

# Correlation between Shopping Addiction and Depression, Anxiety and Stress

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## ABSTRACT

Compulsive buying entails an obsessive drive to purchase things, many of which are unnecessary. Compulsive shoppers use it to elevate their stress levels, mood, self-esteem, and social acceptance. People who are experiencing unpleasant emotional states are more inclined to turn to purchasing as a coping mechanism. It has also been suggested that compulsive buying is influenced by dysfunctional coping. Understanding the relationship between shopping addiction and anxiety, stress, and depression in both men and women was the goal of the current study. A sample of 131 persons from age group 18 to 25 was nominated for the conduction of the research. The research was conducted by using Berger's Shopping Addiction Scale and DASS. The study's findings showed that shopping addiction is positively correlated with depression, anxiety, and stress. Also, it is evident that females are more prone to becoming shopping addicts than males.

**Keywords:** Shopping addiction, Stress, Depression, Anxiety, Berger's shopping addiction scale, DASS

## INTRODUCTION

An excessive, impulsive, and uncontrollable urge to shop and spend money despite serious psychological, social, professional, and financial repercussions is the characteristic of obsessive buying, a mental and behavioural health disorder. It has an impact on a person's mood, anxiety, stress levels, or may cause depression. Individuals with the condition typically have impaired awareness and evaluation of their emotions, as well as a low threshold for undesirable psychological states, such as negative moods. Such behaviour in a long term might cause some people to experience regret, remorse, shame, guilt, and even despair. People buy things to boost their mood, manage stress, get attention and approval from others, enhance their self-image, etc. According to a research, the occurrence of compulsive buying has amplified lately, reaching 4.9% (Maraz *et al.*, 2015). People who are experiencing unpleasant emotional states

are more inclined to turn to purchasing as a coping mechanism. It has also been suggested that compulsive buying is influenced by dysfunctional coping. The relationship between distress and compulsive purchase has been demonstrated to be mediated by emotion-focused coping. People with compulsive shopping are more expected to suffer common psychiatric complications, like anxiety and depression. The impacted population is also said to have far higher levels of perceived stress (Harvanko *et al.*, 2013). Online shopping is more profitable and persuasive than traditional buying because it employs tactics to involve customers in feedback and incentive programs (He and Zhu, 2020). People who are impulsive are more susceptible to shopping behavior because e-commerce companies' AI-powered platforms employ push notifications and customized ads more effectively (Wang *et al.*, 2021). Scholars have noted that obsessive buying behavior is a psychological and behavioral health problem that can arise

from excessive shopping in certain people. Numerous studies have demonstrated that compulsive buying begins in late adolescence and develops over time in a chronic form. Compulsive and dysfunctional spending, guilt after a purchase, and feelings about buying and spending are just a few of the symptoms that may be present. The need or anxiousness that people with compulsive buying behaviour experience increases, and they only feel satisfied or complete after making a purchase. Compulsive buying refers to excessive or poorly managed urges of purchasing or buying something. Both episodic and chronic compulsive shopping are possible. especially when long-term, obsessive shopping is linked to negative financial outcomes (such as debt, bankruptcy, and even shoplifting and other crimes), diminished life quality, marital and family issues, and subjective suffering, such being unable to control one's conduct (Arcan, 2021).

#### Objectives of the study:

1. To examine the co-relation between shopping addiction and depression.
2. To examine the co-relation between shopping addiction and stress.
3. To examine the co-relation between shopping addiction and anxiety.
4. To compare the shopping addiction in males and females.

#### Hypothesis

1. **H1** : There will be a positive relationship between shopping addiction and depression.
2. **H2** : There will be a positive relationship between shopping addiction and anxiety.
3. **H3** : There will be a positive relationship between shopping addiction and stress.
4. **H4** : There will be a significant difference in shopping addiction between males and females.

#### Rationale of the study:

Shopping addiction is a behaviour characterized by excessive buying despite negative consequences. Depression, Anxiety and Stress are some common concerns. It is important to know about the correlation between shopping addiction and depression, stress, and anxiety so that more effective treatments can be developed for the prevention and health professionals can give more comprehensive support to people dealing with this. Shopping addictions can somewhat cause financial

and economic hardships by analysing the correlation we can make strategies to reduce the economic and financial burdens.

#### Literature Review :

Shopping addiction occurs when the buyer buys for the sake of just buying. These strong impulses to buy are seen as uncontrollable and unnecessary (Muller *et al.*, 2015). From a view point of psychology, purchasing compulsively is a disorder when a person shows unstoppable drive to buy (Faber, 2010). Ridgway *et al.* (2008) portrays an excessive and prevalent need to buy. According to medical researches individuals who have been diagnosed with depression have greater purchasing demands as compared to those who are not diagnosed with it (Duroy *et al.*, 2014). Black (2022) mentions that the lack of control can be associated with mood and anxiety disorders. According to Valence (1988) obsessive buyers usually have higher levels of anxiety and very low self-esteem as compared to the average consumer. Brooks Leftwich (2022) also suggests that there is a strong relationship observed between compulsive purchase behaviour and emotional discomfort, sadness, and impulsivity. Brook *et al.* (2016) in his study found that a significant correlation was detected between compulsive shopping and major depressive episodes, generalized anxiety disorder. Additionally, compulsive buying may be linked to self-medication for stress and emotional suffering. Thomas *et al.* (2024) conducted a correlational study which showed that there is an association between stress and compulsive buying disorder. Seth (2020) emphasized how the COVID-19 pandemic affected consumers' buying habits and shopping patterns. The study focused on the new behaviours that might emerge as the demographics and technology change. Bani-Rshaid and Alghraibeh (2017) conducted a study which statistically concluded that females tend to show higher shopping addiction behaviour than males.

## METHODOLOGY

This study implements a quantitative approach to investigate correlation between shopping addiction and depression, stress, and anxiety. Survey was utilized as the primary method of data collection, with structured questionnaires. The methodology encompasses the tools used, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques.

**Tools used:**

Berger Shopping Addiction Scale was established by Andreassen *et al.* (2015). The total number of items in the BSAS is twenty-eight. Every statement was rated on the level of agreement with their own thoughts and actions over the previous 12 months. For each item, a scoring continuum ranging from 1 to 5 is used: 1 for totally disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neither agree nor disagree, 4 for agree and 5 for absolutely agree, respectively. The overall score varies from 0 to 112 where 0-30 indicates no shopping addiction, 31-50 depicts moderate shopping addiction, 51-70 indicates severe shopping addiction and 71-112 denotes extremely severe shopping addiction

**Reliability and Validity:**

For the Berger Shopping Addiction scale test-retest reliability and split half reliability was calculated. The test-retest reliability ( $r = 0.80-0.85$ ) was good and the split half reliability came out to be  $r = 0.75-0.80$ . According to previous studies the construct validity of BSAS is also good.

DASS was developed by Lovibond and Lovibond in 1995. It has 42 self-report items. Each item shows adverse emotional sign, each of these is evaluated on a four-point Likert scale based on severity of the participants' experiences during the prior week. The scores of each item went from 0, which showed that the client assumed it "did not apply to them at all," to 3, which indicated that they assumed it "applied to them most of the time." It has three subscales: Depression: 14 items, Anxiety: 7 items, and Stress: 10 items.

**Reliability and Validity:**

DASS has a moderate to high test-retest reliability coefficient while it has been seen that construct validity of DASS is good.

**Data Collection:**

The data collection procedure was run, targeting young adults' group including both males and females to check their shopping addiction.

**Survey Distribution:**

The questionnaire link was distributed via WhatsApp to young adults. A snowball sampling approach was used, encouraging participants to share the link with their other young adults to maximize reach.

**Response Collection and Verification:**

Responses were collected over a month period. Participants were given ample time to complete the survey at their convenience. In cases where respondents expressed discomfort or withdrew their participation, their submissions were excluded from the analysis. This ensured voluntary and informed participation throughout the process.

**Data Analysis:**

Once all responses were collected, the data was organized and analyzed using MS Excel. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize shopping addiction levels in males and females. Further, statistical methods, including independent t-tests was used to identify difference between males and females and Pearson's correlation was conducted to find correlation between shopping addiction and depression, anxiety, and stress.

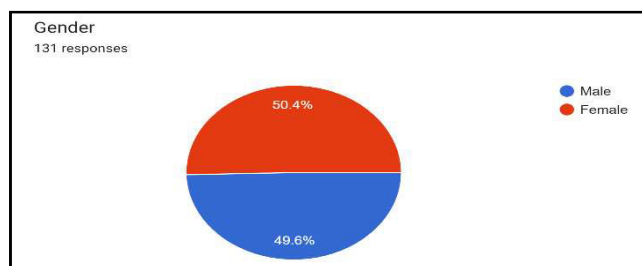
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section shows the findings of the study, indicating key results concerning the relationship between shopping addiction and depression, anxiety, and stress among young adults.

**Respondents' Background:**

Total 128 individuals took part in the research. Respondents were drawn from people who are studying or currently working somewhere or have their own business.

64 were males and 64 were females, as shown in Fig. 1.

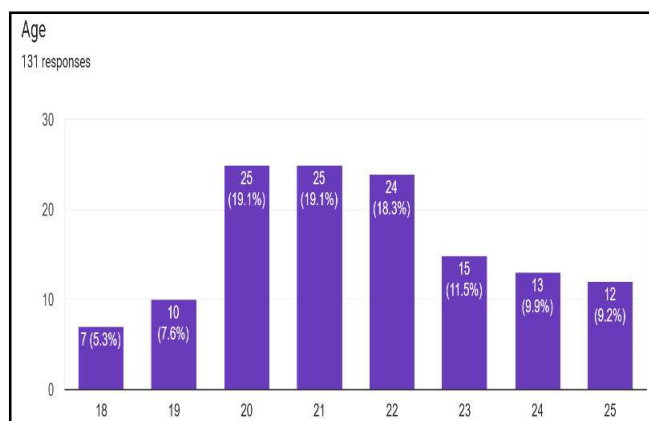


**Fig. 1 : No. of participants taking part in the study**

In terms of age distribution, the participants ranged between 16 to 25 years, as shown in Fig. 2.

**Descriptive statistics:**

Tables 1 to 4 provides with the descriptive statistics



**Fig. 2 : Age groups of participants (ranging from 18 to 25)**

for comparing males and females based on four major variables which are shopping addiction, depression, anxiety, and stress.

The N stands for number of respondents in each group (females and males) taking part in the survey. Overall respondents were 131 out of which 65 were females and 66 were males. The mean i.e. average score for shopping addiction for females is 62.5 which is greater than the mean score of males that is 29.3, which suggests that on an average female shows more symptoms of shopping addiction than males (Table 1).

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics for comparing males and females based on shopping addiction**

Gender	N	Mean	Median	SD
<b>Shopping Addiction</b>				
Female	65	62.5	68	20.2
Male	66	29.3	17.0	33.5

The average score for 65 females is 7.42 whereas average mean score of males is 6.15 which is lower than the avg. score of females. Therefore, it can be concluded that females report slightly higher symptoms of depression than males on an average. The variability of scores (standard deviation) is larger in males (6.33) than females (4.79) indicating that few males can experience greater symptoms of depression while some may encounter lower levels of depression symptoms (Table 2).

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics for comparing males and females based on depression**

Gender	N	Mean	Median	SD
<b>Depression</b>				
Female	65	7.42	7	4.79
Male	66	6.15	4.00	6.33

The average score for males is 5.06 which is very less than that of females (10.17) indicating that males encounter lower levels of anxiety than females. The standard deviation of females is calculated to be 3.93 which shows moderate levels of variability in scores among females whereas, in males the standard deviation is 6.36 which is more than females indicating greater variability in anxiety scores (Table 3).

**Table 3 : Descriptive statistics for comparing males and females based on anxiety**

Gender	N	Mean	Median	SD
<b>Anxiety</b>				
Female	65	10.17	11	3.93
Male	66	5.06	2.00	6.36

The average score or the mean score for females was calculated to be 11.89 which is much higher than the average score of males (6.76). This indicates that females show higher levels of stress symptoms than males. The standard deviation turns out to be 3.97 for females suggesting that they show moderate levels of variability in scores whereas males show higher variability in scores with a standard deviation of 6.13 (Table 4).

**Table 4 : Descriptive statistics for comparing males and females based on stress**

Gender	N	Mean	Median	SD
<b>Stress</b>				
Female	65	11.89	13	3.97
Male	66	6.76	5.50	6.13

### Hypothesis testing:

#### *Correlation between Shopping Addiction and depression:*

Pearson's correlational analysis revealed a positive correlation ( $r=0.729$ ) between shopping addiction and depression among young adults (Table 5).

**Table 5 : Correlation between Shopping Addiction and depression**

		Shopping addiction	Depression
Shopping addiction	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
Depression	Pearson's r	0.729	—
	df	129	—
	p-value	<.001	—

### Correlation between Shopping Addiction and Anxiety:

Pearson's correlational analysis done to find out the correlation between shopping addiction and anxiety reveals a positive correlation ( $r=0.924$ ).

Table 6 : Correlation between Shopping Addiction and Anxiety			
		Shopping addiction	Anxiety
Shopping addiction	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
Anxiety	Pearson's r	0.924	—
	df	129	—
	p-value	<.001	—

### Correlation between Shopping Addiction and stress:

A Pearson's correlational analysis revealed a positive correlation ( $r=0.911$ ) between shopping addiction and stress among young adults (Table 7).

Table 7 : Correlation between Shopping Addiction and stress			
		Shopping addiction	Stress
Shopping addiction	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
Stress	Pearson's r	0.911	—
	df	129	—
	p-value	<.001	—

### Males vs. Females:

An independent sample t-test showed that there is a considerable difference between males and females with females scoring higher on shopping addiction variable than males ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 8 : Males vs. Females				
		Statistic	df	p
Shopping addiction	Welch's t	6.89	107	<.001

Note:  $H_a \mu \text{Female} \neq \mu \text{Male}$

The purpose of the study was to find correlation between shopping addiction and psychological factors such as depression, stress and anxiety among young adults (18-25 age group). The findings from descriptive and correlational methods suggested some notable insights.

### Shopping Addiction and Gender:

The average score of females was 62.5 and for males the mean was 29.3 which shows that females exhibited higher levels of addiction than males. These results align with previous studies by Bani-Rshaid and Alghraibeh (2017).

### Psychological factors and Shopping Addiction:

The research findings shows that depression, anxiety, and stress is closely related to shopping addiction. The positive correlation between shopping addiction and depression ( $r = 0.729$ ), anxiety ( $r = 0.924$ ), and stress ( $r = 0.911$ ) contributes to the idea of shopping mindlessly while experiencing emotional discomfort. This finding supports earlier researches by Brooks Leftwich (2022) and Thomas (2024), who highlighted the correlation between shopping addiction and emotional distress, including depression and anxiety. The correlation between stress and shopping addiction turns out to be  $r=0.911$  as people may use shopping to reduce stress. This result aligns with Brook *et al.* (2016), who found that there is a strong relation between stress, anxiety, and shopping addiction.

### Liminations and Future Directions:

While there are many valuable insights mentioned in this study, there are some limitations.

The study is focusing on specific age range, limiting the generalizability. The study should expand the sample size and include participants from different age group. In future, research should include longitudinal studies to know how the shopping addiction develops over time.

Also, the study should include exploring cultural, socio-economic, and societal factors that may influence shopping addiction. A mixed qualitative and quantitative approach should be used to gain more understanding.

### Conclusion:

This study provides a strong correlation between shopping addiction and depression, anxiety and stress among young adults. The findings says that compulsive buying is not only influenced by discomfort but can also be used as a coping mechanism in managing stress, anxiety, and depression. Females show higher addiction levels than males.

Due to impact of shopping addiction on psychological factors it is important to carry out therapeutic interventions focusing on emotional and psychological causes of compulsive shopping. Techniques such as cognitive-

behavioural therapy, mindfulness exercises and stress-reduction techniques may be useful.

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