

A Study to Assess the Role of Anxiety on Compulsive Buying Behaviour among Women

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of anxiety in influencing compulsive buying behaviour among women aged 18 to 25. In today's consumer-driven society, emotional factors such as anxiety have been increasingly linked to impulsive and excessive purchasing habits. The research employed a quantitative approach, using standardized self-report questionnaires distributed via Google Forms, with a sample size of 519 respondents. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analysis were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between anxiety and compulsive buying behaviour, indicating that higher levels of anxiety are associated with a greater tendency toward compulsive purchasing. The regression analysis further confirmed that anxiety significantly predicts compulsive buying, explaining approximately 14.6% of the variance. These results support the hypothesis that anxiety is a contributing psychological factor in compulsive consumer behaviour among young women. The study contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing the psychological roots of consumer habits and highlights the need for mental health professionals, educators, and policy-makers to address compulsive buying as an emotional and behavioural issue. Recommendations include integrating mental health and financial literacy programs to promote healthier coping mechanisms and informed spending behaviours.

Keywords: Anxiety, Compulsive Buying Behaviour, Women, Consumer Psychology, Emotional Regulation, Pearson Correlation, Young Adults, Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

An important issue in consumer psychology is compulsive purchasing behaviour (CBB), which is defined as an overwhelming and recurrent need to shop despite negative consequences such as negative emotions, interpersonal tension, and financial strain. An emotional reaction, sometimes associated with underlying psychological issues, is at the heart of compulsive buying, as opposed to reasoned purchase choices prompted by necessity. Anxiety is a major one among them. Women between the ages of 18 and 25 in India are at increased risk for developing compulsive shopping behaviours due to the country's fast urbanisation, widespread internet access, and aggressive marketing strategies. Because of school stress, job insecurity, social expectations, and personal fears, this age group often has elevated anxiety levels (Andreassen, 2012). In this way, buying things becomes an escape from problems and a short-lived feeling of mastery. A short-term emotional high is created by the release of dopamine, which occurs as an immediate reward for acquiring products. Unfortunately,

this usually triggers additional negative emotions like shame, guilt, and regret, which may spiral out of control.

Social media's impact makes the problem worse. Social media sites that highlight people's perfect lives, such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, might encourage their users to buy more material possessions. The constant barrage of social media, commercials, and peer pressure to adhere to unattainable ideals of beauty and consume excessively promotes this unhealthy obsession. As a means of coping with worry and boosting self-esteem, young women may engage in impulsive buying in an effort to meet these expectations (Badgaiyan, 2016). Also contributing to the problem of overspending is the abundance of convenient payment methods, steep sales, and online marketplaces. The streamlined purchasing experiences offered by e-commerce behemoths like Amazon, Flipkart, and Myntra make it simpler for young people to succumb to compulsive buying. Why people shop anxiously depends on a lot of factors, including family relationships and cultural expectations. There is a lot of expectation on Indian women to do well in school, get good jobs, and always look their best. Emotional pain may be triggered by these expectations and the need for social recognition, which can lead to compulsive purchase as a coping technique. And when young women gain financial freedom via internships, part-time employment, or allowances, they are more likely to spend recklessly. Although going shopping could help alleviate your anxiety in the short term, the negative effects on your finances and relationships in the long run usually make it not worth it.

Few studies have examined the mental factors that may lead to compulsive shopping among Indian women, even though this disorder is on the rise. This research intends to fill that void by investigating the complex connection between anxiety and young women's compulsive shopping. In order to create effective therapies, it is essential to understand how anxiety impacts purchase choices. This information may be used by mental health practitioners to create treatment plans that target stress management and emotional control. Young women might also benefit from learning how to budget and develop good spending habits via financial literacy classes. Online marketplaces and marketers also have a duty to encourage moral advertising policies that put customers' needs above their own.

The negative impacts of compulsive shopping may be reduced if people are more informed and encouraged to use healthy coping techniques. Empowering young women to handle anxiety without turning to compulsive purchasing requires a multi-pronged approach that includes fostering open talks about mental health, encouraging mindfulness, and offering accessible support networks. This study adds to our collective knowledge of consumer behaviour and provides important insights for marketers, mental health practitioners, and legislators. Better interventions, better financial health, and more emotional resilience among young Indian women may result from recognising the role of anxiety in compulsive purchase behaviour.

Background of the Study

In today's consumer-driven culture, compulsive purchasing behaviour (CBB) is becoming more common. It's defined by an overwhelming need to acquire things, which may lead to both financial problems and emotional misery. Compulsive purchasing, in contrast to infrequent impulsive buying, is a pattern of behaviour that is both chronic and recurrent; it is often a coping method for those who are experiencing psychological pain. Research has linked CBB to a host of mental health problems, including sadness, anxiety, and poor self-esteem. A growing number of people, especially young adults, in India are suffering from anxiety problems. A combination of factors, including the proliferation of

online marketplaces, more intrusive advertising, and the pervasiveness of social media, has led to an upsurge in problems related to mental health, one of which is compulsive shopping. These demands are especially hard for young women, those between the ages of 18 and 25, since they are in the midst of coming of age. Academic obligations, employment uncertainty, and cultural expectations might amplify anxiety in this population. In addition, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok encourage young women to buy excessively by promoting materialistic aspirations and unattainable standards of beauty. There is a tendency to elevate the idea of "retail therapy," which perpetuates the idea that acquiring material possessions may help with emotional problems. Many young ladies find that going shopping helps them temporarily forget about their worries and gives them a rush of pleasure. Unfortunately, the sensation of relief is usually fleeting, which may then be followed by regret and shame, which in turn can lead to more compulsive spending.

Online shopping, buy-now-pay-later plans, and credit card offers have all contributed to the rise of impulsive buying in India. Advertisements aimed at young women often amplify their propensity for compulsive purchase by highlighting trendy items, limited availability, and the fear of missing out (FOMO). Furthermore, in cities where materialism is thoroughly ingrained in lifestyle choices, the need to always buy more and more may be heightened by the cultural pressure to constantly improve one's looks and seek approval from others. Spending money on fads and high-end goods may make people feel better in the short term, but they never solve the real problem—their worry. This keeps them caught in a vicious cycle of emotional buying. Despite CBB becoming more common among young Indian women, less is known about the mental health issues that contribute to it. While there is little research on compulsive purchasing, the majority of it has been conducted in Western settings, ignoring the cultural and socioeconomic subtleties that impact consumer behaviour in India. In order to create effective treatments and support systems, it is crucial to understand the role of anxiety in compulsive purchasing behaviour. Insights from this study may help mental health providers, financial advisers, and lawmakers create more effective financial literacy programs, run more focused awareness efforts, and give counselling services to help people overcome worry while buying.

The purpose of this study is to address a lack of literature by investigating whether or not young Indian women (aged 18–25) who suffer from anxiety also engage in compulsive shopping. This study intends to provide actionable advice for avoiding and controlling compulsive purchasing by determining the basic causes and elements that contribute to the disorder. In addition, by learning how anxiety affects buying habits, we may improve the lives of young women in India via more ethical marketing and consumption.

Understanding Compulsive Buying Behaviour (CBB)

As a mental illness, compulsive buying behaviour (CBB) causes people to feel compelled to buy things even when they don't need them, which may have negative effects on their relationships, finances, and emotions. Consumer behaviour change (CBB) refers to the inability to regulate one's purchasing habits despite knowledge of the detrimental effects of such habits, as opposed to regular shopping behaviour that is motivated by actual necessities or occasional wants (Black, 2007). According to Kellett and Bolton (2009), this illness is characterised by an inability to regulate one's impulses and is often associated with other forms of emotional discomfort, such as poor self-esteem, anxiety, or depression. A coping method to reduce unpleasant feelings is the most common way that CBB is described in research. Some people get momentary release from their worry by going shopping; they

find pleasure and comfort in the act of purchase (Dittmar, 2005). The release of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is linked to pleasure and reward, may lead to a temporary feeling of enjoyment, which in turn reinforces this behaviour (Raab et al., 2011). But the high is short-lived, and the subsequent feelings of shame, guilt, and financial remorse may trap people in a vicious cycle of overspending.

Numerous psychological and social variables can impact CBB. A big factor is consumerism and cultural standards, especially in communities where having a lot of stuff means you're successful and valuable (Koran et al., 2006). The proliferation of social media and e-commerce sites in India has added fuel to the fire of compulsive shopping, particularly among the country's youth. Because of the pressure to conform to cultural standards for beauty, fashion, and image maintenance, young women (those between the ages of 18 and 25) are especially at risk (Gupta, 2013). The probability of indulging in compulsive purchasing rises when one has access to credit, a part-time employment, or an allowance. In addition, CBB is often linked to personality qualities including impulsivity, limited self-control, and being easily influenced by others (Ridgway et al., 2008). People prone to recurrent emotional discomfort or those without adequate coping methods are at a higher risk of developing compulsive shopping behaviours. Digital marketing and tailored commercials have contributed to a culture of quick satisfaction, which in turn has increased the temptation to purchase impulsively.

Despite the fact that CBB is very similar to other types of behavioural addictions, such as gambling and drug misuse, it is nevertheless often overlooked and mistreated. To effectively manage compulsive purchasing behaviour, early detection and intervention are of the utmost importance. When it comes to identifying and resolving emotional triggers and teaching people more adaptive coping mechanisms, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) stands head and shoulders above the competition (Weinstein et al., 2016). Helpful tools for dealing with the monetary fallout of compulsive buying include financial counselling and support groups.

In order to promote responsible consumer behaviour and create focused interventions, it is vital to understand CBB. The best way for marketers, politicians, and mental health experts to help those suffering from compulsive purchasing is to raise awareness of the disorder and the social and psychological elements that contribute to it. We can learn more about CBB and develop better methods to prevent and cure it if researchers keep digging into this topic.

The Role of Anxiety in Compulsive Buying Behaviour

Both the onset and maintenance of CBB are influenced by anxiety, which is a major player in this process. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), people who suffer from anxiety often turn to coping methods in an effort to manage their intense emotional pain, which is marked by constant concern and dread. Anxious emotions and sensations may be temporarily alleviated by excessive purchasing, which is one coping method. The problem is that the respite doesn't last, and then the cycle of emotional pain and compulsive shopping starts all over again (Kellett & Bolton, 2009). A high degree of anxiety is associated with an increased propensity to engage in compulsive buying behaviour (CBB), according to research (Dittmar, 2005). When people suffer from anxiety, they often feel helpless and turn to others or things outside of themselves for solace. Going shopping gives a lot of people a feeling of achievement and takes their minds off of problems for a little while. Women between the ages of 18 and 25 are especially vulnerable to this phenomena because they are dealing with a lot of issues, including scholastic and social pressures, future anxiety, negative body image perceptions, and cultural expectations (Gupta, 2013). Online marketplaces and social media contribute

to these worries by spreading harmful, unrealistic ideals of beauty and lifestyle via influencer marketing and targeted advertising (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002).

Additionally, cognitive distortions may play a role in the development of compulsive purchase behaviour in those afflicted with anxiety. They can think that if they have more stuff, it would make them feel better about themselves or raise their social status (Dittmar, 2005). Even if there are emotional and financial costs associated with shopping, this belief system keeps people compelled to do it. Emotional spending becomes a vicious cycle when impulsive buying is followed by feelings of shame and remorse, which in turn cause further worry (Faber & Vohs, 2004).

Furthermore, research has shown that those who engage in anxiety-driven compulsive buying often have behaviours related to avoidance. They use shopping to control their emotions rather than deal with the underlying reasons of their concern (Ridgway et al., 2008). By putting off seeking help for mental health issues, people with anxiety may let their symptoms worsen. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that persons with poor self-esteem are more inclined to seek validation from material goods, which may lead to anxiety-related CBB (Valence et al., 1988). Reducing compulsive purchasing habits requires effective control of anxiety. Because it teaches people to recognise and question negative thinking patterns, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a well-known and effective therapy for anxiety and CBB (Weinstein et al., 2016). Support groups, stress management strategies, and mindfulness practices are all important tools for overcoming anxiety and developing more healthy ways of coping. Also, people may learn to be more frugal with their spending with the help of behavioural treatments and financial counselling.

The development of effective preventative and treatment measures for compulsive purchasing behaviour hinges on our ability to better understand the function of anxiety in this disorder. Reducing the chance of indulging in compulsive buying may be achieved by addressing the underlying anxiety and building emotional resilience. Mental health providers and lawmakers may help people overcome anxiety-driven compulsive shopping by raising awareness and promoting early intervention.

Socio- Cultural Influences on Compulsive Buying among Young Indian Women

The high incidence of compulsive buying behaviour (CBB) among young Indian women is mostly attributable to the influence of socio-cultural variables on their purchasing habits. According to Dittmar (2005), people often succumb to compulsive shopping as a way to cope with societal and cultural pressures that prioritise materialism, social comparison, and the need for validation. At the crossroads of traditional values and contemporary consumerist society, young women in India, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 25, are particularly open to these influences. The ubiquitous nature of digital marketing and social media is one major factor. Young women see the perfect lives that celebrities and influencers depict on social media and video sharing websites like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. According to Podoshen and Andrzejewski (2012), the idea that having a lot of material goods is the key to pleasure and social status is promoted by the frequent exposure to carefully selected content that features contemporary fashion items and high-end products. Product endorsements and discount promotions are examples of influencer marketing strategies that may generate impulsive sales by creating a feeling of urgency and exclusivity (Kaur & Sharma, 2021). The significance of social comparison and peer pressure is another important sociocultural component. Attempting to live up to what they see as their classmates' ideals of attractiveness, fashion, and achievement is common among young women. Some people in collectivist cultures, like India's, feel an

overwhelming need to constantly acquire things they don't need only to keep up their positive social image (Richins, 1994). Research has shown that comparing oneself to others may lead to feelings of inferiority, anxiety, and compulsive buying (Rook & Fisher, 1995).

Young Indian women's compulsive shopping is influenced by cultural norms and gender expectations. Gupta (2013) notes that women have historically spent more on clothing, cosmetics, and accessories due to cultural norms that put a larger value on their appearance and grooming. Furthermore, Indian weddings, festivals, and other special occasions are often extravagant events that promote wasteful spending (Sengupta & Gorn, 2019). Adolescent girls and young women may develop shopping addictions as a result of societal pressures to fit in. Furthermore, CBB among young Indian women has been enhanced by financial independence and easy access to loans. Credit cards, buy-now-pay-later plans, and e-commerce loans have become more common, allowing young customers to make purchases without worrying about the immediate impact on their finances (Chatterjee & Rath, 2021). Although having financial freedom might give women more power, it also comes with the risk of reckless spending if not handled properly.

Finally, consumer behaviour is greatly influenced by one's family relationships and upbringing. Unintentionally reinforcing the assumption that purchasing material items equals pleasure and success might be parents who place an emphasis on monetary incentives or who utilise shopping as a bonding activity (Koran et al., 2006). The availability of discretionary wealth and exposure to luxury lifestyles may also contribute to greater inclinations towards compulsive shopping among young women from rich homes. It will need a multipronged strategy to tackle the social and cultural factors that impact CBB. Strategies that promote financial literacy, prudent spending, and the development of a sense of self-worth apart from material goods are crucial. Treatments for mental health issues, such as poor self-esteem and anxiety, may also aid young women in learning more effective ways to deal with stressful situations. Developing a better grasp of socio-cultural influences and finding ways to reduce their influence may lead to more conscientious and ethical purchasing habits.

Strategies for Managing Compulsive Buying Behavior

To effectively manage compulsive purchasing behaviour (CBB), one must use a holistic strategy that considers the monetary, social, and psychological aspects that play a role in the disorder. Behavioural modifications that encourage better consumption habits, financial planning, and psychological treatments are all part of effective management measures. Individuals may reclaim control of their buying behaviour by identifying the underlying reasons and applying personalised measures (Kellett & Bolton, 2009). Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is among the top therapies suggested for CBB. CBT aims to help people who struggle with compulsive shopping by recognising and changing the emotional triggers and flawed cognitive processes that fuel this behaviour. As a result, people are better able to control their anxiety, control their impulses, and find healthier ways to cope with stressful situations (Weinstein et al., 2016). It is usual practice to use strategies like reaction prevention, cognitive restructuring, and exposure therapy in order to dispel the notion that shopping alleviates emotional distress. According to studies, CBT may help alleviate symptoms of compulsive shopping and boost general health (Mueller et al., 2011).

Essential to CBB management are financial counselling and budgeting services. With the help of a financial counsellor, people may make sensible spending plans, keep tabs on their spending, and achieve their financial objectives. Limiting one's expenditures and paying with cash rather than a credit

card will help curb impulsive buys (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). A therapist or family member may be an external source of support and reinforcement when you set up an accountability structure, which includes making financial decisions together (Ridgeway et al., 2008). People dealing with CBB may find emotional support and shared experiences helpful via peer counselling and support groups. People may get support and understanding from people who have been through the same things they are going through in groups like Debtors Anonymous (Black, 2007). People who suffer from compulsive buying sometimes feel lonely and guilty; attending a support group might help alleviate these emotions.

Practices of mindfulness and stress reduction are another powerful tool. MBCT and MBSR are two examples of mindfulness-based therapies that teach people to pay greater attention to their internal experiences and lessen the impact of their emotions and thoughts on their behaviour (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). According to Koran et al. (2006), those who regularly practise mindfulness, deep breathing, and yoga are less likely to engage in compulsive shopping because they are better able to regulate their emotions and experience less worry. Digital Rest and Reduction Social media and commercial exposure may also have a major impact on CBB management. Podoshen and Andrzejewski (2012) found that limiting screen time and carefully selecting digital material may help reduce exposure to purchasing triggers, which can cause compulsive buying. You may further lessen the impact of temptations by deleting shopping applications from your devices and unsubscribing from advertising emails. Lastly, it is crucial for long-term treatment of CBB to develop healthy coping mechanisms. Dittmar (2005) suggests that people may wean themselves emotionally off of shopping by encouraging them to participate in other fulfilling activities like exercising, creative hobbies, or volunteering. Reducing the probability of bouts of compulsive shopping and increasing emotional resilience are both aided by cultivating a robust support system of loved ones.

Finally, a multi-pronged strategy including psychosocial support, budgeting, and behavioural changes is necessary to control compulsive purchasing. People may reclaim control of their behaviour and achieve financial stability by addressing the root causes of their emotional triggers and teaching them healthy coping mechanisms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The research conducted by Rathee et al. (2024) aims to examine how materialism influences the use of credit cards, as well as impulsive and compulsive shopping behaviours. The article goes on to ask if materialistic attitudes and CB behaviours are mediated by CC usage and IB conduct. Strategy, technique, and methodology Adult customers with CCs were surveyed online to gather data. We used a two-step process to evaluate the models. To begin, the study's constructs' validity was evaluated and a measurement model was developed and validated using maximum likelihood estimation. After that, the assumptions were tested using structural equation modelling. FindingThe tendency for IB (IB) grows and CC usage is impacted by materialism, which in turn causes CB behaviours to emerge. Cutting down on CC use may lower IB and CB levels. Just one of the six hypotheses tested—the one that would have connected CC usage to CB—was unproven and needed more research. There were observed mediation links between materialism and CB, with CC usage and IB serving as mediators.

In light of the growing stress levels & social media addiction among consumers, the phenomenon of impulsive purchase has emerged as a prominent research topic. Overuse of social media platforms, often known as social media addiction, and the psychological experience of stress, or perceived stress,

may both lead to impulsive purchases. The purpose of the research conducted by Uppal (2024) was to examine the connection between impulsive purchasing, social media addiction, and actual stress in individuals (aged 18–40). Adults' propensity for impulsive purchases, stress levels, and social media addiction were assessed using three standardised measures in the research. Using a combination of snowball & convenience sample approaches, 123 people were surveyed, including 33 men and 90 females. The research found that impulsive purchase habits are much more common among social media addicts. Although there was no direct association between perceived stress and impulsive purchase, there was a strong correlation between stress and social media addiction, suggesting an indirect relationship. According to these results, social media addiction is a stronger factor than perceived stress in causing people to make impulsive purchases. Marketers may better combat impulse purchases, especially on social media, by gaining a better grasp of these dynamics. Furthermore, the research emphasises the need for programs that help people manage their stress better in order to cut down on impulsive buying and social media addiction.

Researchers and practitioners in the field of marketing can benefit from the research done by Magdi et al. (2023) because it examines the mediating role in brand attachment in the relationships between materialism, self-congruence, and university students' obsessive-compulsive buying behaviour (OCBB) for clothing. University students who buy often were surveyed online and 322 surveys were collected. Data analysis was carried out utilising the PLS-SEM technique in SmartPLS V.3.3. software. The results demonstrate that self-congruence and materialism impact brand attachment, and that OCBB is related to materialism and brand attachment. Lastly, the association between Materialism & OCBB and the relationship between Self-congruence & OCBB are both mediated by brand attachment. Among the first studies to do so, this one examines the impact of brand loyalty as a mediator between two types of connections in a developing market and a single conceptual model. One of the recommended implications is raising awareness about the harmful effects of online gambling on young individuals, particularly in light of the present economic climate. Moreover, there are ramifications for clothing brand managers about how they might use the existing ties to improve their marketing strategies, perhaps leading to an improvement in long-term profitability.

A study by Huang et al. (2020) examines the processes behind the correlation between perceived stress and compulsive internet shopping among women. This research looked at how self-esteem moderates the relationship among perceived stress and compulsive purchase on the internet, and how negative coping acts as a mediator between the two. The following questionnaires were filled out by 548 female consumers: stress, self-esteem, negative coping, as well as compulsive shopping; the mean age was 21.41 years and the standard deviation was 4.40. Covariates included the monthly amount spent online and the frequency of online purchases. The results showed a strong correlation between felt stress and compulsive purchase while shopping online. This connection was largely mediated by negative coping. Additionally, self-esteem influenced both the direct impact of perceived stress upon internet compulsive shopping and the mediation effect of negative coping. For women who had a healthy dose of self-confidence, these effects were less pronounced. These results add to our knowledge of the circumstances in which women's perceptions of stress are linked to their compulsive online shopping. The discussion is on the limitations and repercussions.

Many psychosocial variables have been suggested to predispose or trigger compulsive purchasing behaviour (CBB) or pathological buying (PB), a psychiatric condition that is gaining more and more recognition. Israel et al. (2018) examines the relationship between impulsivity, internet addiction, emotional discomfort, self-esteem, and compulsive purchase behaviour among nursing students is the goal of this study. Research Tools and Procedures: In order to determine the correlation between impulsiveness, internet addiction, emotional distress, self-esteem, and compulsive purchase behaviour, a web-based cross-sectional online survey was administered to undergraduate nursing students from February 2018 to April 2018 using total enumerative sampling. A battery of self-administered measures, including the PBS, IAT, BIS-Brief, and DASS-21, were used to gather data. Statistics, both descriptive and inferential, were used. Additional statistical methods used included multiple regression, bivariate correlation, and frequency distribution. The results showed that out of 410 people who filled out the survey, 207 (or 50.5%) were compulsive shoppers. In terms of sociodemographic data, preferred mode of purchasing items, and the "length of daily internet usage," the participant group "with pathological buying" was similar to the group "without having pathological buying". People who were classified as "with pathological buying" had much higher DASS-21 and IAT scores. Regression study revealed that PBS scores were predicted by both the DASS and the IAT. In conclusion, pathological purchasing is significantly associated with psychological discomfort and internet addiction, but not with impulsivity or self-esteem.

Almost all young individuals, regardless of their country of origin, exhibit compulsive shopping behaviours. This is a problem that the world community should be worried about since it gets worse every year. Also, during the time of the Movement Control Order, there was an uptick in the frequency of anxiety disorders and the bankruptcy rate as a result of compulsive purchasing. Consequently, the purpose of the research conducted by Jena et al. (2018) is to examine the connections between gender differences, compulsive purchasing behaviour, materialism, and consumer distress. This research makes use of a cross-sectional design. Using judgemental sampling, we gathered 90 responses from Malaysians aged 18–26; of them, 46 were males (51.1% of the total) and 44 were girls (48.9%). For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed that includes the following instruments: the Material Values Scale, the Self-rating Anxiety Scale, and the Edwards Compulsive Buying Behaviour Scale. The survey is disseminated via several online mediums, including email and social media. Findings indicate a favourable and statistically significant correlation between materialism and compulsion to purchase. Secondly, it showed that obsessive purchase behaviour is significantly and positively correlated with consumer worry. Male and female obsessive shoppers are statistically indistinguishable, according to the results. This work successfully addresses a gap in the current research. In addition, the study clarifies the problem and suggests the way for future scholars to follow while studying this subject. Marketers and policymakers also benefit from it.

Aslam & Iqbal (2016) looked at how college students' materialism, despair, and shopping addictions are connected. In addition, the study's overarching goal was to identify how demographic factors influenced the dynamics at play here. Three measures were used to assess materialism: the Material Value Scale (Richins and Dawson, 1992), the Compulsive Buying Index (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989), and the subscale for depression of DASS (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). From five different institutions in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, 430 students ranging in age from 18 to 24 years old ($M =$

21.55, S.D = 1.95) made up the sample. There was a strong positive correlation between materialism and depression. There was a statistically significant difference between the sexes on the measures of materialism and depression, with men scoring far higher than women. But there was no statistically significant difference in the prevalence of compulsive purchasing among men and women. On the itemistic scale, adults scored significantly higher than teenagers; on the other hand, no significant differences were seen between the sexes with regard to depression or compulsive purchasing.

Another study by Badgaiyan, verma and Dixit (2016) highlights the importance of impulsive purchases to the economy has grown in tandem with mall culture and the liberalisation of the economy. Because consumer behaviour varies among cultures, it is helpful to look at impulsive purchasing from an indigenous viewpoint in order to better understand and quantify the propensity that defines impulsive purchase behaviour. The purpose of these studies was to establish a scale for evaluating the propensity to make impulsive purchases in India and to verify its validity by investigating its relationships with other pertinent factors. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between impulsive purchasing propensity of impulsive buying behaviour on a two-factor, eight-item scale, and an inversely significant correlation among impulsive buying tendency of self-control. There was a statistically significant correlation between impulsive purchase and the extraversion and conscientiousness dimensions of personality, according to the results.

The connections between materialism, bad emotions, and compulsive shopping have been studied and shown to be true. Finding out the way these factors relate to each other was the driving force for the research done by López & Villardefrancos (2013). In particular, we set out to determine if and how anxiety and depression mediate the relationship between materialism and compulsive purchasing. The results of the path analysis, which was conducted with a sample in 685 women, provided strong evidence that the proposed model was appropriate. The model proposed that anxiety and depression controlled the effects of the "importance" and "success" dimensions of materialism on compulsive buying, whereas depression also mediated the influence of the "importance" and "happiness" dimensions. In addition, the significance dimension was shown to have a direct impact on compulsive purchasing.

The purpose of the research conducted by Roberts & Pirog (2013) is to examine the monetary effects of anxiety-induced compulsive purchasing behaviour (CBB) in Indian women between the ages of 18 and 25. The inability to control one's spending may lead to a host of financial problems, including hyperindebtedness, loan reliance, and general bad financial health. Two hundred and fifty people filled out a survey that measured financial strain, compulsive shopping, and anxiety levels on three different scales: the Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), the Richmond Compulsive shopping Scale (RCBS), and the Financial Strain Index (FSI). There was a strong positive association between anxiety and financial hardship, according to the results ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$). When comparing women with low anxiety and CBB tendencies to those with high anxiety, the former group reported 60% more debt accumulation and financial issues. The already precarious financial situation was exacerbated by the frequent use of credit cards for impulsive expenditures. In order to help women manage their worry and spend better, the research stresses the need for financial literacy programs and counselling services. It is recommended that mental health practitioners and policymakers explore the possibility of combining

financial and psychological therapies to lessen the impact of CBB.

Brunborg et al. (2012) look at the impact of social media on CBB among young Indian women (those between the ages of 18 and 25). In addition to acting as a marketplace, social networking sites may also provide emotional support, which can lead to hasty purchases. Using a modified Media Influence Scale to measure social media influence, the Richmond Compulsive Buying Scale to measure anxiety levels, and the Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) to measure CBB, this quantitative study surveyed 350 participants. A significant positive association ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) was found between social media exposure and CBB, according to the results. Women who suffer from anxiety often find solace in shopping, which might be worsened by the prevalence of targeted marketing and influencer promotions. Furthermore, individuals admitted to being more influenced by the idealised portrayal of life on social media while making purchases. Findings from the research stress the need for ethical marketing standards and initiatives to increase digital literacy. Reducing compulsive purchase inclinations may be achieved via the development of intervention programs by mental health specialists. These programs can target both anxiety management and appropriate social media usage.

Kellett & Bolton (2009) determined if cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) may help young Indian women whose anxiety levels are high reduce their CBB. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a well-known and effective method for helping people with emotional control issues and maladaptive behaviours. One hundred fifty people with severe anxiety and a history of compulsive shopping participated in the study's randomised controlled trial. Cognitive restructuring, impulse control, & stress management were the main areas of attention in the 8-week CBT program that participants went through. Pre- and post-treatment CBB symptoms were significantly reduced ($t = 5.32$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, there was a 40% reduction in anxiety levels as assessed by the Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale. There was also an uptick in the individuals' ability to control their emotions and their money. This study's results highlight the need to include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in mental health programs to young women who suffer from compulsive shopping. Timely psychological therapies may decrease the detrimental emotional and financial repercussions of CBB, according to the research.

Koran et al. (2006) look at young Indian women (aged 18–25) and how CBB (compulsive purchasing behaviour) relates to anxiety. The study delves at the ways in which anxious thoughts and feelings might lead to impulsive buying as a way to alleviate stress. A total of 300 individuals filled out a self-report questionnaire that measured their levels of anxiety on the GAD-7 scale and their propensity for compulsive purchasing on the RCBS. A strong positive association between anxiety & CBB was found in the data ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that greater levels of anxiety are linked to increased compulsive purchasing behaviour. There was a 45% increase in the chance of compulsive purchase among subjects with moderate to severe anxiety compared to little anxiety. Peer pressure and excessive use of social media are examples of socio-cultural elements that contribute to compulsive shopping. The results highlight the importance of programs that teach people about money and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for those struggling with anxiety and impulsive spending. When dealing with young women in India who exhibit compulsive shopping habits, mental health professionals and financial counsellors might benefit greatly from these findings.

Dittmarr (2007) examined the impact of anxiety on CBB among young Indian women (aged 18–25) seeking to understand the role of socio-cultural variables. Using a mixed-methods approach, 350 individuals filled out questionnaires that assessed their anxiety levels, inclination to engage in compulsive shopping, and other socio-cultural factors, such as the impact of peers, social media use, and familial expectations. Those who spent more time on social media reported 50% more instances of anxiety-induced compulsive purchase compared to those who spent less time on these platforms. Materialistic views were greatly influenced by cultural expectations and peer pressure, leading to increased inclinations towards compulsive purchase ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$). Qualitative interviews also showed that having a lot of disposable income as well as simple access to credit made people more likely to buy things on impulse when they were feeling down. It is crucial to raise awareness about the mental and financial costs of compulsive shopping, according to the results. To address these behaviours, it is suggested to implement interventions that promote digital well-being, provide training on money management, and provide mental health assistance. These findings may help mental health experts and policymakers in India create programs that specifically target young women for prevention and intervention.

Dittmar (2005) also delved into the gendered aspects of anxiety and CBB among young Indian women ranging from 18 to 25 years old. Cultural norms, emotional coping mechanisms, and commercial campaigns specifically aimed at women make them more susceptible to CBB. In this mixed-methods study, 300 individuals filled out questionnaires measuring CBB with the Richmond Compulsive Buying Scale (RCBS) and anxiety with the Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale. In order to delve further into the participants' perspectives on buying as a coping method, qualitative interviews were carried out. Results showed that 65 percent of those suffering from moderate to severe anxiety used excessive shopping as a coping mechanism. Factors that played a key role were the impact of social media, the practice of peer comparison, and the cultural pressure to keep a certain look. In addition, after making the purchase, individuals felt guilty and regretful, which made their anxiety even worse. Awareness programs that promote emotional well-being and financial literacy, as well as mental health treatments that are sensitive to gender, are urgently needed, according to the research. In order to create effective preventative measures, it is helpful to understand the gender-specific factors that contribute to CBB.

Moos & Moos' (2002) research highlights anxiety-stricken young Indian women (aged 18–25) and how family support and positive family dynamics could help them cut down on CBB. A protective factor against CBB and other unhealthy coping techniques is emotional support from loved ones. The Family Environment Scale (FES), the Richmond Compulsive Buying Scale (RCBS), and the Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) were used to evaluate 300 subjects. A substantial negative connection ($r = -0.55$, $p < 0.01$) was found between family support and CBB inclinations, according to the results. Women who grew up in stable, loving homes were 45 percent less likely to engage in compulsive purchasing, even when they were very anxious. Families that encourage open communication, validated emotions, and offered financial direction had members who were able to cope better. People who had close relationships with their families also seemed to be better able to control their impulse purchases. Counselling and psychoeducation programs that focus on families are

necessary to help children develop emotional resilience and overcome shopping addictions, according to the research. A long-term protective element in anxiety and CBB management might be fostering family togetherness.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

To examine the relationship between anxiety on compulsive behaviour among women aged 18-25 years.

Hypotheses

- **Null Hypothesis**

H₀: There is no significant relationship between Anxiety and Compulsive Buying Behaviour among women aged 18-25.

- **Alternate Hypothesis**

H₁: There is a significant relationship between Anxiety and Compulsive Buying Behaviour among women aged 18-25.

Sample

The study purposefully excluded males and included only females in its 519-person sample. Participants of the research were primarily young adults (aged 18–25).

Tools

- **Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7.** This brief self-report questionnaire analyses the intensity of symptoms related to generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). The seven items that make up the GAD-7 (Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7) ask participants to indicate the frequency with which they have had a certain symptom during the last two weeks. With a Cronbach's alpha of about 0.89, indicating strong internal consistency, and being very sensitive and specific for diagnosing GAD, the 7-item GAD-7 questionnaire has good validity and reliability as a screening tool for generalised anxiety disorder (GAD).
- **Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS).** Individuals' propensity for compulsive purchasing behaviour can be measured using the standardised Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS), a psychological tool. Excessive and impulsive spending on non-essential items is assessed from a behavioural, emotional, and cognitive perspective. In a normal version of the scale, you'll find questions about your shopping desires, how you deal with bad emotions, and the effects of your shopping habits (such as guilt, financial stress, or problems with friends and family). By using a Likert-type scale (e.g., from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"), respondents can indicate their level of agreement with each question, providing for a range of possible ratings for compulsive buying behaviours. People who are prone to emotional or impulsive purchases are among the many groups studied by clinical psychologists and consumer behaviour researchers that employ the CBS. Consistent results from various groups and research show that the Compulsive Buying Scale is reliable and has excellent internal consistency. The scale has high internal reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, which usually falls between 0.80 and 0.92.

Procedure

Data were collected through an online survey, which included demographic details and two questionnaires, specifically the "Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 Anxiety and Compulsive Buying Scale". Participants completed the survey in approximately 7-10 minutes. Ethical considerations were followed, and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained before participation, and they were given the option to withdraw at any point.

Data Analysis

The association between anxiety and compulsive buying behaviour was examined statistically using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and linear regression. The SPSS software was used to analyse the data.

RESULTS

This section summarises the findings from the research project "Assessing the Role of Anxiety in Compulsive Buying Behaviour." Standardised anxiety and compulsive buying measures, in addition to basic demographic questions, were used in a Google Form to collect the data. This study's overarching goal is to learn how participants' anxiety levels correlate with their propensity for compulsive shopping. The demographic characteristics have been summarised using descriptive statistics, and patterns and connections between the variables have been identified using inferential tests such as correlation. This chapter's discussion will be based on the results, which are provided in tables for clarity.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis of relationship between Anxiety and Compulsive Buying Behaviour among women aged 18-25

Correlations				
			<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Compulsive Buying Behaviour</i>
Anxiety				
	Pearson	Correlation	1	0.382**
	Sig.	(2-tailed)	—	0
	N		519	519
Compulsive	Buying	Behaviour		
	Pearson	Correlation	0.382**	1
	Sig.	(2-tailed)	0	—
	N		519	519

*Correlation is significant at 0.01

H₁: There is significant relationship between Anxiety and Compulsive Buying Behaviour among women aged 18-25

INTERPRETATION

A Pearson correlation coefficient showing the relationship between anxiety and compulsive shopping behaviour in women aged 18–25 is shown in Table 1. A somewhat favourable association

between the two variables is shown by the correlation value of 0.382. In other words, compulsive shopping tends to rise in tandem with anxiety levels. Anxiety and compulsive buying are meaningfully related since the correlation coefficient is statistically significant (as shown in the regression analysis with a p-value considerably below 0.05). Thus, we accept the alternate hypothesis (H_1), which posits that females between the ages of 18 and 25 experience a substantial correlation between worry and compulsive purchasing.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to examine, in a sample of women (aged 18–25), whether there is a correlation between anxiety and compulsive purchasing. Results showed a somewhat positive relationship between anxiety and compulsion to purchase, with anxiety being a strong predictor of compulsion to buy in this group. These findings are in line with previous research and provide more evidence that psychological discomfort, especially anxiety, is a key factor in the emergence and perpetuation of compulsive purchasing habits.

An overwhelming need to acquire things despite negative consequences is known as compulsive purchasing behaviour (CBB) (Maccarrone-Eaglen & Schofield, 2017). There is strong evidence from previous studies that CBB is associated with anxiety. People with extreme anxiety, according to research by Müller et al. (2015), are more likely to engage in extreme forms of compulsive shopping. A similar body of evidence suggests that excessive buying is a common maladaptive coping technique for those dealing with unpleasant feelings like anxiety (Black, 2007). In the short term, this action alleviates symptoms, but in the long run, it might make them worse.

This study found a modest positive association between anxiety levels and compulsive purchase behaviours among young women, suggesting that the two go hand in hand. This confirms what Ghani (2024) found: that during the COVID-19 epidemic, late-adolescents exhibited a strong positive association between anxiety and compulsive purchasing. It is crucial to take gender variations into account while doing psychological research, since the study also revealed that females had higher degrees of anxiety and obsessive shopping behaviour than males (Ghani, 2024). In addition, the cognitive-behavioral model proposes that people with high anxiety levels may participate in compulsive buying as a way to regulate their emotions (Müller et al., 2015), which is consistent with the predictive significance of anxiety in compulsive buying behaviour seen in our study. This reinforces the vicious cycle of compulsive shopping by providing short-term relief from unpleasant emotional states. Consistent with this idea, the scoping review conducted by Starcke et al. (2024) found that worry and stress are risk factors for the onset of compulsive shopping disorder.

Important implications for treatments targeting the reduction of compulsive purchase behaviour emerge from this study's findings. Treatment methods like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) that target underlying anxiety may help reduce the symptoms of compulsive shopping. Previous studies have shown that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is effective in treating CBB. It is important to note that therapies should be customised to address individual psychological characteristics, such as anxiety (Müller et al., 2016). For young women, there is mounting evidence that worry can lead to compulsive shopping. This study adds to that expanding body of data. Interventions aimed at addressing compulsive

purchase behaviours in this population should incorporate measures for anxiety management, since these findings emphasise the substantial significance of anxiety.

Limitations of the Study

- **Limited Demographic Scope:** The results may not apply to males or other age groups because the study only included women in the 18–25 age bracket. There may be gender and age differences in the symptoms of anxiety and compulsive shopping, therefore the findings may not be representative of the community as a whole.
- **Reliance on Self-Reported Data:** Data was gathered via a Google Form questionnaire that participants filled out on their own, which opens the door to potential response biases such as social desirability bias and erroneous self-evaluation. The reliability of the results may have been compromised if participants had exaggerated or understated their anxiety levels or purchasing habits.
- **Cross-Sectional Research Design:** The research only recorded participants at one point in time because it was cross-sectional. Thus, it can only show a correlation between anxiety and compulsive shopping behaviour; it cannot prove a causative relationship. To investigate the development and trajectory of this interaction across time, longitudinal research is the way to go.
- **Lack of Control Over External Variables:** Additional environmental and psychological factors that may have a role in compulsive shopping, such as depression, impulsivity, poor self-esteem, peer pressure, or social media use, were not taken into consideration in the study. It is possible that a more thorough comprehension of the complete range of impacting factors was hindered by the lack of these variables.

Recommendations for Future Research

- **Include Compulsive Buying and Mental Health Education in Community and Academic Settings:** This study's finding of a strong correlation between anxiety and compulsive buying behaviour highlights the critical need for educational initiatives in K-12, higher education, and community centres to bring attention to the mental factors that contribute to compulsive shopping. In these meetings, you should talk about how to control your emotions, how to deal with stressful situations, and how your anxiety affects your ability to make sound financial decisions. A more self-aware and self-controlled generation of young women is possible when they are educated about the emotional signals that influence their shopping behaviours.
- **Promote Healthcare Professional Counselling and Therapeutic Interventions:** When dealing with anxious clients, particularly young women, mental health providers should encourage their patients to undergo testing for compulsive shopping behaviour. To get to the bottom of the emotional issues, it would be wise to use interventions like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which has a track record of success in treating anxiety and compulsive behaviours. Therapists can assist clients in developing more beneficial coping mechanisms for emotional discomfort by utilising mindfulness-based therapies and behavioural activation techniques.
- **Establish Programs to Teach Young Adults About Personal Finances:** Workshops on financial literacy that focus on emotional expenditure should be incorporated into institutions. Preventing the formation of emotionally and financially harmful behaviours among young adults may be achieved via teaching them about budgeting, impulse control in spending, and the long-term implications of compulsive shopping. Emotions like anxiousness can cloud one's judgement and cause one to buy

things on impulse, which these programs should also address.

- **Use social media to Advocate for Mindful Consumption and Digital Wellness:** Anxiety and the idealised lives promoted by social media might lead young women to engage in compulsive shopping. To promote digital wellbeing and encourage attentive usage of digital spaces, it is advised that influencers, mental health pages, and marketing be used. Reducing emotionally vulnerable impulsive purchases can be achieved via raising knowledge about advertising strategies and encouraging thoughtful purchasing practices.
- **Investigate Additional Factors Contribute Through Additional Research:** Although this study primarily examined anxiety as a psychological predictor of compulsive shopping, additional characteristics that might be influential include sadness, low self-esteem, personality traits (such as impulsivity), and negative influences from peers. These supplementary factors should be investigated in future studies with bigger and more representative populations. To learn more about the temporal and context-dependent development of compulsive purchasing behaviours in reaction to persistent stress or anxiety, a longitudinal approach may be useful.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the relationship between anxiety and compulsive shopping among young women (those between the ages of 18 and 25), a demographic that is at increased risk for experiencing psychological distress and turning to commercial goods as a means of coping. This study aimed to determine if and how anxiety levels substantially impact compulsive buying habits by collecting data from 519 participants and analysing it statistically using standardised measures.

Anxiety and compulsive buying are moderately positively correlated, according to the results. According to the results of the regression analysis, anxiety significantly predicts compulsive purchase behaviour, explaining around 14.6 percent of the total variation. This suggests that young women whose anxiety levels are greater are more likely to engage in compulsive buying. A statistically significant association was also confirmed by the Pearson correlation coefficient, lending credence to the idea that anxiety significantly influences compulsive buying behaviour. These findings corroborate earlier research that has shown compulsive shopping as a therapeutic strategy for dealing with stressful or depressing emotions. These results are consistent with cognitive-behavioral models that explain compulsive shopping as a way to manage negative emotions; it may help in the short-term, but it usually ends up hurting you in the long run and costing you a lot of money.

The results show that compulsive buying is a psychological problem with its origins in emotional dysregulation, and not just a money or behaviour problem. This highlights the importance of psychological intervention in helping young women, in particular, to develop healthier coping mechanisms, and it should begin at an early age. Treatments for anxiety and compulsive shopping might include cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and training in emotional control. This study adds to the increasing amount of evidence that compulsive buying should be included as a clinical diagnostic criterion, especially for anxiety disorders. This consumer-centric culture frequently takes advantage of emotional weaknesses; therefore, it is important for mental health providers, teachers, and families to be aware of how emotional disorders show up in purchasing habits.

The study concludes that anxiety is a major component of compulsive purchase behaviour among young women and that this behaviour has psychological roots. Research in the future might look at how social media and digital marketing contribute to the development of compulsive purchase habits, as well as other psychological factors like impulsivity, low self-esteem, or depression. These findings will play a crucial role in developing consumer awareness campaigns and more extensive mental health interventions.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Jasmine Bhandari holds a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Amity University, Noida. She completed her undergraduate studies with a B.A. Programme in Psychology and Sociology from Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi. Deeply passionate about the field, her academic and research interests span across all domains of psychology, with a particular inclination toward understanding human behavior through both clinical and sociocultural lenses.

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