

Meaning in Life and Time Perception: The Moderating Effects of Obsessive-Compulsive Tendencies

Roselyn Tentzohua, Bao Han L. Tran & Cathy R. Cox
Texas Christian University

Background

- People with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) tendencies experience intrusive, uncontrollable thoughts and images that elevate anxiety. Compulsions are excessive and repetitive behaviors or mental acts that serve to relieve such anxiety. (Singh et al., 2023)
- These tendencies may influence time perception (subjective experience of time passage (Kasser & Sheldon, 2009)) as they take up a significant amount of time. (Zisler et al., 2024)
- Subjective time poverty has been linked with a lower meaning in life. (Yuan & Sun, 2025)
- Given that OCD may be linked to time scarcity, it may be predicted that people with OCD tendencies experience a lower meaning in life when they experience time scarcity.
- This research establishes a link with OCD and time scarcity.

Research Question

How do OCD tendencies moderate the relationship between perceived time affluence/scarcity and an individual's sense of meaning in life?

Measures

Yale Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Obsessions

$\alpha = .817$

- How much of an effort do you make to resist the obsessive thoughts?

Yale Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Compulsions

$\alpha = .853$

- How would you feel if prevented from performing your compulsions? How anxious would you become?

Meaning in Life Questionnaire

$\alpha = .926$

- My life has a clear sense of purpose

Methodology

Participants:

- $N = 325$ students (Prolific)
- 156 women, 164 men, and 5 other ($M_{age} = 45.32, SD = 16.03$)
- 67% White

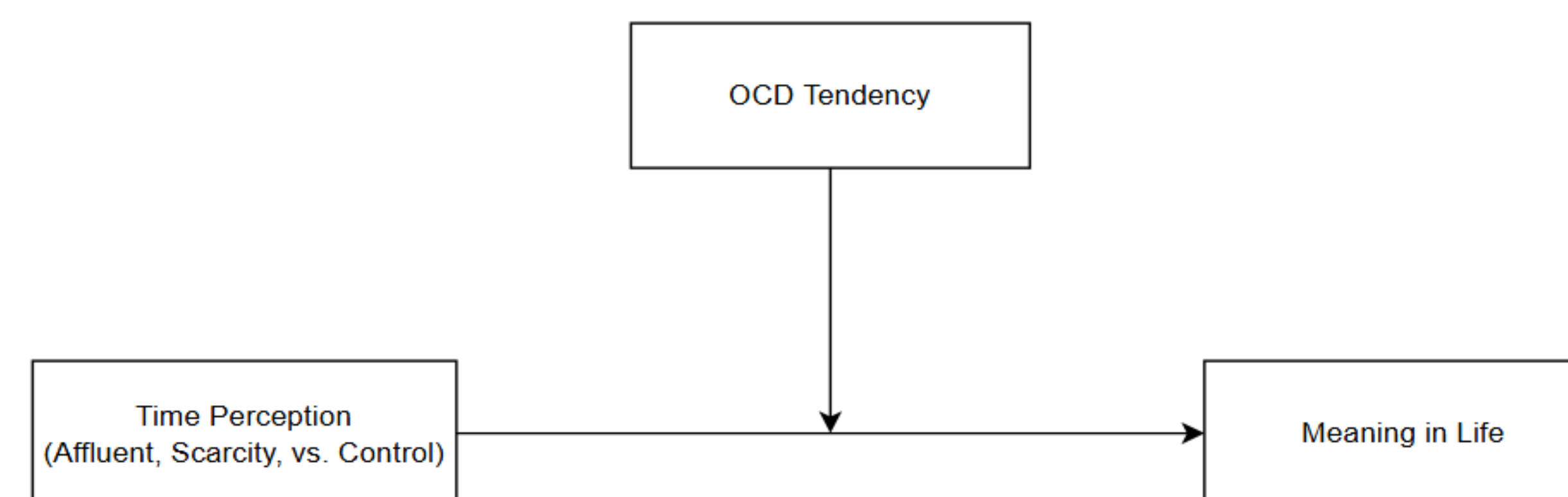
Participants first filled the Y-BOCS questionnaires, then they received a time perception manipulation:

Experimental Manipulation: Participants were instructed to read one of the 3 vignettes.

- **Time Affluence Condition:** Imagine working a corporate job where you have abundant time
 - **Time Scarc Condition:** Imagine working a corporate job where you have insufficient time
 - **Control Condition:** Imagine working a corporate job
- Participants answered questions for a manipulation check

Meaning in Life: Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ).

Expected Results



- It is predicted that OCD tendencies will influence the relationship between time perception and meaning in life. This is because OCD tendencies may increase the negative effects of the time scarcity manipulation and thus decrease in meaning in life.
- Participants in the time scarce condition will experience less meaning in life while participants in the time affluent condition will experience more meaning in life.

Discussion

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- Identifying significant correlations could provide foundational insights for developing clinical interventions aimed at enhancing the sense of meaning in individuals with OCD
- We hope our results provide better understanding of time perception in people with OCD since the research is very limited.

Limitations

- 67% white sample, which may not be representative of OCD symptomology in diverse cultures
- OCD has many subtypes, and there is a possibility that each subtype garners different results.

Future Directions

- Future studies should explore how different OCD subtypes e.g., scrupulosity or contamination OCD affects the relationships between time perception and meaning in life.
- Future studies should experiment with manipulating resource or time scarcity in individuals with OCD to see how time perception is affected
- It will be interesting to see examine how specific OCD dimensions, such as obsessions and compulsions, exert varying degrees of moderating influence."

References

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