

Psychosocial Impact and Quality of Life in People with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: Literature Review (2021–2025)

Impacto Psicossocial e na Qualidade de Vida de Pessoas Com Transtorno Obsessivo-Compulsivo: Revisão de Literatura (2021–2025)

Impacto Psicosocial y en la Calidad de Vida de Personas con Trastorno Obsesivo-Compulsivo: Revisión de la Literatura (2021–2025)

RESUMO

Objetivo: Analisar os principais impactos psicossociais, funcionais e terapêuticos do Transtorno Obsessivo-Compulsivo (TOC), além dos avanços recentes no manejo clínico, entre os anos de 2021 e 2025. **Método:** Revisão de literatura narrativa realizada nas bases PubMed/MEDLINE, SciELO e LILACS, com descritores relacionados ao TOC, impacto psicossocial, qualidade de vida e tratamento, incluindo artigos originais e revisões publicadas no período. **Resultados:** O TOC mostrou altos custos socioeconômicos, prejuízos escolares e familiares, e associação frequente com ansiedade e depressão. A Terapia Cognitivo-Comportamental com Exposição e Prevenção de Resposta (TCC-ERP) permanece como padrão-ouro, potencializada por farmacoterapia com ISRS e clomipramina. Abordagens como neuromodulação e terapias digitais online apresentaram resultados promissores, especialmente em adolescentes. **Conclusão:** O TOC constitui relevante problema de saúde pública, exigindo estratégias integradas de prevenção, diagnóstico precoce e tratamento multidimensional, voltadas à funcionalidade e à melhoria da qualidade de vida dos indivíduos afetados.

DESCRIPTORES: Transtorno Obsessivo-Compulsivo; Impacto Psicossocial; Qualidade de Vida; Terapia Cognitivo-Comportamental; Saúde Mental.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To analyze the main psychosocial, functional, and therapeutic impacts of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), as well as recent advances in clinical management between 2021 and 2025. **Method:** Narrative literature review conducted in PubMed/MEDLINE, SciELO, and LILACS databases, using descriptors related to OCD, psychosocial impact, quality of life, and treatment, including original articles and reviews published during the period. **Results:** OCD showed high socioeconomic costs, academic and family impairments, and frequent association with anxiety and depression. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with Exposure and Response Prevention (CBT-ERP) remains the gold standard, enhanced by SSRI and clomipramine pharmacotherapy. Approaches such as neuromodulation and digital therapies demonstrated promising results, especially in adolescents. **Conclusion:** OCD is a significant public health issue, requiring integrated strategies for prevention, early diagnosis, and multidimensional treatment focused on functionality and quality of life improvement.

DESCRIPTORS: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder; Psychosocial Impact; Quality of Life; Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy; Mental Health.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Analizar los principales impactos psicosociales, funcionales y terapéuticos del Trastorno Obsesivo-Compulsivo (TOC), así como los avances recientes en su manejo clínico entre 2021 y 2025. **Método:** Revisión narrativa de la literatura en las bases PubMed/MEDLINE, SciELO y LILACS, con descriptores relacionados con TOC, impacto psicosocial, calidad de vida y tratamiento, incluyendo artículos originales y revisiones del período. **Resultados:** El TOC presentó altos costos socioeconómicos, perjuicios académicos y familiares, y frecuente asociación con ansiedad y depresión. La Terapia Cognitivo-Conductual con Exposición y Prevención de Respuesta (TCC-EPR) sigue siendo el estándar de oro, potenciada por farmacoterapia con ISRS y clomipramina. Estrategias como la neuromodulación y las terapias digitales mostraron resultados prometedores,

Literature Review

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especialmente en adolescentes. **Conclusión:** El TOC representa un problema relevante de salud pública, que requiere estrategias integradas de prevención, diagnóstico precoz y tratamiento multidimensional orientado a la funcionalidad y a mejorar la calidad de vida.

DESCRIPTORES: Trastorno Obsesivo-Compulsivo; Impacto Psicosocial; Calidad de Vida; Terapia Cognitivo-Conductual; Salud Mental.

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INTRODUCTION

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a chronic psychiatric disorder characterized by the presence of obsessions, compulsions, or both, which cause significant functional impairment and a relevant impact on quality of life, resulting in intense psychological distress. Its lifetime prevalence is estimated to vary between 1% and 3% of the world population, making it one of the most common mental health conditions globally. OCD often begins in child-

hood or adolescence, with chronic progression and high psychiatric and medical morbidity. International studies show that individuals with OCD are at increased risk for comorbidities such as depression, anxiety disorders, and somatoform disorders, as well as high rates of suicidal ideation.¹ This overview reinforces the severity of the disease, which should be understood not only as an individual clinical condition but also as a relevant public health issue.

The impacts of OCD transcend the individual sphere and reverberate in

different social and family contexts. A multicenter study conducted in China showed that the disorder entails significant costs and multiple losses, including medical expenses, loss of work productivity, and economic burden on families, in addition to compromising the functionality and emotional health of affected individuals.² These findings show that OCD goes beyond subjective suffering and directly affects social participation, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and family financial stability. Given this reality, there is a clear need

for public health strategies aimed at early diagnosis and expanding access to effective treatments in order to reduce the collective impact and costs associated with the disorder.

In recent years, scientific literature has made significant advances in understanding the functional impact of OCD, especially in pediatric and adolescent populations. Evidence shows that, in these groups, the repercussions go beyond obsessive and compulsive symptoms, affecting school performance, social integration, and family dynamics. A study published in 2022 showed that intestinal and urinary dysfunctions in children with OCD are strongly associated with greater severity of the disorder and the presence of psychiatric comorbidities, such as depression and anxiety.

In addition, these changes have a negative impact on the socialization and academic performance of these individuals.³ Complementarily, another recent study showed that functional impairment in young people may be even broader than the symptoms presented, reinforcing the need for multidimensional assessments that include not only patient reports but also observations from family members and health professionals.⁵ This evidence highlights the importance of developing therapeutic strategies that are not limited to reducing symptoms, but also promote improved functionality, facilitating daily adaptation and quality of life for children and adolescents with OCD.

In the field of therapeutic interventions, significant advances have been made in recent years. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) with exposure and response prevention (ERP) remains the gold standard, with widely proven effectiveness. However, new modalities have been investigated with the aim of increasing treatment effectiveness. A review published in 2023 highlighted relevant progress, including neuromod-

ulation techniques such as transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and deep brain stimulation (DBS), as well as the analysis of the efficacy of first-line drugs such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and second-line drugs such as clomipramine.¹ The findings indicate that the combination of psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy enhances results, favoring both the reduction of obsessive symptoms and more lasting gains in individuals' functionality and quality of life.

At the same time, new therapeutic formats gained prominence after the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, a Brazilian study evaluated the effectiveness of online group CBT for adolescents with OCD. The results showed a significant reduction in symptoms, as well as an improvement in quality of life and family relationships. This model highlights the potential of digital interventions to expand access to effective treatments, especially in regions with a shortage of qualified specialists, with important implications for the formulation of public mental health policies.

Despite these advances, significant gaps remain. Studies are needed to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of innovative modalities, considering the clinical heterogeneity of OCD, its medical and psychiatric comorbidities, and the functional impacts that go beyond core symptoms. Furthermore, although the social and economic costs of the disorder are already recognized, they continue to be underestimated in several countries, limiting the development of comprehensive public policies. These gaps justify the importance of systematic and narrative reviews that integrate recent knowledge, identify emerging trends, and point to new avenues for future research and intervention strategies.

Thus, it is clear that the relevance of OCD is undeniable. It is not only a

clinical challenge, marked by its chronicity and therapeutic complexity, but also a problem with significant social and economic impact, which requires coordination between clinical practice, scientific production, and the formulation of health policies. A critical review of recent literature allows us to gather information that guides both clinical management and the development of more effective public health strategies.

Thus, this article aims to critically review the literature published between 2021 and 2025 on Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), highlighting its prevalence, psychosocial and functional impacts, therapeutic advances, and remaining gaps. The aim is to justify the relevance of the topic and contribute to clinical practice, scientific production, and the planning of public policies and strategies focused on mental health and psychiatric disorders.

METHOD

This article is a narrative literature review, designed to gather, analyze, and synthesize the most recent scientific evidence on Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and its psychosocial, functional, and therapeutic impacts. The bibliographic search was conducted in the PubMed/MEDLINE, SciELO, and LILACS databases, selected for their relevance to the health field and their coverage of national and international publications. Controlled descriptors (DeCS/MeSH) and free terms were used, including: "Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder," "OCD," "Treatment," "Functional Impairment," "Psychosocial Impact," and "Quality of Life," combined using the Boolean operators AND and OR to broaden and refine the results. The search period covered publications between January 2021 and July 2025, ensuring the evidence was up to date.

Original articles, reviews, and clinical studies published in Portuguese, English, or Spanish, available in full text, that directly addressed OCD in relation to psychosocial impact, quality of life, functionality, or therapeutic strategies were included. Duplicate works, editorials, and studies that were not directly related to the theme or the research objectives were excluded. After applying the eligibility criteria, five studies met the requirements, covering different dimensions of the topic: social and economic costs of OCD², functional impact on children and adolescents^{3,5}, therapeutic advances in adults⁽¹⁾ and digital interventions in adolescents⁴.

The analysis was conducted qualitatively and descriptively, through a comprehensive reading of the texts, prioritizing the identification of convergences and divergences between the findings. The information extracted included methodological characteristics, main results, and evidence related to the functional and therapeutic psychosocial impact. The data were organized into a narrative synthesis, allowing for a critical and integrated view of current knowledge on the topic, in addition to highlighting gaps and potential directions for future investigations.

RESULTS

This review included studies published between 2021 and 2025 that addressed different dimensions of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), including therapeutic, functional, psychosocial, and economic aspects. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with Exposure and Response Prevention (CBT-ERP) is the gold standard for the treatment of OCD in adults, highlighting the effectiveness of combination with pharmacotherapy, especially with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and clomipramine. In addition,

new approaches are emerging, such as transcranial magnetic stimulation and deep brain stimulation, which show promise in cases refractory to conventional treatment.

A pilot study conducted in China showed that CBT, when applied virtually to adolescents, had a positive effect on quality of life and control of obsessive-compulsive symptoms, as well as improving quality of life, family relationships, and daily functioning. These findings reinforce the viability of digital strategies as accessible therapeutic tools, especially in public health settings and regions with a shortage of specialized professionals.

Associated with OCD, intestinal and organic dysfunctions were associated with a worse prognosis in children and adolescents and were usually associated with anxiety and depression. Complementarily, functional impairments in young people with OCD exceed the severity of the reported symptoms, widely affecting the school, family, and social domains, which reinforces the need for integrated and interdisciplinary clinical approaches. The promotion of remote CBT enables not only symptom control and reduction but also improvement in quality with better patient socialization.³⁻⁵

Socioeconomically, the literature shows high costs associated with OCD. These include treatment costs, loss of productivity, and financial burden on families. As a result, high rates of functional and emotional disability are observed, reaffirming OCD as a global public health problem.

An integrated analysis of the studies shows that, despite methodological diversity, there is theoretical and empirical convergence in the understanding of OCD as a condition that has broad and multifactorial repercussions, impacting psychological, social, physical, and economic aspects.

In the therapeutic approach, the combination of CBT and SSRIs

provides more lasting results, with reduced relapse rates and sustained improvement in functionality. The introduction of neuromodulation techniques, such as TMS and DBS, emerges as an innovative alternative for resistant cases, with the potential to redefine future clinical protocols.

The pediatric approach is not only about symptom control, but also about understanding the associated factors in the environment in which the patient lives, in a holistic way. The functional impact, which transcends the severity of symptoms, highlights the need for assessments that include reports from patients, family members, and healthcare professionals, offering a more accurate view of functionality and subjective suffering.

It is important to incorporate economic and social dimensions into the analysis of OCD, highlighting the loss of labor productivity, reduction in family income, and increased emotional burden on caregivers. These data reinforce the urgency of public policies that promote equitable access to specialized treatment and psychosocial support for families.

The studies cited converge on the need for integrated therapeutic and policy strategies, ranging from early diagnosis and multidisciplinary management to the expansion of accessible, community-based therapies. Thus, the success of OCD treatment should be understood not only as symptomatic remission, but also as restoration of functionality, social reintegration, and improved quality of life for patients and their families.

DISCUSSION

The results of this review show that Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a complex and multifactorial psychiatric condition, whose impacts go beyond the individual clinical sphere and reach functional, psychosocial, and economic dimen-

sions.

OCD imposes significant and sustained costs, resulting from both the ongoing need for treatment and the loss of productivity and financial and emotional burden on families. Such evidence reinforces the understanding of OCD as a public health problem, requiring policies that ensure early diagnosis, expanded access to effective therapies, and structured psychosocial support.

With regard to the functional impacts on children and adolescents, the damage goes beyond obsessive and compulsive symptoms, encompassing physiological, academic, and relational changes. These dysfunctions reveal the importance of integrated clinical approaches capable of addressing the somatic, cognitive, and emotional manifestations of the disorder. Clinical management should, therefore, go beyond symptomatic reduction, prioritizing overall functionality, socio-emotional development, and family and school integration.

Therapy based on CBT-ERP as the main treatment is evident, but the association with medications and new neuromodulation techniques can enhance clinical and functional improvement. When associated with

CBT, even virtually, studies show good results in the management and control of symptoms.^{1,5-4}

In an integrated manner, a multi-dimensional care model that considers the clinical dimension of OCD and its functional, psychosocial, and economic ramifications is essential. However, there is a scarcity of longitudinal studies evaluating the sustained effects of innovative therapies and a lack of analyses addressing the social impact of the disorder in different cultural and economic contexts.

Therefore, OCD should be understood as a highly complex clinical and social challenge, in which management requires the improvement of traditional therapies and the incorporation of new, intersectoral strategies adapted to patients' needs. Effective management of the disorder thus depends on the integration of mental health, education, and public social support policies, promoting person-centered care aimed at improving the quality of life and social inclusion of affected individuals.

CONCLUSION

The review confirms that Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is

a chronic, multifactorial, and highly prevalent condition whose impact goes beyond obsessive-compulsive symptoms, compromising functionality and quality of life and generating a significant socioeconomic burden. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with Exposure and Response Prevention (CBT-ERP) remains the first-line treatment, especially when combined with pharmacotherapy with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. Emerging approaches, such as neuromodulation and digital therapies, show promising results and expand access to specialized care.

There is evidence of the importance of integrated strategies for prevention, early diagnosis, and multidimensional treatment that address the clinical, functional, and social aspects of the disorder. Investing in public policies that promote access to evidence-based therapies and a model of continuous care is essential to reduce the individual and collective burden of OCD and sustainably improve clinical outcomes and the quality of life of affected individuals.

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