

Generic Participant Information Sheet – for student use

Title: OCD in the Age of AI: Exploring the Relationship Between AI Chatbot Use, Reassurance Seeking and Psychological Distress

Student(s): *Barry McLaughlin*

Academic Supervisor and Chief Investigator: *Jemma Davidson*

Hello, my name is Barry McLaughlin and I am studying for an MSc in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in the School of Health and Life Sciences, Teesside University. As part of my course I am undertaking a research project and I would like to invite you to take part. Before you decide whether you would like to participate, please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please contact me, or my supervisor, if you have any questions.

Researcher Email: F5570490@tees.ac.uk

Supervisor Email: J.Davison@tees.ac.uk

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore how people with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) use Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots, such as ChatGPT, during periods of uncertainty, intrusive thoughts and anxiety. The research aims to investigate whether AI chatbot use is associated with reassurance-seeking behaviours, OCD symptom severity and participants' lived experiences. The findings may improve understanding of how AI is being used by people with OCD and help inform future Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) assessment and treatment.

Why am I being invited to take part?

You have been invited because I believe you are aged 18 years or over;
have symptoms Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

be able to understand the participant information and provide informed consent

To be able to take part though you must have completed at least 10 sessions of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) incorporating Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP);

have used an AI chatbot (for example ChatGPT) to manage intrusive thoughts, uncertainty, anxiety or reassurance seeking;

Unfortunately, you can't take part if you are currently experiencing an acute suicidal crisis or acute psychotic episode;

have significant cognitive impairment affecting your ability to provide informed consent;

have completed fewer than ten ERP-focused CBT sessions;

have no experience of using AI chatbots in relation to OCD.

Do I have to take part?

No, it's up to you if you want to, or not.

What would I be asked to do if I chose to take part?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an anonymous online questionnaire, which will take approximately 15–20 minutes. The questionnaire will begin with eligibility questions and demographic information, followed by questions about your use of AI chatbots. You will then complete the Obsessive Compulsive Inventory–Revised (OCI-R), questions relating to AI reassurance-seeking behaviours, Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDS) ratings, and a small number of open-ended questions about your experiences of using AI chatbots during periods of uncertainty or distress.]

What are the possible disadvantages, or risks, of taking part?

Some of the questions ask about obsessive-compulsive symptoms, intrusive thoughts, reassurance seeking, and experiences of anxiety. Thinking about these experiences may cause temporary emotional discomfort or distress. You are free to skip any question you do not wish to answer and may stop completing the questionnaire at any time before submitting your responses without giving a reason. At the end of the survey, information about appropriate support services will be provided should you feel distressed after taking part.

What are the possible benefits to taking part?

You may not receive any direct personal benefit from taking part in this study. However, your participation will contribute to research exploring how people with OCD use AI chatbots and whether these technologies influence reassurance-seeking behaviours. The findings may improve understanding of AI use within OCD and help inform future Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) assessment, treatment, and research.

What would happen to the information collected about me?

By submitting this survey you are giving your consent to take part in this study

Your Consent Form will be retained by the Project Team, led by Project Supervisor Jemma Davidson, in secure University storage for up to **10 years** in accordance with the University Retention Schedule and Medical Research Council recommendations.

People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your contact details. Your survey responses will remain anonymous and cannot be linked to your email address. Teesside University is the sponsor of this research and is responsible for looking after your information. We will keep all information about you safe and secure in University storage. Once personal information is no longer required it will be securely destroyed.

All other information collected will be anonymous and stored securely on encrypted, password-protected University systems with access restricted to the researcher and

academic supervisor. Research data will be retained securely for **10 years** before being permanently destroyed in accordance with University policy.

All other information - Personal data including special category data obtained for the purposes of this research project is processed lawfully in the necessary performance of scientific or historical research or for statistical purposes carried out in the public interest. Processing of personal data including special category data is proportionate to the aims pursued, respects the essence of data protection and provides suitable and specific measures to safeguard the rights and interests of the data subject in full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The questionnaire is anonymous, and no personally identifiable information will be included within the research dataset. Participants may choose to provide responses to open-ended questions, and brief anonymous quotations may be used within the dissertation, publications, or presentations to illustrate key themes. Any quotations used will be fully anonymised, and no information that could reasonably identify an individual will be included. Where contact details are collected for the optional prize draw, these will be stored separately from questionnaire responses and will not be linked to the research data.

Should any abusive or unprofessional behaviours or actions be disclosed and/or discovered then confidentiality will be breached, and the academic supervisor (in the first instance) will be informed. Any concerns related to abuse, neglect or any other area of adult safeguarding will be dealt with as a matter of urgency. The University's Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy will be followed in reporting safeguarding concerns to the appropriate authorities.

If completing this questionnaire raises any concerns or causes you distress, you are encouraged to seek support from someone you trust, your GP, or your current mental health professional if you have one. You may also find it helpful to contact one of the following organisations:

Samaritans – Call 116 123 (free, 24 hours a day) or visit www.samaritans.org

NHS 111 – Call 111 for urgent mental health advice.

Mind – Information and support: www.mind.org.uk

OCD Action – Information and support for people affected by OCD:
www.ocdaction.org.uk

NOCD – OCD information and peer support: www.treatmyocd.com

If you believe that you or someone else is at immediate risk of serious harm, please call 999 or attend your nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department immediately.

What would happen if I started, but, changed my mind?

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time before submitting your questionnaire without giving a reason and without any consequences. Because the questionnaire is anonymous, once responses have been submitted it will not be possible to identify or remove individual responses from the dataset.

Information about the School Research Ethics Committee and Chair

Who has approved this study?

This study has been approved by the Allied Health Professions (AHP) Research Ethics in the School of Health and Life Sciences, Teesside University.

What happens if there are any problems?

If you wish to discuss the study with someone outside of the research team who has knowledge of the study or if you wish to make a complaint that cannot be resolved by the research team please contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee Professor Cormac Ryan - c.ryan@tees.ac.uk/

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering whether or not to take part in my study. If you would like to take part then please contact me on

F5570490@tees.ac.uk