

Oniomania essay example

[Sociology](#), [Shopping](#)



Introduction

Oniomania refers to a compulsive desire for shopping which is irresistible. Oniomania is also known as CBD or Compulsive Buying Behavior, shopaholism, shopping addiction and compulsive shopping. About 2 to 8% of adult population in USA is reported to be suffering from the disorder and about 90% of them are women. Individuals suffering from Oniomania shop impulsively and are unable to resist their craze for buying. This impulsive buying behavior leads to problems in marriage, occupation, interpersonal and spiritual distress and most damaging of all dire financial crunch. According to many researchers, compulsive shopping disorder can be compared with the urges of alcoholism and drug abuse while others believe that it is similar to mood and anxiety disorders, OCD and impulse control (Hollander and Stein 2005). Oniomania is still not included in contemporary diagnostic system like Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) or the International Classification of Diseases, though several definitions of the mania have been proposed. Despite DSM-IV-TR not mentioning anything about Oniomania, the condition has recently been accepted as a disorder by the Deutsche Gesellschaft Zwangserkrankungen (German organization for obsessive-compulsive disorders). It was Emil Kraepelin who first wrote about 'buying maniacs' or 'oniomaniacs' in 1915. Later in 1930 Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler quoted Kraepelin his textbook of psychiatry " As a last category, Kraepelin mentions the buying maniacs (oniomaniacs) in whom even buying is compulsive and leads to senseless contraction of debts with continuous delay of payment until a catastrophe clears the situation a little - a little bit never altogether

because they never admit all their debts" (Aboujaoude & Lorrin 2010). This paper will discuss in detail the symptoms, causes and assessment and treatment procedures of dealing with Oniomania.

Symptoms

People with Oniomania spend a significant amount of time shopping and spending. They develop an extreme urge and anxiety before shopping and find relief after shopping is made. There are four distinct phases of Oniomania: anticipation, preparation, shopping and spending (Black 2007). An individual with Oniomania develops urges and thoughts related to shopping a particular item or shopping in general in the first phase. The second phase involves taking preparation for shopping which includes making decisions on where to go, what to buy and which credit cards to use. He might even conduct a mini research before going on a shopping venture on which shops are giving sales, the trend in fashion and so on. In the third phase, the person engages actively in the shopping experience which according to many Oniomaniacs gives the same sort of stimulation as sex does. The exhilaration during shopping is followed by a sense of disappointment and distress with oneself in the fourth phase. Usually people with Oniomania shop alone and sometimes may be accompanied by friends sharing equal interest in shopping but mostly for Oniomaniacs, shopping is a personal pleasure. They may engage in shopping at malls, high fashion stores, boutiques and so much as garage sales. Research shows that person suffering from Oniomania can spend thousands of dollars after shopping within a few months. Typical items bought by Oniomaniacs include consumer goods mainly including crafts, compact discs,

clothing, jewelries, shoes, cosmetics and household goods. The items may not necessarily be expensive but often these shoppers buy in huge quantity making their spending go out of control. Oniomania doesn't have anything to do with income level as people with relatively low income level can spend mindlessly over shopping as the wealthy individuals. A study made by Schlosser et al came up with the finding that people with Oniomania can suffer from Axis I and II disorders, substance use disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders and problems with controlling impulses (Black 2007).

Causes

Studies show that negative emotions like boredom, anger, anxiety and self-critical thoughts often function as antecedents to shopping impulses in Oniomaniacs who feel a great sense of relief from these negative emotions after purchase is made, but as soon as the buying is completed, they slide into feelings of remorse and depression for making the purchases and as a result in order to cope with their feelings they again fall back on shopping expeditions. According to the report furnished by Lejoyeux et al., "uncontrolled buying, like bulimia, can be used as a compensatory mechanism for depressive feelings" (Aboujaoude & Lorrin 2010). People who suffered sexual abuse or parental neglect during childhood develop low self-esteem over a period of time and often resort to compulsive shopping in order to compensate for their depressed feelings. Shopping functions like a panacea for getting away from the overwhelming feelings of deprivation. Being unable to cope up with their day to day drudgery, they seek solace in mindless shopping. Apart from psychological reasons, there are social

reasons adding to the problem of Oniomania. Of late, shopping has become an easy affair due to the availability of credit cards and online shopping facility and hence shopaholics don't need to bother counting money before spending. However, it is important to distinguish normal buying behavior with Oniomania. Although normal shopping may go overboard during festivals, marriage or birthdays, the outcome doesn't end in depression or morbid feelings as is the case with Oniomania.

Assessment & Treatment

People with Oniomania are generally secretive about their disorder because they think if their problem comes open to people, they will be judged as materialistic and vacuous. Therefore, a good deal of enquiries should be made by asking them questions related to their abnormal shopping behavior. The patient's family history, social and personal history should be obtained to find out the causes for such behaviors. All these details are important to develop a comprehensive approach to address the patient's problems. There are no evidence based treatments yet available for Oniomania. Treatment usually involves either cognitive-behavioral therapy or medication like antidepressant. Several models for cognitive-behavioral therapy have been developed to treat Oniomania, the most significant being the group treatment which was first developed by Damon and subsequently by others including Villarino et al, Burgard and Mitchell and recently by Benson and Gengler (Aboujaoude & Lorrin 2010). Benson recently has come up with a comprehensive cognitive behavioral therapy that includes self-monitoring. People going through this treatment are required to note down their shopping behavior on shopping diary, workbook and CD-ROM. Medication has

given mixed results with few early cases suggesting that antidepressants like fluvoxamine are useful for curbing the shopping impulses but few subsequent clinical trials show that fluvoxamine does nothing more than a placebo effect as the patients again revert to shopping. Therefore, medication alone cannot treat Oniomaniacs. It is important that they understand the gravity of their disorders and try to get rid of checkbooks and credit cards because the presence of these things facilitates their shopping abnormality. They should always get accompanied by friends and relatives while shopping so that their tendency to overspend can be controlled and they should seek meaningful ways to enjoy their leisure time.

Conclusion

Oniomania refers to an impulsive uncontrollable shopping behavior which follows four phases of symptoms - anticipation, preparation, shopping and spending. People with the disorder of Oniomania develop negative emotions like anger, anxiety, depression and boredom before getting on a shopping venture and feel a great sense of fulfillment after shopping is made but soon the euphoria of shopping gets replaced by an overwhelming feeling of guilt and helplessness. Oniomania leads to dire financial consequences for individuals suffering from the disorder adding to frictions in family and social life. Usually people who have the disease running in the family or who have suffered sexual abuse and parental neglect during childhood begin to compensate their emptiness in life with mindless shopping. Treatment of Oniomania is of two types - CBT or cognitive-behavioral therapy and medication. But these therapies and medication alone cannot help an

Oniomaniac overcome his problem unless he acknowledges the gravity of the situation and takes measures to control his shopping impulses.

Work Cited

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