

Abstract

Background

Neuropsychological functioning in patients with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a growing concern, yet conflicting results from different studies have often been confounded by comorbidities. The purpose of this study was to provide an up-to-date meta-analysis of the neuropsychological functioning of OCD patients in which moderating variables were explored.

Method

The initial studies were selected from four electronic databases, the reference lists of which were searched for additional articles. Twenty-eight studies were selected based on specified inclusion criteria. A total of 10 neuropsychological domains were examined in the meta-analysis and the effects of eight moderator variables were explored.

Results

OCD patients demonstrated neuropsychological deficits over a wide range of domains, with larger effect sizes for verbal fluency, processing speed and response inhibition. A modest effect was found for set shifting, working memory, problem solving and visuospatial memory. Different variables moderated the effect sizes in various domains, but the results were limited by the small number of studies.

Conclusions

Generalized rather than specific neuropsychological impairment was present in OCD patients. Future work should focus on patients without comorbidities and provide further evidence of the moderating factors in the neuropsychological functioning of OCD patients. The identification of subtypes and endophenotypes in OCD will also be an important direction for future research.