

A Study on the Effects of Compulsive Buying Behavior and Shopping Addiction on the Self-Esteem of College-Going Female Students

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ABSTRACT

Several variables affect consumers' propensities toward compulsive shopping. Consumers who are materialistic and suffer from shopping addiction struggle with illnesses that increase stress and reduce subjective well-being, and are unable to regulate their shopping habits, which in turn bring social and financial problems. Shopping addiction causes a person to be preoccupied with spending money and experiencing various satisfactions along the way. They start to have ideas, compulsions, and obsessions that get them ready to go shopping and spend money. This persists even though they are aware of the behavior's unmistakable detrimental effects on their lives. The aim of the current research is to study the effect of compulsive buying behaviour and shopping addiction on the self-esteem of college-going female students. Standardized scales were used to measure shopping addiction, compulsive buying behaviour and self-esteem. The results found that compulsive buying behaviour and shopping addiction are negatively correlated. However, there seemed to be no significant correlation between self-esteem and shopping addiction. The validity of the clinical diagnosis of compulsive buying disorder is still up for debate. However, it is undeniable that some people are "addicted to shopping" and require treatment for their addiction. To further understand the behavior in terms of origin, prevalence, clinical characteristics, the course of the illness, and treatment, more research is required.

Keywords: *Compulsive Buying Behaviour, Shopping Addiction, Self-Esteem, College-going Female Students*

Some people develop shopping addictions because they essentially get addicted to how their brain feels while shopping. As they shop, their brain releases endorphins and dopamine, and over time, these feelings become addictive. - Ruth Engs, Indiana University.

It is not uncommon for individuals to want and even need to accumulate material possessions, but for a person who indulges in compulsive buying, the desire for new and more possessions takes over their lives and causes major problems. This is an era where we're surrounded by advertisements that tell us that buying will make us happy and where consumerism has evolved into a gauge of societal value.

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The term shopping addiction or “oniomania” was first used in 1915 by German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin to describe a pathological addiction to the need to buy things and services and to spend leisure time shopping. In 1924, Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler used the term to characterize compulsive buying reflexes. In other terms, oniomania is a preoccupation with purchasing (from the Greek word *onios* + *mania* = for sale + insanity). Although compulsive buying and shopping addiction among people has increased recently due to the increase in the spending capacity of people, these concepts are not new. It was acknowledged as early as the nineteenth century, and in the early twentieth century, it was listed as a psychiatric illness. Shopping addiction commonly co-occurs with other mental illnesses such as eating disorders, anxiety, and depression. Shopping addictions, as opposed to other addictions, typically start to take hold in people's 30s once they acquire financial independence. People frequently spend more time and money than they can afford on shopping, and many of them experience financial difficulties because of their overspending.

Shopping addiction, like other addictions, typically develops as a coping mechanism for dealing with the emotional anguish and challenges of life, and it usually makes things worse rather than better for the addict. Shopping addiction is contentious despite having a lengthy history, and both experts and the public dispute whether it qualifies as an addiction. Both compulsive and impulsive spending when shopping might lead to an addictive pleasure. However, those who have a shopping addiction frequently return home feeling empty and dissatisfied with their purchases. Shopping addiction differs from other types of shopping in ways that it becomes the person's primary method of managing stress, to the point where they continue to shop excessively even though it is obviously having a bad effect on other aspects of their life. As with other addicts, they struggle to control their urges and are, therefore, more receptive to the marketing and advertising messages that permeate our daily lives. Certain studies have also found a neurological basis to explain the phenomenon of compulsive buying. Lawrence et al. (2014) conducted a study on 24 people with a mean age of 25, where they found that different neurological networks are associated with compulsive buying, which reflected cue reactivity and episodic memory with increased arousal and attachments to items. Studies have also found that people engaging in compulsive buying are also prone to different lifestyle psychological disorders. Black et al. (2012) conducted a study on 26 subjects with compulsive buying disorder with a mean age of 36.3 years and found out that in comparison to controls, compulsive buyers exhibit higher levels of lifetime mental comorbidity, self-rated depression, ADHD symptoms, trait impulsivity, and novelty seeking.

Shopping Addiction or Oniomania

Shopping addiction has sometimes been defined in pop science literature as "a cultural epidemic." Among other characteristics, it causes spending recklessly large amounts of money on non-essentials. In *Family, Consumer and Economy Review*, the hypothesis was made that in the future, many people would be unable to control their shopping impulses (Chaykowsky, 1998). It appears that predictions were justified; in the 21st century, it became possible to buy everything online within the comfort of our homes. Zalega (2020) defined shopping addiction as “a dysfunctional form of excessive and pervading buying. The consumer experiences an unstoppable, chronic, and repeated impulse to go shopping and spend money and he or she loses control of this activity.” A similar definition was proposed by McElroy et al. (1994), who defined oniomania as a sense of strong compulsion to buy combined with a total or partial loss of control, causing much damage, including suffering, a strong feeling of guilt, financial and social problems.

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Anwar et al., (2021) conducted a study on 1160 shopping mall customers where oniomania is explored in relation to consumers' decision-making process, consumer attitudes, values, lifestyles, and preferences. A negative linear relationship was found between age and compulsive buying behavior, suggesting that compulsivity seems to decline with the process of aging. Similarly, materialistic attitudes, the need for social identity, and self-fulfilling prophecy were found to be potentially related to oniomania.

Compulsive Buying Behaviour

Compulsive buying, or material addiction, is a phenomenon that has existed for ages in different cultures and societies. The life of all individuals has become complex and fast-paced, which results in the overconsumption of goods. It is a phenomenon that is on the rise among the affluent population and especially among teenagers. Though this problem has been barely noticed, it is one of the most severe problems in westernized society. Whomsoever depending upon the level of involvement may experience this problem. The core issue here lies in how well, or to what extent, the individual being impacted by this problem is able to adjust to his/her surroundings.

O'Guinn & Faber (1989) defined compulsive buying as "chronic, repetitive purchasing that occurs as a response to negative events or feelings." Black (2007) defined compulsive buying behavior as typified by "excessive thoughts of shopping and buying behavior that produces distress or harm." Compulsive buyers often buy clothes from famous designers and "top of the line" (i.e., expensive) items in order to impress others, and they shop online more than control participants (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009)

In addition, compulsive shoppers have been shown to have significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, binge eating, and impulse control disorders (Klein, 2013).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is an important concept in personality psychology and psychotherapy. Self-esteem has been defined as a positive or negative evaluation of one's own worth. Self-esteem can apply specifically to a particular domain (e.g., social, intellectual) or overall. An individual's self-esteem affects their thoughts, behavior, and emotional reactions. Self-esteem is composed of different aspects, or 'facets,' all of which contribute to your overall feelings about yourself. According to Crocker & Wolfe (2001), self-esteem is "both a state and a trait, and fluctuating of state self-esteem around one's typical level may be more important, with more direct consequences for behavior, than trait self-esteem". In particular, those whose self-esteem is contingent upon the approval of others are more likely to exhibit compulsive buying tied to mood swings. Low self-esteem has been found to be consistently associated with compulsive buying. (Roberts et al, 2014). Tuncel & Kavak (2022) found that social exclusion reduced feelings of self-esteem and belonging and that this reduced sense of belonging decreased the intention to engage in unethical consumer behavior in an effort to re-establish connections.

Purpose

The purpose of the research is to study the effect of compulsive buying behavior and shopping addiction on self-esteem among female college-going students.

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Hypothesis

- There will be a significant relationship between people engaging in shopping addiction and self-esteem.
- There will be a significant relationship between compulsive buying behaviour & self esteem.

METHOD

Sample

Data were collected from a total of 30 people from across Faridabad and Ghaziabad, who were all female college-going students. The age of the participants ranged between 18-25.

Measures

- **Compulsive Buying Behaviour Scale (CBBS)**: as developed by Faber & O'Guinn (1992). It consists of 7 statements. Six of the statements are rated on a scale from 1=very often to 5=never. One statement is rated on a scale from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree. CBBS is a screening instrument utilized to identify compulsive buyers from the general population.
- **Bergen Shopping Addiction Scale (BSAS)**: as developed by Andreassen (2014). It consists of 28 statements, and each item is rated on a five-point continuum of agreement: completely disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, completely agree. Groups of four items are targeted toward each of the seven addiction criteria (salience, mood modification, conflict, tolerance, withdrawal, relapse, and problems). BSAS is a brief screening tool for assessing the severity of shopping addiction.
- **Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES)**: as developed by Rosenberg (1965). It consists of 10 statements, and each item is rated on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. RSES is a self-report measure of global self-esteem.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and the questionnaires were filled out through Google Forms. Standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants. Each participant was thanked for their cooperation.

Analysis of data

The responses of participants were analyzed using the correlation matrix to study the correlation between shopping addiction, compulsive buying behavior, and self-esteem.

The Mean and Standard deviation data are presented in Table 1, and Table 2 shows the correlation between the same variables.

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Table No. 1 Shows the mean and standard deviation of the variables

Descriptives

	Salienc e	Mood Modifica tion	Confli ct	Tolera nce	Relap se	Withdra wal	Probl em	Shoppi ng Addicti on Total	Compul sive Buying Behavio ur Total	Self Esteem Total
N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	5.03	4.97	1.73	3.67	3.53	3.93	1.47	24.3	26.3	18.5
Stand ard deviati on	3.46	3.76	2.39	3.58	2.89	3.73	2.36	17.5	3.35	6.58

*Table 2 shows the correlation between Shopping Addiction, Compulsive Buying Behaviour, and Self-Esteem.
Correlation Matrix*

	Salienc e	Mood Modifica tion	Confli ct	Tolera nce	Relaps e	Withdr awal	Proble m	Shopp ing Addicti on Total	Compu lsive Buying Behavio ur Total	Self Esteem Total
Salienc e	—									
Mood Modific ation	0.7 10	*	—							
Confl ct	0.5 68	*	0.46 2	*	—					
Tolera nce	0.5 99	*	0.64 6	*	0.6 37	*	—			
Relapse	0.4 92	*	0.24 3	*	0.5 96	*	0.5 41	*	—	
Withdr awal	0.6 92	*	0.73 1	*	0.5 47	*	0.6 66	*	0.5 70	*
Proble m	0.2 98	*	0.39 0	*	0.5 18	*	0.5 49	*	0.4 33	*
Shoppi ng Addicti on Total	0.8 19	*	0.79 9	*	0.7 63	*	0.8 54	*	0.6 86	*
Compu lsive Buying Behavio ur Total	- 0.3 29	- 0.50 6	*	- 0.1 82	- 0.3 15	- 0.1 90	- 0.35 2	- 0.5 53	*	- 0.44 4
Self Esteem Total	0.3 34	0.19 1	0.1 37	0.1 89	0.0 03	0.23 0	0.0 88	0.22 6	0.051	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results found that there is a significant negative correlation between Shopping Addiction and Compulsive Buying Behaviour ($r = -0.444, p < 0.5$). In simpler terms, individuals who engage in more compulsive buying behavior are less likely to develop shopping addiction, and vice versa. This finding suggests that although both behaviors involve excessive spending, they may be driven by different underlying motivations or psychological factors. The results also found that there is no correlation between Self Esteem and Compulsive Buying Behaviour. This implies that an individual's level of self-esteem does not directly influence their tendency to engage in compulsive buying. This might seem surprising, as one could intuitively assume that low self-esteem might lead to compensatory buying behaviors. However, this result suggests that other factors, such as materialism or perceived social status, might be more influential in driving compulsive buying behaviors. There is also no correlation between Self Esteem and Shopping Addiction. The absence of a correlation between Self Esteem and Shopping Addiction suggests that an individual's self-esteem is not significantly related to their likelihood of developing a shopping addiction. This finding indicates that shopping addiction might be influenced by factors other than self-esteem, such as coping mechanisms, emotional regulation, or neurological factors associated with addiction. The hypothesis has thus been rejected.

A study by Hanley & Wilhem (1992) found that compulsive buyers have relatively lower self-esteem than normal consumers and that spending addicts hold views about money that are reflective of their symbolic capacity to raise self-esteem. Lower self-esteem could potentially lead to an increased desire for external validation, and compulsive buying might be a way for individuals to temporarily boost their self-worth through acquiring material possessions. However, it's important to note that this study only shows an association and cannot establish causality. Another study by Yurchisin & Johnson (2009) found that compulsive buying behaviour was inversely correlated with self-esteem and correlated favorably with perceived social status connected with materialism, buying, and participation in clothes products. As individuals with lower self-esteem might seek validation and a sense of social status through material possessions, they are more likely to engage in compulsive buying to fulfill these needs. This behavior can lead to a harmful cycle of seeking fulfillment through consumption without addressing the underlying self-esteem issues. Overall, these results and previous studies highlight the complexity of shopping addiction and compulsive buying behavior, and how they may be influenced by various psychological factors. It's essential for future research to delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms driving these behaviors, as well as explore potential interventions to address shopping addiction and its impact on individuals' well-being.

CONCLUSION

The present research aimed to study the effect of compulsive buying behavior and shopping addiction on the self-esteem of female college-going students aged 18-25. According to the findings, there is a strong negative association ($r = -0.444, p < 0.5$) between compulsive buying behavior and shopping addiction. Additionally, the findings revealed no correlation between self-esteem and either compulsive shopping or shopping addiction. Thus, it has been determined that there is no negative correlation between shopping addiction and self-esteem. Previous studies solely employed a trait-based measure of self-esteem, which has limited our knowledge of the connection between self-worth and significant consumer outcomes like compulsive shopping. According to the results of the

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current study, a critical factor in comprehending how self-esteem affects compulsive buying tendencies is how much a person's self-esteem changes around the average level. When stress levels are minimal, low self-esteem does not lead to compulsive shopping. According to studies by Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton (1997) and Roberts, Manolis, and Tanner (2003), young adults and adolescents who are dealing with their parents' divorce often turn to compulsive shopping as a coping strategy. Hence, when examining the impact of self-esteem on compulsive purchase habits, future studies may also benefit from manipulating different types of anxiety and stress. Future studies should also concentrate on the purchasing motivations of men and women since these factors may predict or moderate personal susceptibility features and compulsive purchasing.

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Conflict of Interest

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