

Abstract

Previous research has revealed the psychopathological complexity of obsessive-compulsive symptoms (OCS) in schizophrenia with an “atypical” presentation. Yet, such a phenomenon failed to conform with the current classification systems of psychiatric disorders and therefore brought difficulties to clinicians and researchers. Meanwhile, the relationship between cognitive impairments and OCS in schizophrenia is yet to be ascertained and studies have yielded mixed results. Thus, this study aimed to examine whether the patients with schizophrenia and a high level of OCS severity (SZ+ group) would demonstrate distinguishable cognitive profiles from those with schizophrenia yet a low level of OCS severity (SZ- group), via the employment of a newly and locally developed measure, namely the Obsessive and Compulsive Symptoms in Schizophrenia Scale (OCSS), to measure the “atypical” OCS in schizophrenia. This study hypothesised that the SZ+ individuals would demonstrate greater levels of cognitive impairments across multiple cognitive domains than the SZ- group. A between-subjects design was employed and the data of 74 participants were analysed. Each participant was engaged in a 2-hour one-off assessment which consisted of a clinical assessment interview, followed by a range of neuropsychological assessments and the OCSS. No significant difference in the neuropsychological performance between the two groups was found, suggesting that an individual with more severe OCS was not necessarily more impaired in his/her cognitive performance. The results also implied that the cognitive deficits might possibly have a “trait” characteristic. Possible explanations and methodological issues were discussed.

Keywords: schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, cognitive impairments, OCSS