

Research Paper

Compulsive Buying, Self-Regulation, Self Esteem among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Compulsive Buying Behaviour, an ongoing trend of addictive shopping behaviour which indulges many youth and an area need to be explored as it has tremendous effect on one's life. At this point, young adults become the main focus as they are in the stage of starting to earn a disposable income and therefore, they should be able to regulate themselves over their financial matters for avoiding future crisis like debts, financial crisis and other psychological effects. But the studies on this area are rare and only few have focused on Kerala population. The aim of the present study was to understand Self-Regulation and Self Esteem in Compulsive Buying among young adults. And to study differences among Compulsive buyers and Non-Compulsive Buyers on study variables. It was hypothesized that Compulsive Buying would not be significantly related with Self Esteem and Self-Regulation. For this purpose, 120 young adults in the age range of 18-25 years, in Kerala were administered The Compulsive Buying Scale (Valence, d'Astous & Fortier, 1988), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), Self-Regulation Scale (Schwarzer, Diehl & Schmitz, 1999). Correlation analysis. Additionally, t-ratio also calculated to understand the gender differences and other demographic differences like localities (urban or rural), family type, etc. Results revealed that Compulsive buyers have low self-regulation. Self-esteem is negatively correlated with Self-Regulation. Women have more self-esteem than men and compulsive buying is higher among urban residents than rural residents. Practical implications are that compulsive buying is negative and harmful behavior with damaging consequences for an individual psychologically and financially. So proper measures should be identified and implemented for impeding compulsive buying and training and education should be provided for changing such shopping attitudes and for self regulation and management.

Keywords: *Compulsive Buying, Self-Regulation, Self Esteem*

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Shopping has been recognised as a form of leisure among urban dwellers in the twenty-first century. This phenomenon can be observed in the daily lives of young adults, as young adults living in metropolitan cities have a constant need to achieve some level of social standards as a means of meeting social needs, with popular acts such as chilling at a café and spending time at the mall with their peers (Enrico, Aron & Oktavia, 2014). A compulsive buyer will frequently use their purchasing behaviour to make up for negative experiences and low self-esteem. Compulsive buying is referred to as repeated extensive buying, which cannot be controlled, has negative consequences.

At this point, young adults become the main focus as they are at the stage of their lives where they have earned or are starting to earn disposable income, allowing them the freedom of purchasing as their hearts desire. This newfound freedom could be problematic as adults have been identified as the demographic that are more prone to exhibit compulsive Buying behavior. Upon looking at theories of Developmental Psychology, young adults are at the stage of their life that marked the attainment of independence that individuals usually get by holding a more or less permanent full-time job which occurs after an individual has finished school, college, graduate or professional schools (Santrock, 2011) Individuals go through a shift at this stage of development from being totally dependent on their parents financially to becoming fully financially independent, allowing them full control over their money. Establishing certain life objectives and accomplishments is another hallmark of adulthood, and achieving these goals and accomplishments requires self-control. Erikson asserts that early adults are going through an ego crisis known as intimacy vs. Isolation, which is the stage in which people start looking for their significant others and begin to make preparations for starting families in the future. Young individuals often set objectives for their weddings, accommodations, children's schooling, and a variety of other things in Indian communities.

Compulsive shopping in addition to having an emotional content can be triggered by several factors such as the store environment, life satisfaction, self-esteem, self regulation and the emotional state of the consumer. Here we are mainly focuses on the variables: compulsive buying, Self -esteem and Self –Regulation

COMPULSIVE BUYING

Defined as “chronic, repetitive purchasing that occurs as a response to negative events or feelings” (O’Guinn and Faber, 1989, p. 149), compulsive buying is also regarded as a mental disorder and an addiction in which individuals display “elevated levels of impulsivity and obsessive-compulsive symptoms” (Maraz, van den Brink, and Demetrovics, 2015, p. 922). Compulsive buyers are characterized by high level of distress, chronic anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (Darrat, Darrat, and Amyx, 2016; DeSarbo and Edwards, 1996). They tend to base their self-esteem on others’ evaluation and use shopping as a mean to impress others (Palan et al., 2011). Problematically, compulsive buying can only offer short-term to reduce uncomfortable emotions or affect is another reason people shop compulsively. Rewards to relieve individuals’ emotional distress, while having long-term negative consequences, such as financial debt and damages in family and personal relationships (e.g., Nga et al., 2011; Pirog III and Roberts, 2007). Due to the vicious cycle of compulsive buying and their propensity for denial, compulsive buyers frequently struggle to manage their compulsive buying behaviour. Compulsive Buyers may also hide their purchases from family or friends (Faber and O’Guinn, 1998). Denial is used as neurotic defense or an avoidance coping mechanism to evade anxiety, depression or negative emotions (DeSarbo and Edwards, 1996). In other words, compulsive buyers deny their

overspending and deeper Psychological problems through addictive buying and self-deception (Faber et al., 1987; DeSarbo and Edwards, 1996)

SELF ESTEEM

Self-esteem is how someone sees themselves. In other words, people care about their appearance as much as how they value their personal traits. Self-esteem, according to Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan (2004), is a subjective self-evaluation that has been developed from one's own successes and failures, interactions with others, development as an adult, maturity, and social learning. According to Tesser (2000), self-esteem is a general assessment that represents how we perceive our level of accomplishment and aptitude, our worth, how others perceive us and our bodies, how others react to us, and occasionally even how we perceive the things our own. Self-esteem, according to Heatherton and Wyland (2003), is an attitude toward oneself and pertains to individual ideas regarding one's skills and abilities, social relationships and outcomes that a person will have in the future. These theories support the idea that a person's sense of self-esteem is a personal assessment that he or she holds in high regard. This assessment is made in light of the events in the person's life as well as their possessions. How an individual views the qualities or value they possess is related to their self-esteem. According to a number of studies, persons who are confident in their abilities, particularly those who view their abilities as significant, have a tendency to spend more money than other people on a variety of goods and services that can enhance their feelings of self-esteem. This has an impact on a variety of product marketing strategies, including those for alcoholic beverages, entertainment, and particularly those that improve one's appearance. Excessive self-consciousness that is perceived negatively by others is also linked to low self-esteem. Numerous studies have shown that consumer society, with its overemphasis on physical attractiveness, can make people feel less confident about themselves. Very low self-esteem is also linked to addictive and compulsive behaviours such compulsive gambling, television addiction, eating disorders, and obsessive shopping. Women with poor self-esteem tend to avoid buying particular items because they do not believe it is worthwhile to spend money on oneself. Women with poor self-esteem tend to avoid purchasing particular items because they do not think it is worthwhile to spend money on them, according to a series of focus group interviews on skin care conducted on women's groups with the same demographic profile. Therefore, depending on other factors, poor self-esteem might sometimes result in excessive consumption and other times in reduced consumption. Consumer behaviour that is driven by the need for fleeting satisfaction may also be related to one's self-esteem. High self-esteem and shopping are associated, according to numerous research.

SELF REGULATION

Individuals relinquish their self-regulatory goals in pursuing compulsive buying to deal with emotional distress. Self-regulation was defined as the ability to control thoughts, feelings, and behaviours so that individuals can comply with standards, such as goals, norms, rules or values (Baumeister and Vohs, 2004). Individuals who have proximity bias, self-identity deficit, hedonic goals, or materialistic values use impulse buying as a promotion-focused self-regulation strategy to achieve immediate gratification or reinforce positive experiences and emotions, such as excitement and happiness (e.g., Fenton-O'Creevy et al., 2018; Verplanken and Herabadi, 2001; Verplanken and Sato, 2011). On the other hand, a prevention-oriented self-regulation strategy is used by consumers who intend to reduce information processing (e.g., comparing and evaluating product prices and values) and avoid information overload.

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Moreover, individuals who experience low self-esteem or negative affect use impulse buying as a Prevention-oriented strategy to momentarily cope with psychological distress or repair emotional imbalance. (Atalay And Meloy, 2011; Verplanken and Sato, 2011). Thus, impulse buying was also regarded as a failure of self-regulation, as impulse buyers only experience a short-term emotional uplift, but they may encounter long-term adverse financial consequences (Fenton-O’Creevy et al., 2019; Rook and Fisher, 1995; Youn and Faber, 2000).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Faber and O’Guinn, compulsive buying is described as chronic, repetitive purchases to overcome negative feelings. Compared to non-compulsive buyers, compulsive buyers have higher out of control and engage in compulsive buying to relieve some problems such as low self-esteem, or unhappy events. Women are more tendencies to engage in compulsive buying than men. Also, young generations are shown more compulsive buying tendency than adults or old generation. They also stated that individuals prone to addictive behaviors likely experience childhood and adolescence marked by feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Low self-esteem has consistently been found to increase the likelihood of compulsive. Individuals experience fear and guilt because of their inability to control their purchasing behavior. Compulsive buying may be an attempt to temporarily block or overcome these feeling. Thus, low self-esteem is posited to be both an antecedent and consequence of compulsive buying.

Aboujaoude et al. used the compulsive buying scale to classify the samples as either compulsive buyers or not. The results of the research concluded that the estimated point of prevalence of compulsive buying was 5.8%. Compared to other samples compulsive buyers were younger. They were also four times less likely to pay off credit card bills.

Dittmar examined how compulsive buying is an increasing consumer disorder that has serious consequences for an individual’s psychological health, as well as their finances. Through analytical research, the author found that gender, age and the endorsement of materialistic values are good predictors of this psychiatric disorder. The results stated that younger people are more prone to compulsive buying and the core values of current consumer culture are reflected their need to spend beyond their financial needs.

Significance of the Study

Shopping online and offline is emerging as a trend among youngsters. Its a matter of social status and prestige. People are least concerned about overspending. This may eventually leads to financial crisis, especially for young adults as they are in a transition phase in their life where they are starting to deal with money on their own. Compulsive buying can trap individuals into financial struggles and debts. Proper planning, regulation and other effective steps can help us to prevent this situation to an extent. This study helps us to understand the current status of buying behavior of young adults in Kerala and to check whether there is a necessity of ensuring proper steps and plannings to avoid future consequences and regulating oneself in such behaviours.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study compulsive buying, self esteem and self regulation among the young adults.

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Objectives

1. To study compulsive buying among young adults.
2. To understand the relationship between compulsive buying and self regulation.
3. To understand the relationship between compulsive buying and self esteem.
4. To study relationship between self regulation and self esteem.
5. To explore the gender differences among study variables.
6. To study whether there is any difference in the variables with respect to urban and rural geographical areas.

Hypotheses

- **H01:-** There is no significant relationship between compulsive buyers and non compulsive buyers in self regulation and self esteem
- **H02:-** There is no significant relationship between compulsive buying and self esteem among young adults.
- **H03:-** There is no significant relationship between self regulation and self esteem among young adults.
- **H04:-** There is no significant difference among compulsive buying, self regulation and self esteem in young male and female adults.
- **H05:-** There is no significant difference in compulsive buying, self regulation and self esteem among urban and rural residents.

Sample

Subjects who took part in this study were 120 young adults from Kerala population (males and females) between the ages of 18 and 25yrs. Out of 120 samples, 70 were females and 50 were males.

Inclusion criteria:

- Young adults between the age group 18-25yrs
- Sample from Kerala population
- Both males and females
- Residents from both rural and urban area

Exclusion criteria:

- Mentally disabled
- Illiterate
- Individuals suffering from serious illnesses

Tools

- **Informed Consent:** The questionnaire's time frame and details about ethical issues including participant anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent were all described on the cover page.
- **Socio Demographic Data Sheet:** It was used to obtain details regarding the participant's gender, age, marital status, family type and locality.
- **Compulsive Buying Measurement Scale:** Compulsive Buying Behaviour was assessed using Compulsive Buying Scale by Valence et Al (1988). It uses a five point Likert scale, ranging from (1) Strongly disagrees to (5) strongly agree. Higher scores reflect more compulsive buying. The scale has shown to meet satisfactory levels of reliability and validity Scherhorn, Raab and Reisch employed the scale to study self-

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reported compulsive and normal consumers. The scale exhibited a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 across both sample.

- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965):** A 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be unidimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Reliability: The RSE demonstrates a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency. Test-retest reliability over a period of 2 weeks reveals correlations of .85 and .88, indicating excellent stability. Validity: Demonstrates concurrent, predictive and construct validity using known groups. The RSE correlates significantly with other measures of self-esteem, including the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. In addition, the RSE correlates in the predicted direction with measures of Depression and anxiety.
- **Self- Regulation Scale (Schwarzer, Diehl & Schmitz, 1999):** It is a 10 items scale used to assess participant's level of self-regulation (SRS) , It measures how individual maintain their focus attention when facing challenges in achieving a goal, The scale specifically designed to capture attention control in the process of goal pursuit. The score is ranging from 10 to 40 points. Higher scores reflecting greater ability to control and maintain one's attention (e.g., self regulation) and lower score indicate lower self-regulation. There are ten reverse scores in the SRS, these are the number (5,7,9), Responses are calculated up to get a total score. The scale designed for the use of general adult population. The scale was translated from German into English. The original German version of the SRS reported good internal consistency of the measure with a Cronbach's α of .82 (Panebianco-Warrens, Fletcher & Kreutz,2015). In cross-cultural research by Luszczynska et al. (2004), SRS remain its good internal consistency Cronbach's alpha 0.75.

Procedure

This study conducted was a descriptive research and the procedure followed was a survey method using questionnaire to collect data. The participant was administered a link which directly open up an online self-reported questionnaire via Google form. The cover page of the questionnaire outlined a brief explanation regarding nature and the purpose of the study. The participant was fully informed the questionnaire consisted of 3 parts which set out to investigate the relationship to Compulsive Buying, Self-Regulation and Self esteem. The cover page outlined the time duration which Questionnaire will take and also included information regard ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity of the participant and informed consent. Details of the guide, authors and institution were also given. Participant must click agreed to the term and conditions in order to get permission to continue the self-report questionnaire. In the first part of questionnaire demographic questions were asked to fill (i.e., gender, age, marital status, family type, locality). The sample consisted of 120 young adults of which 70 females and 50 males between age 18 and 25 yrs. This study used the convenient sampling method to collect data. The correlation analysis and t-test were administered

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analysis and t-tests for independent variables were calculated. Correlation between Compulsive Buying, Self Esteem and Self Regulation is calculated using the Pearson's coefficient of correlation. All statistical analysis were done using SPSS 16 for windows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Correlation between the study variables

	Compulsive Buying	Self Esteem	Self Regulation
Compulsive Buying	1		
Self Esteem	0.16	1	
Self Regulation	-0.17	-0.32**	1

** significant at .01 level.

Table 2: Mean, S.D, and t-values for the compulsive buying behaviour, self esteem and self regulation.

SI. No	Variables	Compulsive buyers (N=26)		Non compulsive buyers (N=94)		t
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Self Esteem	22.85	3.68	22.36	4.71	0.63
2	Self Regulation	24.19	3.36	26.01	4.45	2.01*

* p<0.5

** p<.01 level

Table 3: Mean, SD and t -values of male and female participants on study variables.

	MALE (N=50)		FEMALE (N=70)		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Compulsive buying	34.30	12.14	31.84	9.83	1.22
Self Esteem	21.50	4.11	23.16	4.67	2.01*
Self Regulation	26.30	4.82	25.13	3.83	1.48

*p<0.5

Table 4: Mean, SD and t-values of urban and rural participants on study variables.

	URBAN(N=57)		RURAL(N=63)		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Compulsive buying	35.18	12.20	30.78	9.12	2.21*
Self Esteem	22.79	4.20	22.17	4.76	0.74
Self Regulation	25.12	3.93	26.06	4.57	1.2

*p<0.5

The present research examines the relationship among compulsive buying behavior, self-esteem, and self regulation among young adults in Kerala, and explores whether there is any significant gender and locality differences for the same. Results are presented in table 1, table 2, table 3 and table 4.

Results (Table 1) shows that self esteem is negatively correlated ($r = -0.33$, $p < .01$) with self regulation among young adults. It means that when there is higher self esteem, there is lower self regulation. High self-esteem has a very positive connotation, and people are reluctant to admit that it might also have a negative side. However, words like arrogance, conceit, egotism, and narcissism have less positive connotations despite having the same denotative meaning as a favourable self-appraisal. There is evidence to suggest that those with high self-esteem may be more likely to engage in violent or aggressive behaviour. One crucial sort of inability to regulate behaviour is violent and aggressive behaviour (Roy F. Baumeister Joseph M. Boden, 1998).

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Table 2 shows mean, standard deviation, and t- value of different variables among compulsive buyers and non-compulsive buyers. It is evident that self-regulation is higher among non-compulsive buyers than compulsive buyers. compulsive buying often falls under the category of impulse control disorder, some authors got confuse compulsive buying with impulsive buying. Self-regulatory failure can be viewed as the root cause for both, and the difference is in the cause of the failure and the form it takes.

One distinction in self-regulation failure is between an initial violation and a complete breakdown of self-regulation (Baumeister et al.,1994). Initial violations are cases that involve a single instance of failing to maintain a goal-directed behavior, but control can be quickly re-established afterwards. Alternatively, when there is a complete breakdown in self-regulation, an initial failure can lead to a major binge in the prohibited behavior (Baumeister et al.,1994)

When a person's need outweighs their ability to resist, they succumb to their emotions and purchase the item, often without giving the decision any thought. The desire to make impulsive or unplanned purchases can frequently be resisted by consumers who are capable of exercising self-control. People's capacity for self-control was found to be strongly correlated with goal achievement, impulse control, and emotional regulation. Higher interpersonal skills, better academic performance, and lower stress levels among university students were also linked to high levels of self-control.

Table 3 shows the gender differences in compulsive buying and related variables. The results show that females show higher self-esteem than males. This is contradictory to the existing literatures that showed that females tend to have lower self-esteem than males, which can be attributed to a lower evaluation of the stereotypic female role by the society, and the greater cultural pressure on female's physical appearance (Zeigler-Hill and Myers, 2012, Zuckerman et al., 2016). Other research revealed that females scored higher in self-esteem than their male counterparts (Grossbard, Lee, Neighbors, & Larimer, 2009). Some studies regarded self-esteem as a multidimensional self-evaluation, including cognitive, social, and physical appearance aspects; and the self-esteem of females maintained higher than males concerning the cognitive dimensions (Jackson et al., 1994, Sahlstein and Allen, 2002). There were also studies indicating no significant differences between females and males (Yang et al., 2003). Additionally, it should also be noted that gender differences in self-esteem varied with age, and women's self-esteem may be higher than their male counterparts between adolescence and adulthood (Frost and McKelvie, 2004, Sahlstein and Allen, 2002)

The table 4 shows differences in locality in compulsive buying behavior, Self Esteem, Self-Regulation. And it is observed that compulsive buying is higher among urban residents. Urban dwellers are found to have greater rates of compulsive buying. Indian consumers' spending and buying patterns have lately changed as a result of changes in urban living, internet use, and social media usage. Rapid urbanisation is taking place in India, which is affecting people's lifestyles and spending patterns. Their spending patterns have evolved during the past few years.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Compulsive buying behavior has an impact on young adults' life. From the study it is evident that people who are low in self-regulation tend to show compulsive buying behavior and this lack of control can affect other domains of life too. So, strengthening self-regulation

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could be a promising way of preventing compulsive buying. And here, contrary to many studies, it is found that self regulation is negatively correlated with self esteem. And another major finding is that women possess higher self esteem than men in this study. Urban dwellers are more prone to compulsive buying as they are more financially stable than rural population and also they have wider accessibility to resources and shopping malls. So, the study has met its objectives to an extent. This paper deals with a major personal and social issue, it can guide policy makers to search ways for impeding this growing trend. Government can start educational or awareness programmes for young adults how to deal with compulsive buying behavior and changing attitude towards it. Parents can guide them in monetary matters as they are in a transitory period and can assist them with their values and ideas, such a way helping them in their financial management and budget planning. The increased self esteem among women could be a result of women empowerment and breaking societal stereotypes. So, this study could inspire more such activities.

Limitations and Future Research

The study possesses certain limitations:

The study relied on self reported measures and conducted through online and samples were obtained through convenient sampling. The results could vary in other cultures, environmental settings etc. So study has limited external validity, and results may differ according to the target audience. And the results can't be generalized. A larger sample size and expanded inclusions could give a more holistic view of compulsive buying and related variables. Studies can conduct among different age groups or demographic groups. Upon looking at different developmental stages, future studies should continue evaluating the link between self esteem and self regulation. A longitudinal study could aid in the clarification of this idea because behaviour evolves over time and compulsive buying behaviour is not a unidimensional construct.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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