The Relationship of Anxiety, Depression and Low Self-Esteem on the Tendency to have Compulsive Buying-type Behaviors

Ingrid Granados
Dominican University of California

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Background
Compulsive Buying is characterized by:
• shopping not done in moderation
• preoccupation to buy
• uncontrollable urge to buy
• leading to significant social and financial problems

Compulsive Buying is:
• Not officially recognized as a psychological disorder by APA
• Associated with impaired functioning. (Gallagher et al, 2017)
• More likely in women than in men (Granero et al, 2016)

“Retail therapy” is:
• engaged in by people with the primary purpose of improving their mood
• considered the first phase of shopping addiction (John et al, 2013)

Common factors in people with Compulsive Buying Behaviors:
• Psychiatric history
• Mood disorders
• Legal problems (Harvanko et al, 2013)

Hypotheses
Compulsive-buying-type behaviors will be more common for individuals with:
1) higher levels of depression.
2) higher levels of anxiety.
3) lower self-esteem.

Method
• Materials
  • Richmond Compulsive Buying Scale
  • Tano General Anxiety Scale
  • Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
  • Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale
• Participants
  • Recruited via email and Facebook posts
  • 90 completed surveys (14 male, 76 females)
• Procedure
  • Participants completed an anonymous online survey

Results
Hypothesis #1 was supported.
Results showed a moderate positive linear relationship between depression and compulsive buying type behaviors.
$r = +0.36 \quad p = 0.05\%$

Hypothesis #2 was not supported.
Results suggest a possible weak linear relationship between general anxiety traits and compulsive buying type behaviors, as predicted.
$r = +0.14 \quad p = 17\%$

Hypothesis #3 was not supported.
Results showed the predicted negative linear relationship between self-esteem and compulsive buying type behaviors.
$r = -0.19 \quad p = 7\%$

Conclusions
• Compulsive Buying was significantly more common among participants who were depressed than those with anxiety.
• Self-esteem is negatively related to Compulsive Buying behaviors, but was too weak to be statistically significant.
• Presence of all three factors is not required to increase the inclination of individuals to Compulsive Buying.
• Compulsive Buying is not higher in women than in men.
• People can behave in ways consistent with compulsive buying from time-to-time without meeting the diagnosis for a mental illness.
• Future studies might benefit from examining the role(s) of:
  • income levels
  • materialism
  • online shopping
  • stress