

The Executive Functioning Profile of Children and Adolescents with a Diagnosis of OCD: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Authors : Parker Townes, Aisouda Savadlou, Shoshana Weiss, Marina Jarenova, Suzzane Ferris, Dan Devoe, Russel Schachar, Scott Patten, Tomas Lange, Marlena Colasanto, Holly McGinn, Paul Arnold

Abstract : Some research suggests obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is associated with impaired executive functioning: higher-level mental processes involved in carrying out tasks and solving problems. Relevant literature was identified systematically through online databases. Meta-analyses were conducted for task performance metrics reported by at least two articles. Results were synthesized by the executive functioning domain measured through each performance metric. Heterogeneous literature was identified, typically involving few studies using consistent measures. From 29 included studies, analyses were conducted on 33 performance metrics from 12 tasks. Results suggest moderate associations of working memory (two out of five tasks presented significant findings), planning (one out of two tasks presented significant findings), and visuospatial abilities (one out of two tasks presented significant findings) with OCD in youth. There was inadequate literature or contradictory findings for other executive functioning domains. These findings suggest working memory, planning, and visuospatial abilities are impaired in pediatric OCD, with mixed results. More work is needed to identify the effect of age and sex on these results. Acknowledgment: This work was supported by the Alberta Innovates Translational Health Chair in Child and Youth Mental Health. The funders had no role in the design, conducting, writing, or decision to submit this article for publication.

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