

DO AUTISTIC TRAITS PREDICT OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE SYMPTOMS? A COMMUNITY-BASED STUDY

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder share similar characteristics. People with one disorder are more likely to meet the diagnosis of the other. This study investigated whether autistic traits predicted obsessive-compulsive symptom subtypes, controlling for demographic features and clinical variables.

METHODS: This study included 460 students from two universities and their family members. Subjects completed a sociodemographic form, the Vancouver Obsessional Compulsive Inventory (VOCI), Autism-Spectrum Quotient (AQ), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), and Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI). The relationship between autistic and obsessive-compulsive symptoms was assessed using linear regression analysis, controlling for age, sex, depression, anxiety scores, and a history of frequent childhood upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs). Approval was obtained from Pamukkale University, Faculty of Medicine ethics committee on 22.02.2022 (number 185844). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

RESULTS: The study group consisted of 55.7% women and 44.3% men. The mean age was 37.14 ± 14.79 years. The AQ attention-switching

score was associated with hoarding, just-right, indecisiveness and total VOCI scores ($p < 0,05$). AQ subscale scores other than attention-switching were not associated with VOCI scores. Age was negatively associated with obsessions, just-right, indecisiveness, and total VOCI score ($p < 0,05$). BDI and BAI total scores were positively associated with all VOCI scores ($p < 0,05$). Checking, just-right, and total VOCI scores were higher significantly in the group with frequent childhood URTIs ($p < 0,05$).

CONCLUSIONS: Jiujias et al. reported that these disorders share common characteristics. Meier et al. reported that people diagnosed with ASD were twice as likely to be diagnosed with OCD, and people diagnosed with OCD were four times as likely to be diagnosed with ASD. Individuals with OCD symptoms may exhibit attention-switching deficits similar to those of individuals with ASD symptoms, suggesting a subgroup of OCD that shares features with ASD. Attention-switching deficits should be further investigated in terms of the relationship between ASD and OCD.

Keywords: Obsessive compulsive symptoms, autistic spectrum disorder, autistic traits in healthy population, anxiety