

# Effects of compulsive buying disorder



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Compulsive buying disorder or Oniomania commonly known as shopping addiction was recognized in the early nineteenth century, and considered as a psychiatric disorder in the early twentieth century. It is characterized by excessive behavior regarding shopping and spending which may lead to dangerous consequences. Why compulsive buying is considered a dangerous symptom? Although it is not specifically listed in the diagnostic of mental disorders it does seem to be a well-researched topic in the field of psychology. It is hard to believe that a person consciously decides to be a compulsive shopper, but it could start out as a simple day of shopping. A person might feel very pleased once purchasing, and continuously wants to repeat the feeling. These Compulsive shoppers usually see shopping as a way of escaping negative feelings, such as depression, anxiety, boredom, self-critical thoughts, and anger . Sometimes they tend to go shopping to fulfill an inner void in their personality attempting to treat symptoms of low self-esteem through compulsive shopping. Compulsive shoppers will definitely lose their spouses when they tend to hide their purchases and once the consumptions are discovered, they often become the focus of arguments.(Shieldsl, 2013)

There is a quite difference between impulsive and compulsive shopping. Experts who have looked into this issue assumed that the difference between both aspects rests with the internal motivation or reason for making the purchase. Impulse buying is typically unplanned, and happens in the moment such as seeing the desired item in the shop which is considered a normal shopper. While a compulsive shopper will plan the shopping

experience as a way to avoid or relieve uncomfortable internal feelings.

(Benson, 2006)

The major difficulty refers to the unawareness of these irrational spenders that they suffer from such sickness. Therefore, when they get used to the condition and ways of recovery it will be easier to relieve from the tension and sadness they went through. Shopping addiction not only affects women as it was long known, it also affects men in the same way it does to women, what differs only is the type of things they buy. (Shieldsl, 2013)

Shopping addicts need to be effectively guided by specialists such as psychologists to help them overcome their addiction since as it is known that this problem has basically psychological reasons. They need to find a new way to direct their depression, anger, and all the negative feelings that might lead someone to go extremely wild in shopping in an attempt to get rid of all the inner negativity. Psychologists represent one of the most important right solutions for this problem since psychologists help shopaholics resolve the problem from its roots as they allow them to express and let out their negative feelings in other more beneficial means rather than shopping compulsively (Hartney, 2009).

## **Problem Statement**

At first glance, people might see excessive shopping a relatively normal activity of daily life especially to the ones that can afford all expenditures. This initial perception fails to take into account, that type of shopping takes on an entirely different meaning. According to my personal interest and curiosity to know more about shopping addicts and why they practice such

excessive behavior, this research would help recognizing a lot of related behaviors, and the way they appear. Compulsive shopping or spending may result in interpersonal, occupational, family and financial problems in one's life (Clark, 2008).

All mentioned results relate to each other in a way or another, people who engage in compulsive shopping may become preoccupied with that behavior and spend less and less time with important people in their lives. They create a fantasy world of their own far away from reality, which will lead finally to damage in relationships. Financial problems may occur if money is borrowed or there is extreme use of credit to make purchases. For the above stated details, there is a need to address the subject of shopping addiction and its negative effects. Thus, it is expected in this study to look up the solutions suitable to the problem.

## **Research questions**

The following research questions are used to guide the research process:

In what way does shopping addiction affect the personal life of the addict?

To what extent does psychological care help shopping addicts recover from their addiction?

Hypothesis: Being shopaholic has detrimental effects on relationships.

## **Definitions**

The terms that are recurrent in this study include compulsive buying disorder, impulse purchasing, excessive behavior, and psychiatric disorder.

Compulsive buying disorder is defined as “ excessive shopping cognitions and buying behavior that leads to distress or impairment, it is also associated with significant psychiatric comorbidity, particularly mood and anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, eating disorders, and other disorders of impulse control”(Valence, 2006, p. 4). Similarly, it is considered as “ an obsession with shopping that significantly interferes with the functioning of the individual” (Benson, 2010, p. 9)

Impulse purchasing is known as “ an unplanned decision to buy a product or service, made just before a purchase. One who tends to make such purchases is referred to as an impulse purchaser or impulse buyer” (Zimmerman, 2009, p. 16) Furthermore, “ Impulse buying is the purchase habits of consumers who buy goods or services at the beginning point of contact. This normal behavior is influenced by sale signs and advertisements at retail locations” (Harwood, 2011, p. 22)

Excessive behavior stands for “ inappropriate individual type of buying behavior whereby consumers repetitively spend more than what they can afford this lead us to define excessive buying as a perception-based construct” (Thompson, 2007, p. 8) Furthermore, Excessive behavior can be linked to the disproportionate use of a substance. When you engage in an excessive behavior you are attempting to soothe an unresolved emotion or trauma (Sparks, 2008).

Psychiatric disorder is defined as “ pattern of psychological or behavioral symptoms that causes an individual significant distress, impairs their ability to function in life, and significantly increases their risk of death, pain,

disability, or loss of freedom. In addition, to be considered a psychiatric disorder, the symptoms must be more than an expected response to a particular event” ( Salters, 2009, p. 5) In addition to that, Kendra Cherry (2010) revealed that a psychiatric disorder “ known as a mental disorder, is a pattern of behavioral or psychological symptoms that impact multiple life areas and create misery for the person experiencing these symptoms” (p. 11)

## **Literature review**

All of the compulsive buying researches has centered on defining and explaining the phenomenon. Faber and O’Quinn (2005) derived their definition from the much broader category of compulsive consumption. They defined compulsive consumption “ as a response to an uncontrollable drive or desire to obtain, use, or experience a feeling, substance or activity that leads an individual to repetitively engage in a behavior that will ultimately cause harm to the individual and to others” (p. 4). D’Astous (2009) provides a less extreme definition of compulsive buying “ as a generalized urge to buy in the consumer population and that individuals who are extremely high on this factor may be called compulsive buyers” (p. 10). D’Astous (2009) also suggested that “ by dichotomizing consumers into two categories, compulsive or not compulsive, that we were missing much of the phenomenon. By ignoring what lies between compulsive and functional, we may be overlooking information that would help us to better understand the phenomena and its origins” (p. 2)

## **Researcher's different point of views concerning shopping addiction**

Several empirical studies have yielded interesting findings about factors related to compulsive buyers. Faber (2004) found that compulsive buyers tend to be younger. However, Valence (2010) did not find age to be a significant factor. In my own estimation, age could be a factor influencing a compulsive purchase process. As an example, teenagers are highly encouraged by their peers.

Consumer researchers have been exploring this phenomenon in an effort to describe, explain, and identify it. Psychology has given us answers concerning the origins of the phenomenon. We now know that compulsive buying is a behavioral disorder that causes an individual to continually make purchases regardless of financial, social, or psychological consequences. (Damon, 2008)

Compulsive buying is the result of dysfunction in any or all of the following processes: heredity, family of origin, psychological reasons, and societal aspects. Compulsive buying is distinguished from functional buying by the following characteristics: the items are not bought for their essential value, there is denial to the negative consequences of the actions, and it is disturbing to the individual's life (Krych, 2009).

It has been proposed that the socio-cultural environment is one of the many factors that helped in creating of compulsive buyers. People's perceptions of what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior are based on societal, cultural, and individual norms. During the socialization process, consumers

learn what is acceptable and unacceptable. If one's socialization process has been dysfunctional, that is, dysfunctional behavior has been modeled to the individual, that person will "grow up" believing the dysfunctional behavior is "normal." Furthermore, if the socio-cultural environment is conducive to this type of dysfunctional behavior, the individual's norm becomes reinforced (Hirschman, 2007).

### **Are men and women equally addictive on shopping?**

Compulsive buying is not just a problem that some women have, it seems that men are just as likely to suffer from it. The traditional view of women suffering from compulsive buying is probably the result of most studies being done mainly on women. Women are more likely to admit to compulsive shopping than men. All people have bad practices, but some don't really confess or accept it or even they are unaware of it. The aim of what I'm trying to reach is that, it could be really not a shame to have a certain compulsive or bad practice and to confess with that action because, when we are true to others we are true to ourselves and in that way we can find solutions to our problems. Surprisingly, more people from lower incomes suffer from compulsive shopping than people from higher incomes (Hollander, 2006).

A recent study of shopping behavior, published in the American Journal of Psychiatry, has revealed that as many as 1 in 20 Americans suffers from compulsive buying. The surprising discovery is that men are almost as likely to be compulsive shoppers. This type of addiction is a compulsive behavior that interferes with an individual's life to the extent that a shopaholic may lie about their shopping addiction. They may be in extreme debt, unable to



control their shopping, and experience the same symptoms as other addictive behaviors such as compulsive gambling addiction, alcohol or drugs. The traditional view of compulsive spending is of women suffering from this addiction but the recent studies showed that both men and women equally shop but for different type of items (Lepore, 2012).

### **Problems that occur as a result of compulsive shopping**

Shopping addiction isn't necessarily about the money, it's about how shopping impedes your life. If you or someone you know has such excessive behavior corresponding shopping then it's a real problem. There are some people who are just total rational consumers, they buy what's on sale, or what they need and nothing else. James Roberts a researcher of Baylor University of Business in Texas claimed that, on the other end there are compulsive shoppers who buy to their own financial ruin and to relationship problems and other kinds of debt, and then there are the rest of us somewhere in between (Bryner, 2008). As a result, breaking a compulsive buying addiction is not that easy for irrational spenders. They have to accept it, educate their thoughts, selves, realizing that they are tackling a serious problem.

### **Methodology**

The current research involves both qualitative and quantitative methods since the data collection procedure is based on a questionnaire and interview.

## **Questionnaire**

The first method of data collection is a questionnaire including seven questions which range between Yes/No questions and open ended ones. The purpose of these questions is to collect data about the negative effect behind being a shopaholic person especially on relationships. It is going to be distributed and administered by the researchers herself. Sample investigated includes 30 people from the Shouf area (the sample is randomly chosen).

## **Interview**

The interview is going to be conducted with one shopaholic. It includes (3 to 4 questions) about my research topic (The effect of being a shopaholic person on relationships) and their point of view.

## **Conclusion**

Like other forms of addiction, shopping addiction is a disease. It is a hard addiction to overcome since people do need to shop for basic things like food and clothing. Thus, a person cannot completely eliminate shopping. There is help, however, for the compulsive shopper. There are many treatment facilities that help people deal with any type of addictive behavior. Thus, seeking help is indeed because compulsive shopping can lead people to hard situations where they lose all of their possessions. As well, compulsive shopping can damage relationships with spouses or with children, beyond repair.