will be deleted immediately after it has been transcribed. The transcription and data will be kept for teaching and research purposes or if the study is published.

The raw data will be stored separately from the participant consent forms. They will be kept in separate password protected files.

References


- Almario, C. V., Ballal, M. L., Chey, W. D., Nordstrom, C., Khanna, D., & Spiegel, B. M. R. (2018). Burden of Gastrointestinal Symptoms in the United States: Results of a Nationally Representative Survey of Over 71,000 Americans. *The American Journal of Gastroenterology*, *113*(11), 1701–1710. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41395-018-0256-8>
- Brock, H., Hany, M., & Rizvi, A. (2024). *Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)*. PubMed; StatPearls Publishing. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553162/>
- Grassi, G., & Ilenia Pampaloni. (2024). Gut Microbiota and Gastrointestinal Symptoms in the Global Assessment of Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder: A Narrative Review of Current Evidence and Practical Implications. *Brain Sciences*, *14*(6), 539–539. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci14060539>
- Krebs, G., & Heyman, I. (2015). Obsessive-compulsive disorder in children and adolescents. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, *100*(5), 495–499. <https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2014-306934>
- Lee, K.-S., & Kim, E. S. (2022). Explainable Artificial Intelligence in the Early Diagnosis of Gastrointestinal Disease. *Diagnostics*, *12*(11), 2740. <https://doi.org/10.3390/diagnostics12112740>

SECTION 2: SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Please attach in the below section any of the following information to support your application:

1. Consent forms – [Online](#) and [Paper](#)
2. [Information](#) and [debrief sheets](#)
3. Advertisements you will use to collect data (e.g. social media post text or [posters](#))
4. Published or self-created questionnaires (including scales and what scores mean)
5. Links or examples of any materials you will give to participants (e.g. screenshots of experiments or images)

Online consent Form



Consent Statements

Participant Code: _____

	Yes	No
I confirm that I am over the age of 18		
I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information document.		
I understand that the data collected in this study are completely anonymous.		
I understand that the anonymised data from this study may be shared with other researchers and/or used for teaching purposes.		
I agree that I will discuss OCD symptoms, traits and behaviours		
I agree that I will discuss gastrointestinal symptoms and physical health issues		
I agree that I will discuss eating and drinking behaviours and disorders		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study by emailing the researcher or logging on to withdraw during the interview at any time		
I agree to take part in this study.		
I understand that I can withdraw from the study within 4 weeks following participation		
I agree to the interview being audio recorded.		
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.		
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be shared (after it has been anonymised) with other researchers		
I agree that my data gathered in this study (after it has been anonymised) may be used for teaching purposes.		

A "no" response will be denied access to the study with the statement: "Thank you for considering taking part in the study! Unfortunately, we have not received your full consent and therefore, we are not able to grant you access to the study."

If participants consent to take part, they will be directed to the study. At the end of the study, participants will be directed to a final page with a debrief and "Submit" button and be made aware that by clicking "Submit" they are granting permission for their data to be used in the study. Participants will then be directed to appropriate support resources if required.

Paper Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND

CONSENT FORM

Participant Code: _____

Study Title: What is the effect of OCD on Gastrointestinal Symptoms: A recount of the lived experiences

	Please initial box
I confirm that I am over the age of 18 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that I am able to discuss OCD symptoms, traits and behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that I am able to discuss Gastrointestinal symptoms and physical health diseases	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that I am able to discuss eating and drinking behaviours and disorders	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the above study	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Please initial box	
	Yes	No
I understand that I can withdraw from the study within 4 weeks following participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the interview being audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be shared (either if has been anonymised) with other researchers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that my data gathered in this study (either if has been anonymised) may be used for teaching purposes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>


Name of Participant: _____ Date: _____ Signature: _____

Consent Form - Interview session number and date

Name of Researcher: _____ Date: _____ Signature: _____

Consent Form - Interview session number and date

Participant Information



UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND

Participant Information Sheet

What is the effect of OCD on Gastrointestinal Symptoms: A recount of the lived experiences

What is the purpose of the study?

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Do I have to take part?

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

What if something goes wrong?

What will happen to the results of the study?

Further information and contact details

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet!

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

What if something goes wrong?

What will happen to the results of the study?

Further information and contact details

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet!

Debrief Sheet

Debrief

Study title: What is the effect of OCD on Gastrointestinal Symptoms: A recount of the lived experiences

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. The study is now complete, and your responses recorded. Your responses have contributed to this study looking into the effects of OCD on Gastrointestinal symptoms. The data collected from this study are for research purposes only as part of my Clinical Psychology degree. If you have any questions about the study, please email the researcher or project supervisor using the contact details below.

If the content of this study has caused any distress to you, you should contact your GP's surgery who will signpost you to relevant support.

If you have been affected by the topic of the study or if you wish to find out more about the topic, please contact charities such as

MIND online: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

MIND via email: info@mind.org.uk

Samaritans via telephone: 116 123

Samaritans via email: jo@samaritans.org

OCD UK: <https://www.ocduk.org/support-groups/online/>

Beat - 0808 801 0677 (England)
0808 801 0433 (Wales)
beatateinidorders.org.uk

Hoarding UK



info@boardinuk.org
boardinuk.org

Hub of Hope
hubofhope.co.uk
OCD Action
[0300 636 5478](tel:03006365478)
ocdaction.org.uk

MIND- has links to **all of the above contacts**, Beat to OCD Action and more
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/useful-contacts/>

Further contact details

Researcher – bi57lw@student.sunderland.ac.uk

Supervisor – Elizabeth.Dent@sunderland.ac.uk

Chair of the University Research Governance, Integrity, and Ethics (URGIE) group Dr Jon Rees
Email: ethics.review@sunderland.ac.uk

Advert from Canva

Hello
I hope you are doing well.
My name is Joshitha and I am currently doing a research study at the University of Sunderland.
My study title is: What is the effect of OCD on Gastrointestinal Symptoms: A recount of the lived experiences

I am hoping to conduct interviews in order to understand how OCD and traits of OCD affect Gastrointestinal symptoms.

Participants will need to complete a consent form and will be provided with an information sheet. The interview will consist of questions about OCD and Gastrointestinal symptoms.

The interview will last roughly an hour.

Questions on OCD will roughly discuss:
-What the individual's OCD behaviours and traits were
-The development and triggers of their OCD
-The timeline of their OCD and Gastrointestinal symptoms
Questions on GI symptoms will discuss:
-What the participant's GI symptoms were
-When these symptoms occurred, how long after the OCD or during the OCD
-Did any particular OCD traits trigger these symptoms?

The interviews will be conducted either in-person or via Teams depending on what the participants is comfortable with.

Please contact me via the email:
bi57lw@student.sunderland.ac.uk

Inclusion Criteria:
-Participants must be over 18 when the interview is being conducted
-Participants must have or had a diagnosis of OCD
-Participants must be experiencing or must have experienced Gastrointestinal symptoms. These symptoms include anything that is felt from the mouth to the bowel, inclusive of the stomach and intestines.

Exclusion criteria:
-Anyone who feels uncomfortable discussing their OCD journey and symptoms
-Anyone who feels uncomfortable discussing Gastrointestinal symptoms and conditions and physical health issues.

SECTION 3: SUPERVISOR AND MODERATOR SIGNOFF

Supervisor

I confirm that I have checked the proposal and ethics application and that I am happy for the research to go ahead

Name: Lizzie Dent

Signed: E. Dent

Date: 21/11/2025

Moderator

I confirm that (delete as appropriate):

The research to proceed without any changes.

Name: William Webster

Signed: W. Webster

Date: 01/12/25

General feedback:

Please use this space to provide feedback on the application

