# Beyond Diagnostic Comorbidity: Toward a Shared Cognitive-Behavioral Framework for Obsessive-Compulsive Features in ADHD

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## BACKGROUND

- ADHD and OCD frequently co-occur, but comorbidity rates are inconsistent.
- Many individuals with ADHD report obsessive-compulsive (OC)-like features (e.g., intrusive thoughts, checking, hoarding).
- These features have not been integrated into a shared conceptual framework.

## OBJECTIVE

To synthesize current evidence on OC-like features in ADHD and evaluate whether these reflect overlapping processes along a spectrum, rather than isolated comorbid OCD symptoms.

## METHODS

- Narrative review of human studies across the lifespan.
- Focus on OC-like features, internal cognitive interference, and neurobiological mechanisms.
- Databases: PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science.
- Studies included: Clinical, cognitive, neuroimaging, and genetic evidence.

REFERENCES

**Many OC-like symptoms in ADHD may reflect the ADHD phenotype rather than true OCD.**

## PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**ADHD**
- Inattention
- Executive dysfunction
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity

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**INTERNAL COGNITIVE INTERFERENCE**
- Intrusive thoughts
- Mind blanking
- Mind wandering
- Negative automatic thoughts

Reduced top-down control of internally directed cognition

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**OC-LIKE BEHAVIORS**
- Checking (e.g., reassurance, repeated confirmation)
- Hoarding (e.g., difficulty discarding items)

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**SHARED NEUROBIOLOGY**
- CSTC circuits
- Dopaminergic systems
- Frontostriatal dysfunction

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**ADHD-RELATED OC-LIKE FEATURES**
OC-like symptoms in ADHD exist on a spectrum and may reflect heterogeneous ADHD-related mechanisms.

## EVIDENCE FROM THE LITERATURE

### A. Internal Cognitive Interference

- Adults with ADHD report more unwanted intrusive thoughts and worry. [2]
- ADHD distractibility includes mind wandering and intrusive thoughts. [8,12]
- Higher mind blanking and negative automatic thoughts in ADHD. [7,11]

### B. OC-like Behaviors

- Checking behaviors may be compensatory rather than driven by OCD mechanisms. [1,10]
- Childhood inattention predicts hoarding; elevated hoarding in ADHD samples. [5,6]
- Punding is distinct from OCD and linked to dopaminergic mechanisms. [3,4]

### C. Shared Neurobiology

- Alterations in CSTC circuits involved in cognitive control and habitual responding. [4,9]
- Overlapping frontostriatal dysfunction in ADHD and OCD. [1,4]
- Genetic overlap in dopaminergic and glutamatergic pathways. [4]