

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Theory of mind in autism and OCD.

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What is the study about?

This research aims to explore how autistic adults who also experience Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) understand and make sense of other people's thoughts feelings and behaviours something often referred to as **Theory of Mind** (ToM).

Theory of Mind is the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling. Difficulties with ToM are often discussed in autism research, while people with OCD may experience heightened awareness or distress around other people's thoughts. But there is not as much known about when autism and OCD co-occur.

This study aims to learn directly from people with lived experience of both autism and OCD. Rather than relying on stereotypes or assumptions, the research is interested in how you understand social experiences in your own words, and how your OCD may shape that understanding.

Why have I been invited? You've been invited because you identify as autistic and have experienced OCD, and you are aged 18 or over. You do not need a formal diagnosis to take part.

Who would not be able to participate? Unfortunately due to the nature of the study, we would not be able to include the following people in our research

- Individuals currently experiencing acute psychological distress that would compromise their ability to participate safely.
- Participants experiencing psychological difficulties that may impair their sense of reality. (psychosis, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder)
- Individuals without capacity to consent.
- Individuals we believe may be inauthentic (fake) participants.

If you have any questions about this please email on the address below.

What will I be asked to do? You'll be asked to:

- A brief online screening meeting (approximately 20-30 minutes) to confirm eligibility, explain the study, and complete a short questionnaire (Obsessive-Compulsive Inventory).
- Take part in a 60–90 minute interview via Microsoft Teams.
- Reflect on your experiences of understanding others, and being understood yourself, and how OCD may affect this.

What is the process?

Before the interview, you will be invited to a brief screening meeting lasting approximately 20–30 minutes. During this meeting, the researcher will explain the study, answer any questions, confirm eligibility, discuss consent, and ask you to complete the Obsessive-Compulsive Inventory (OCI), a questionnaire about OCD symptoms. The questionnaire is not being used as a diagnostic assessment, and your responses will not be used to determine whether you have OCD. The questionnaire will provide a symptom profile which will help us understand which symptoms of OCD you experience. Following the screening stage it may be decided that you do not meet criteria for the study, we ask you read the criteria carefully and email over any questions or concerns about the criteria prior to the screening interview.

Do I have to take part? No. Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study without giving a reason up until your interview has been anonymised and incorporated into the analysis. After this point it may not be possible to identify and remove your individual data

Will my data be kept confidential? Yes. Your interview will be anonymised and stored securely away from your consent form. Only the researcher and supervisory team will have access to the data. Pseudonyms will be used in all reports.

Are there any risks? You can choose what you discuss but you might find some topics are emotionally sensitive. You can pause or stop the interview at any time. A list of support resources will be provided.

What will happen to the results? Findings may be used in academic publications and presentations. You will not be identified in any outputs.

Who has reviewed this study? This study has been reviewed and approved by Cardiff universities Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions, please contact:

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