

Book Review

EXPERIMENTS WITH OCD: A REVIEW OF DR. P.J. SAJU'S JOURNEY THROUGH OCD

Jaseela PT¹, Ajith Premnath^{2*}

1. Junior Resident, 2. Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, MES Medical College Perinthalmanna

Corresponding Author: 2*Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, MES Medical College Perinthalmanna

Email: premnathajith@gmail.com



"People are not disturbed by things, but by the view they take of them" – Epictetus.

The quote above aptly highlights the profound influence of thoughts on life. This theme resonates throughout Dr. P.J. Saju's Malayalam book Ente OCD Sathyanweshana Pareekshanangal. (translated as My Experiments with Truth in OCD) The author aims to improve understanding and awareness of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) among readers, and the book successfully fulfills this purpose. It underscores that OCD extends beyond the stereotypical notions of excessive washing or cleaning, delving into its complexities.

This 144-page treatise, published by Olive Publications and priced at ₹220, consists of six chapters and five appendices.

It is dedicated to his two professors, Dr. K Kuruvila and Dr. Prathap Tharyan. He further dedicates the book to OCD patients whose insights are unforgettable and to all those who will benefit from it in the future. The author acknowledges the role his wife Beena and his medical school batch have played in motivating and encouraging him to complete this work, the chief amongst them being the chairman of Olive Publishers, Dr. M. K. Muneer. The publisher's note, written by Dr. M. K. Muneer, details the author's unique skill in communicating his ideas through his distinctive use of words and skilled application of layout. This unique style is what the reader experiences while going through this treasure, which at the same time captivates them and offers them a clear understanding of a complex concept.

The prelude, written by emeritus professor Dr. K. Kuruvila, introduces common mental disorders and discusses their multifaceted impacts on patients. Dr. Kuruvila emphasizes the importance of residency training in addressing common mental health issues alongside the attention traditionally given to severe mental disorders. The overview by Dr. Abdul Raoof, Director of Medical Education, Essex, UK, mentions how the author uses language in a simple and interesting way to describe the deep recent concepts of OCD without compromising its scientific basis.

The author starts with a brief sojourn through



Access the article online:
<https://kjponline.com/index.php/kjp/article/view/491>
doi:10.30834/KJP.37.2.2024.491.
Received on: 20/12/2024 Accepted on: 21/12/2024 Web Published: 21/12/2024

Please cite the article as Jaseela PT, Ajith P. Experiments with OCD: A Review of Dr. P.J. Saju's Journey through OCD. Kerala Journal of Psychiatry 2024; 37(2): 159-161.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), mentioning its origins, its evidence in different psychiatric disorders, its evolution across the various waves of psychotherapy, and how this book would guide the discerning reader in applying the principles of CBT. Here, he observes that therapy, in a way, is a search for the truth, which is the inspiration for the book's title. The chapter also outlines his personal experiences with OCD and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

The second chapter deals with the conceptual framework of obsessions and compulsions, when these become a disorder, and how to identify whether someone has OCD. The chapter also deals with the help-seeking behavior of OCD patients and goes on to describe the disorders related to OCD, which completes its spectrum. By the second chapter, the author enriches the reader's journey with mental exercises and simple yet impactful writing, making the process both enjoyable and enlightening. Instead of overwhelming readers with excessive information, the author skillfully delivers essential knowledge in a practical and accessible manner. Using precise Malayalam terminology is particularly beneficial, especially for clinicians applying tools like the Yale-Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Scale (Y-BOCS).

In the subsequent chapter, he tells the Freudian ideas regarding OCD, cognitive behavioral concepts, and formulations of OCD. Five detailed case vignettes are particularly noteworthy, illustrating the real-world application of CBT. Graphical representations of CBT's effectiveness, alongside pharmacotherapy, make the concepts more accessible. He then describes the role of behavior therapy and the idea and application of Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP). The next chapter deals with the understanding of thoughts and beliefs in OCD, cognitive distortions in OCD, the questions posed by CBT to address the thoughts in OCD, the two perspectives of CBT, and behavioral experiments.

While primarily focused on CBT, the author also explores newer therapies, such as

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Here, he gives an interesting discussion on mindfulness and how its concepts based on Buddhist philosophy revolutionized psychotherapy.

The final chapter appears to be beyond the book's scope, which is intended for the common man, as it delves into the pharmacological management of OCD. The appendices are both informative and time-saving for clinicians, and the detailed references provided at the end will benefit readers seeking further study.

Written in simple Malayalam and complemented by clear diagrams, the book captivates readers, often compelling them to finish it in a single sitting. Dr. Saju's work emphasizes the need for similar future explorations of common mental illnesses. Dr. Saju's ability to demystify complex concepts of OCD is exceptional. His narrative style blends clinical expertise with personal anecdotes, making the book informative and engaging. The book serves as a self-help resource for those struggling with OCD, offering hope and practical strategies. A work of this nature is a testament to the deep reflections the author has made over the decades about the practice of CBT in OCD patients. Dr. Saju's compassionate approach to addressing even minor patient concerns reflects his genuine care. This is an approach the author alluded to at the book launch as being more critical than empathetic; as with empathy, we understand the suffering of others but stop short of actually helping. With compassion, we take one step more than empathy and try to help those suffering.

As Dr. Saju states, this book focuses not on describing OCD in a manner that reaches perfection but on providing the reader with a useful resource that helps them understand the nuances of OCD. It is, therefore, a pardonable error that a few typographical and stylistic errors have crept in, which an obsessive copy editor and proofreader may weed out in future editions. A word of appreciation also for the beautiful cover design capturing, at the same time, the

behavior and distress of a person suffering from OCD, as exemplified by the image of a person using a paper napkin to touch a door handle.

In conclusion, "Ente OCD Sathyanweshana Pareekshanangal" is a comprehensive guide for the general public and a concise reference for mental health professionals. Dr. Saju's experiences in India and the UK lend credibility and depth to his insights into treating OCD. This book is highly recommended for patients seeking support in their journey with OCD. Dr. Saju has successfully delivered a valuable resource that blends wisdom, compassion, and practical advice for the community. We hope that the author will reveal more gems of the same nature on psychotherapy and psychiatric disorders in the near future.

The book is available at Amazon.com [[Link](#)]

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