

A corpus-driven
Critical Discourse Analysis
of *The OCD Stories*

Poppy Plumb

Lancaster University

Email: p.plumb@lancaster.ac.uk

This presentation:



Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)



The OCD Stories and illness narratives



Corpus-driven Critical Discourse Analysis
(CDA)



My research: Medicalised vs Socially-orientated
OCD discourses

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

- Affects 2-3% population
- Intrusive thoughts and compulsive behaviour
- Heterogeneous disorder

(Krzanowska and Kuleta, 2017)

the OCD stories

Real stories that educate and inspire those with OCD

theocdstories.com

Example

“But suddenly, as she was hugging me Goodnight, **the thought shot into my head that if I strangled her she wouldn’t be able to stop me because of being too frail. It terrified me.** There was no thought in the world that could have appalled me more.

Looking back now I can see that the circumstances conjured this up in my mind. **It was an involuntary thought – intrusive.** The problem was that the thought didn’t go in one ear and out the other. **I obsessed about it.** I was a growing boy, shocked to realize that I was already stronger than my Gran. In the nighttime stillness of her bungalow I glimpsed through childhood eyes the vulnerability of an elderly person that I loved dearly.”

'Unsolicited Written Illness Narratives from the Internet'

- **Illness narratives:** 'construct personal world of suffering' (Hyden, 1997).
- **Unsolicited written illness narratives:** Reduce researcher bias (Robinson, 2001).
- **Narratives from the internet:** Optional anonymity (Robinson, 2001).
- **“Construct and give meaning to our social reality” (Hyden, 1997)**

“How do people with OCD construct their experiences on *The OCD Stories*?”

Corpus-driven Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA (Wodak and Meyer, 2008)

- Problem-orientated
- Discursive constructions of power imbalances

Corpus-driven CDA (Baker, 2006)

- Triangulating quantitative and qualitative methods
- Avoid 'cherry-picking'
- Systematic analysis



'The OCD
Corpus'

131 illness narratives

178,763 tokens

#LancsBox (Brezina, McEnery
and Wattam, 2015)

Collocations

- Node = word under investigation
- Collocate = a word that frequently co-occurs with the node within a specified span (McEnery and Hardie, 2012)
- Collocations can help to uncover traces of discourse (Baker, 2006)

Top 20 lexical collocates of 'ocd'

Collocate	Z-score	Collocational frequency
pure	37.95	19
diagnosed	37.11	26
symptoms	31.48	26
stories	29.83	17
contamination	28.74	13
caused	27.40	18
story	27.34	29
sufferers	26.50	12
says	26.13	8
to never	25.40	5
ocd	24.78	90
sufferer	24.63	9
religious	24.58	10
anxiety	24.06	42
officially	23.87	7
can	23.65	48
raise	23.15	5
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KWIC search for 'diagnos*'

- 111 results
- 54/131 illness narratives

1	case. I have never officially been	diagnosed	with OCD although a therapist I was
2	through this. When my therapist officially	diagnosed	me with OCD, I did some research
3	I was officially, and oddly gratefully,	diagnosed.	I fought through much depression, panic attacks,
4	street drugs. I was later officially	diagnosed	with OCD, Anxiety, and Depression at age
5	OCD, I have not been officially	diagnosed,	there are days where I just feel
6	a postnatal Psychiatrist, where I was officially	diagnosed	with post-natal OCD and prescribed SSRIs, which
7	against misconceptions, I was finally officially	diagnosed	with OCD. The fact that my compulsions
8	a week later I was finally	diagnosed	with OCD after reading an article by
9	Treatment In 2006 I was finally	diagnosed	by a psychiatrist who placed me on
10	absence from school, and was finally	diagnosed	with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. I was 19. I
11	lot of weight. I finally was	diagnosed	by a psychiatrist with OCD. It made

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Socially-orientated OCD Discourse

Categories of OCD	Frequency
Contamination OCD	8
Existential OCD	1
Classic OCD	2
Harm OCD	5
Health OCD	1
Homosexual OCD	1
Pure O/Pure Obsessional/Pure OCD	16
Sexual Orientation OCD	1
Paedophile OCD	3
Perfectionism OCD	1
Post-Natal OCD	1
Relationship OCD	5
Religious OCD	4
Schizophrenia OCD	2
Scrupulosity OCD	1
Sexual OCD	2
Sexuality OCD	2
Gay or Straight OCD	1
Trans OCD	1
ROCD	18
HOCD	6
POCD	7
Total	89

- 19 'types' of OCD + 3 initialized forms
- 29/131 illness narratives

“Because these terms have **no medical meaning** and to avoid any confusion, we generally try and **avoid using the acronyms in our writings** where possible to ensure there is no loss of meaning or context.

In fact, we **actively discourage their use** because we have seen on multiple occasions the use of the acronyms leading to some users experiencing a delay in accessing treatment.”

- OCD-UK, (“Types of OCD”, 2018)

Should alternative terms be 'discouraged'?

- Remember: OCD is a heterogeneous disorder
- Language can empower individuals with illness(es) (Semino et al. 2015)

Acknowledging the multitude of OCD constructions helps medical professionals to understand individuals' experiences, and helps individuals to communicate their specific OCD experiences.

Limitations

Small dataset that
is context-specific

Limited to English
illness narratives

Conclusions

- Illness narratives on *The OCD Stories* reflect the heterogeneity of OCD.
- Tension between a medicalised discourse of legitimacy and a socially-orientated discourse including content-specific labels.
- Listening to the linguistic constructions of mental illness in illness narratives can inform medical professionals and improve doctor/patient communication.

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Further Reading

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