Guilt and Cognitive Fusion as Potential Pathways Linking Obsessive-Compulsive Symptoms to Depression

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Findings from a cross-sectional study in an analogue sample suggest **guilt** and **cognitive fusion** contribute to the co-occurrence of obsessive-compulsive and depressive symptoms.

INTRO
- Although obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and depression often co-occur, limited work has explored potential shared risk factors that may cause the symptoms of these psychological conditions to cohere.
- The present study examined whether guilt and cognitive fusion (CF), two important clinical features of both OCD and depression, mediated the relationship between obsessive-compulsive (OCS) and depressive symptoms.

METHODS
- A large undergraduate sample (N = 272) completed questionnaires to assess OCS dimensions (DOCS), depressive symptoms (DASS), excessive guilt (IEGS), guilt sensitivity (GSQ), and cognitive fusion (CFQ).
- Mediation was conducted using PROCESS (Hayes, 2018) in SPSS.
- Independent analyses were conducted to examine the mediation of OCS dimensions and depressive symptoms by guilt or CF.
- A serial analysis was conducted for each OCS dimension predicting depressive symptoms, with CF and guilt as sequential mediators.

RESULTS
- See figure #1-4.
- Inappropriate and excessive guilt, as well as guilt sensitivity, significantly mediated the relationship between each OCS dimension and depressive symptoms.
- In the serial mediation model, both CF and excessive guilt significantly and uniquely mediated the relationship between each OCS dimension and depressive symptoms.

DISCUSSION
- The hypothesized specificity of CF and guilt was not observed in the present study; further examination of these effects in longitudinal designs and clinical samples may clarify the specificity of these associations.
- Our findings support the potential significance of both guilt and cognitive fusion in linking OCS with depressive symptoms.
- Guilt and cognitive fusion warrant further study as factors that potentially contribute to the common coherence of OC and depressive symptoms.