

# Materialism and Compulsive Buying: The Mediating Roles of Self-Control and Anxiety

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## KEYWORDS

Compulsive Buying Behavior, Anxiety, Materialism, Self-Control

## ABSTRACT

Compulsive buying behavior (CBB) is a maladaptive consumption pattern characterized by excessive and uncontrolled buying that causes significant psychological, social, and financial consequences. This study investigates the roles of materialism, self-control, and anxiety in predicting compulsive buying behavior (CBB) through a serial mediation model. Data was collected from 639 participants using validated scales via a snowball approach and convenience sampling approaches. The results demonstrate that materialism exerts both direct and indirect effects on CBB. Materialism has a significant positive direct effect on CBB, suggesting that individuals with higher materialistic values are more prone to compulsive buying tendencies. Furthermore, materialism negatively impacts self-control and positively influences anxiety, which in turn contribute to increased CBB through significant indirect pathways. The model reveals that lower self-control and higher anxiety levels are directly associated with greater CBB. The findings highlight the complex interplay among these variables and the multiple pathways through which materialism can influence CBB, providing insights into the underlying mechanisms driving this phenomenon. The study has important theoretical implications for understanding CBB and practical implications for developing targeted interventions and prevention strategies that address materialistic values, enhance self-control, and manage anxiety. By integrating these factors within a unified framework, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of compulsive buying behavior and its antecedents.

## 1. Introduction

In today's consumer-oriented society, materialism has become a dominant force in shaping individuals' behaviors and attitudes. The desire to acquire and possess material possessions is seen as a measure of success and status. Materialism is often associated with a lack of self-control, as individuals prioritize immediate gratification over long-term goals and financial stability. Consumer behavior in India exhibits unique characteristics influenced by cultural values, socio-economic factors, and rapid technological advancement. The growth of consumerism in India has brought materialism to the forefront, with consumers increasingly associating material possessions with status and success. This cultural shift can impact self-control, where individuals might prioritize immediate acquisitions over long-term financial planning, often succumbing to impulsive buying decisions.

This obsession with material possessions can lead to anxiety and compulsive buying behavior, where individuals feel an intense urge to purchase items even when it goes against their better judgment or financial means. Various factors contribute to the rise of materialism and its impact on self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior. According to a study by Sabah, consumer behavior plays a crucial role in contemporary society, defining individuals' identities, social roles, and perceived status (Sabah, 10.5772/intechopen.71269). The influence of materialism on individuals' behaviors and attitudes runs deep, often rooted in societal pressures and cultural norms. It is not just about the acquisition of material possessions but also about the significance attached to these possessions in defining one's identity and social standing. This creates a constant tug-of-war between the desire for immediate gratification and the need for long-term financial stability, ultimately impacting self-control.

Anxiety often accompanies materialism, stemming from the fear of not being able to attain or maintain the desired possessions, the pressure to keep up with societal standards, and the constant comparison with others (Górník-Durose, 2020). This anxiety can have profound effects on mental well-being,

leading to stress, depression, and a sense of inadequacy (Mishra et al., 2023). The connect between materialism and the loss of self-control can contribute to heightened levels of anxiety; the Indian middle-class, in particular, may face stress due to financial commitments caused by purchasing behavior that tries to emulate higher societal status. Anxiety can also stem from societal pressures and the disparity between the desired lifestyle portrayed by media and the individual's actual financial capability.

Compulsive buying behavior, driven by materialism and anxiety, manifests as an irresistible urge to make purchases regardless of financial constraints. This behavior can lead to financial troubles, strained relationships, and a sense of guilt or remorse after the purchase (Yurchisin et al., 2004).

Understanding the intricate web of materialism, self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior is crucial in addressing these issues and fostering healthier attitudes towards consumption and possessions. More research is needed to explore effective interventions and strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of materialism in today's society.

Compulsive buying behavior in the Indian context may not be as extensively documented, but the global phenomenon of consumerism suggests it's an emerging issue, with individuals facing the compulsion to purchase as a result of materialistic values, often leading to financial hardship and emotional distress. As for statistics specifically detailing these aspects within the Indian context, a comprehensive study would be needed to ascertain the figures that quantify these behavioral patterns and their socio-economic impacts. Compulsive buying behavior (CBB) is a significant psychological issue that has garnered increasing attention in recent years (Müller et al., 2019). This maladaptive pattern of excessive and uncontrolled buying can lead to adverse consequences, including financial problems, interpersonal conflicts, and emotional distress (Lejoyeux & Weinstein, 2010). Understanding the underlying factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of CBB is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Furthermore, self-control, which refers to the ability to regulate one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Baumeister et al., 2007), has been identified as a crucial factor in preventing impulsive and compulsive behaviors, including CBB (Faber & Vohs, 2004). Individuals with low self-control may have difficulty resisting the temptation to engage in excessive buying, leading to a cycle of compulsive behavior.

Anxiety, a negative emotional state characterized by feelings of worry, tension, and apprehension (Spielberger et al., 1983), has also been associated with CBB (Müller et al., 2015). Some individuals may use compulsive buying as a maladaptive coping mechanism to alleviate anxiety or escape from negative emotions temporarily (Lejoyeux et al., 1996).

The proposed model in this study suggests that materialism, self-control, and anxiety play important roles in influencing compulsive buying behavior. Materialism, defined as the excessive emphasis on acquiring and possessing material goods (Richins & Dawson, 1992), has been consistently linked to CBB (Dittmar, 2005). Individuals with high levels of materialism may engage in compulsive buying as a means to enhance their self-worth or seek happiness through material possessions (Gardarsdottir et al., 2014).

## **Background**

### **Materialism, Self-Control and Compulsive Buying Behavior**

Materialism, self-control, and compulsive buying behavior are important topics in the field of consumer psychology and have garnered considerable attention in recent research. Research has shown that materialism, defined as the importance individuals attach to acquiring and possessing material possessions, is associated with various negative outcomes such as increased debt. For instance, a study by Frost et al. (1998) found that high levels of materialism were positively related to compulsive buying behavior, which refers to the repetitive and excessive purchasing of items without considering the financial consequences. Recent studies have also focused on the role of self-control in moderating the

relationship between materialism and compulsive buying behavior. Self-control is the ability to regulate one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to achieve long-term goals. It has been found that individuals with low self-control are more likely to engage in compulsive buying behavior, especially when they are highly materialistic. Understanding these relationships is crucial for developing interventions and strategies to help individuals with compulsive buying tendencies. Furthermore, exploring the underlying psychological mechanisms can provide valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the field of consumer psychology. Materialism plays a significant role in influencing compulsive buying behavior, especially among individuals with lower self-control levels. Studies (Nik et al., 2022; Dudi, 2023) highlight how materialistic tendencies can lead to compulsive buying habits, with factors like neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experiences contributing to this behavior. Additionally, Passent et al., (2023) emphasized that materialism values can drive compulsive buying behavior, particularly during challenging times like the Covid-19 crisis. Furthermore, findings (Aadel et al., 2022) suggest that materialism can result in depression, which in turn may fuel compulsive buying through obsessive-compulsive tendencies and impaired self-esteem.

Studies highlight that materialistic tendencies can lead to compulsive buying, especially when coupled with a lack of self-control, as seen in the link between materialism, stress, and compulsive buying behavior affecting economic well-being among single mothers (Piotr et al., 2022). Additionally, gender differences exist in the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying, with women showing a stronger tendency towards compulsive buying driven by materialistic and hedonistic values compared to men (Hatice, 2023). Previous studies have consistently linked materialism, defined as the excessive emphasis on acquiring and possessing material goods (Richins & Dawson, 1992), to compulsive buying behavior (Dittmar, 2005; Gardarsdottir et al., 2014). Individuals with lower levels of self-control, which refers to the ability to regulate one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Baumeister et al., 2007), have been found to be more likely to engage in impulsive and compulsive behaviors, including compulsive buying (Faber & Vohs, 2004).

Materialism, self-control, and compulsive buying behavior are three interrelated constructs that have garnered significant attention in the field of consumer psychology. Numerous studies have explored the relationship between these constructs, aiming to understand the underlying mechanisms and implications for consumer behavior. One area of focus in this literature is the impact of materialism on self-control and compulsive buying behavior. The paper by Kasser et al. (2004) provides valuable insights into the association between materialism and self-control. Kasser et al., (2004) examined the role of materialistic values in undermining self-control and ultimately leading to reduced well-being. Another relevant study by Fujiwara and Nagasawa (2015) investigated the impact of psychological factors on purchase intentions for luxury brands, including materialism and compulsive buying behavior. A Study of Japanese Consumers. American Journal of Industrial and Business Management conducted a study that confirmed the influence of psychological factors, such as materialism, on consumers' purchase intentions for luxury brands. Furthermore, the literature suggests that materialism can also contribute to compulsive buying behavior. According to Dittmar et al., (2005) materialistic values are positively associated with compulsive buying behavior. The relationship between materialism and personal well-being is moderated by self-control. Moreover, self-control has been identified as a key factor in mitigating the negative consequences of materialism and compulsive buying behavior. The relationship between materialism and self-control has been extensively studied in recent years. For example, the review by Dittmar et al. (2005) delves into the intricate relationship between materialism, self-control, and personal well-being. In their study, Dittmar et al. (2005) found that individuals with higher levels of self-control were better able to resist the materialistic values that often contribute to compulsive buying behavior. The positive relationship between low self-control and compulsive buying behavior may be stronger for individuals with higher levels of anxiety, as the combination of poor self-regulation and increased anxiety may exacerbate the tendency for compulsive buying. Lower levels of self-control may contribute to the positive association between materialism and compulsive buying behavior, as individuals with high materialism and low self-control may have difficulty resisting the temptation to engage in excessive buying. Understanding these dynamics is

crucial for addressing compulsive buying behaviors and promoting healthier consumption habits.

On the basis of the aforementioned studies, the following hypothesis has been formulated;

Hypothesis 1: There will be a relationship between materialism, self-control, anxiety with CBB.

Hypothesis 2: Materialism will have a positive direct effect on compulsive buying behavior.

Hypothesis 3: Self-control will have a negative direct effect on compulsive buying behavior.

### **Self-Control, Anxiety and Compulsive Buying Behavior**

Self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior are three interconnected constructs that have garnered increasing attention in psychological research. Many studies have examined the role of self-control in various domains, such as health behavior, addictive behaviors, and financial decision-making (Sharma et al., 2020; Baumeister et al., 2007). Baumeister and colleagues conducted a comprehensive review of self-control research and proposed that self-control is a limited resource that can be depleted over time (Baumeister et al., 2007). They suggested that exerting self-control in one domain may lead to a depletion of self-control resources, making subsequent self-control attempts more challenging. The concept of self-control has been linked to various psychological outcomes, including anxiety and compulsive buying behavior. One area of interest in the literature is the relationship between self-control and anxiety. According to a study by Sharma et al., (2020) individuals with higher levels of self-control are found to have lower levels of anxiety. Another study by Baumeister et al. suggested that individuals with low self-control may be more prone to experiencing anxiety due to difficulties in managing their impulses and emotions. The link between self-control and compulsive buying behavior has also been explored. Researchers have found that individuals with lower levels of self-control are more likely to engage in compulsive buying behavior (Black, 2017; Dittmar et al., 2004). The rationale for investigating the relationship between self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior is multifaceted. First, understanding the relationship between self-control and anxiety can provide insights into the mechanisms underlying anxiety disorders. It has been suggested that individuals with low self-control may have difficulties in managing their impulses and emotions, which could contribute to increased anxiety levels. Second, exploring the link between self-control and compulsive buying behavior can shed light on the underlying factors that contribute to this problematic behavior. The literature suggests that individuals with lower levels of self-control are more likely to engage in compulsive buying behavior, which can have negative consequences for their financial well-being and overall quality of life. These findings highlight the importance of investigating the relationship between self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior. In a study conducted by Sharma et al., the researchers aimed to examine the relationship between self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior.

Studies have shown that self-control plays a crucial role in impulsive buying tendencies, with higher self-control leading to lower impulsive buying behavior (Priyanto et al., 2023; Yobella et al., 2022). Additionally, anxiety has been identified as a significant predictor of compulsive buying, with individuals experiencing higher levels of anxiety being more prone to compulsive buying tendencies (Fachrul et al., 2022; Cole, 1995). Additionally, the presence of self-control impairment is a key characteristic of compulsive buying, often rooted in an anxiety-based reactive mechanism that leads to uncontrollable buying behaviors (Tatiana et al., 2021). Previous studies have suggested that individuals may use compulsive buying as a maladaptive coping mechanism to alleviate anxiety or escape from negative emotions temporarily (Lejoyeux et al., 1996; Müller et al., 2015). These findings underscore the complex relationship between self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior, highlighting the need for interventions focusing on enhancing self-control and reducing anxiety to mitigate the adverse effects of compulsive buying.

Hypothesis 4: Anxiety will have a positive direct effect on compulsive buying behavior.

Materialism, Self-Control, Anxiety and Compulsive Buying Behavior



Compulsive buying behavior, characterized by repetitive and excessive purchasing that is driven by an irresistible urge, has become a prevalent issue in today's consumer society. Research has shown that materialism, the pursuit and importance placed on possessions and wealth, is a significant predictor of compulsive buying behavior (Benson et al., 2015; Dittmar, 2005). Several theoretical frameworks have been proposed to explain the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying behavior. One such framework suggests that self-control and anxiety may act as serial mediators in this relationship, meaning they sequentially transmit the effects of materialism on compulsive buying behavior. Self-control, defined as the ability to regulate impulses and resist immediate gratification, has been proposed as a mediator between materialism and compulsive buying behavior. Previous research has found a negative association between materialism and self-control, suggesting that individuals high in materialistic values may struggle with self-regulation when it comes to impulsive buying (Richins & Dawson, 1992; Tang & Xie, 2017). Additionally, anxiety has been proposed as another serial mediator in the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying behavior. Anxiety, characterized by feelings of worry, unease, and fear, has been found to be positively associated with materialism and compulsive buying behavior (Benson et al., 2015; Roberts & Jones, 2001). The rationale for examining the relationship between materialism, self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior is twofold. First, understanding the underlying mechanisms that link materialism to compulsive buying behavior can provide valuable insights for intervention and prevention strategies. Second, investigating the serial mediation of self-control and anxiety can shed light on the specific processes through which materialism influences compulsive buying behavior. The literature also suggests that self-control and anxiety may play a significant role in mediating the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying behavior (Müller et al., 2015). The literature review and rationale suggest that there is a relationship between materialism and compulsive buying behavior. The literature review and rationale support the hypothesis that there is a relationship between materialism and compulsive buying behavior through self-control and anxiety.

Hypothesis 5: Self-control and anxiety will mediate the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying behavior

## **2. Methodology**

### **Design and Procedure**

This study was approved by the ethics committee of the university. The study is based on primary data collected through a well-structured online. Data collection was conducted in India via a snowball approach and convenience sampling approaches using a self-administered questionnaire, to which an offline customer introduces their fellow offline shopping customers (e.g., friends, relatives, colleagues). Alternative hypotheses and research designs were developed in light of the aforementioned theoretical framework (Figure 1). Respondents were informed that the survey was about their offline buying habits in order to reduce response bias. The short questionnaire (just 24 multiple-choice items) and clear statement of the research's goal helped to boost the response rate. Further instructions included encouraging the respondents to distribute the email to their social and professional networks. Along with asking people to complete the questionnaire, the link to the survey was also emailed to researchers' Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media accounts. The present study was cross-sectional as the data was collected at a point in time. Correlation, regression, and mediation analysis were employed using SPSS software.

### **Participants**

Initially, 710 people were contacted online through email to give consent regarding their participation in the research study. 59 people were not interested in the survey and unfilled (12) surveys were not include in the study.

The study sample consists of 639 participants, as males (65.9%) outnumber females (34.1%) as presented in Table 1. The age distribution reveals a predominance of young individuals, with the

majority (51.5%) falling within the 18 to 25 years age group. The next largest age groups are 35 to 45 years (21.8%) and 25 to 35 years (16.3%), while the representation of participants under 18 years (0.9%) and above 45 years (9.5%) is relatively low. In terms of marital status, the sample leans towards a higher proportion of single individuals (59.2%) compared to married individuals (40.4%), with a negligible percentage (0.5%) falling under the "Others" category.

An overwhelming majority of the participants (90.9%) have a family size of less than 5 members, indicating a prevalence of smaller households within the sample. Larger family sizes of 5 to 10 members (7.8%) and more than 10 members (1.3%) are less common. The income distribution is relatively even across different groups, with 29.7% earning less than 300,000 per annum, 22.8% between 300,000 to 600,000, 25.5% between 600,000 to 900,000, and 21.9% earning more than 900,000 annually.

The sample exhibits a relatively high educational level, with a significant portion holding postgraduate degrees (38.3%) and undergraduate degrees (36.8%). Graduates constitute 15.8% of the sample, while those with only a school-level education account for 3.1%. Additionally, 5.9% of the participants fall under the "Other" category for education level, indicating the presence of alternative educational backgrounds or qualifications.

Overall, the sample captures a diverse range of participants in terms of age, income levels, and educational backgrounds. However, the gender distribution and marital status distribution suggest potential biases or limitations in the sampling process. It is crucial to consider these sample characteristics when interpreting the study findings and assessing their generalizability, as well as explore potential relationships or differences among the various demographic variables and the key variables of interest in the study.

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Insert Table 1  
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## Measures

The author developed ten questions that make up the sample profile: questions about gender, age, marital status, education level, and income.

In order to evaluate the impact of materialism on compulsive buying behavior, a concise self-administered questionnaire will be utilized. This survey will comprise three questions aimed at measuring fundamental materialistic beliefs linked to compulsive buying tendencies. Respondents will be requested to assess their degree of agreement with each statement on a Likert scale encompassing from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Utilizing a concise three-item scale enables streamlined data gathering while encompassing the fundamental aspects of materialism relevant to compulsive buying behavior. The questionnaire is derived from existing materialism scales, like the Materialistic Values Scale (Richins & Dawson, 1992), although it has been customized in terms of wording and emphasis on compulsive buying behavior to suit the present research context.

In the present study, three measurement scales were adopted to measure Materialism, self-control, anxiety and compulsive buying behavior. The ability of the self to change its own states and actions is referred to as self-control (Baumeister 2002, p. 670). Tangney et al. (2004) developed a self-control scale for measuring self-control. They developed a 36-item full version of the scale as well as a 13-item short version (both versions performed equally well in the initial research; see Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone 2004). The current study adopted a brief scale which includes 13 items, 2 items were excluded due to the value were less than 0.5 in factor analysis. Each item on the measure was rated on a 5-point scale (1 for "if you feel the statement does not describe you at all" to "5 if you feel that it describes you very well). Two items were eliminated are "I refuse things that are bad for me" and "I am able to work effectively toward long-term goals".

The Faber and O'Guinn (1992) compulsive buying scale was employed. The tool measures respondents' tendency for compulsive buying behaviour by evaluating seven concerns on a 5-point Likert scale (1-never, 5-always). The probability of someone being a compulsive buyer increases as the number increases of "nearly always" and "always." In this study, compulsive buying behavior scale has an excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ).

In order to examine the potential correlation between anxiety and compulsive buying behavior, a brief self-administered questionnaire will be used. This questionnaire includes three items that aim to capture fundamental components of anxiety related to impulsive purchasing. Participants will be requested to assess the frequency of their experiences with each statement using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Often). The questionnaire is adapted from established anxiety assessments, such as the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1970). Nonetheless, the wording and focus have been adapted to the research context, specifically linking anxiety to compulsive buying behaviors and motivations.

### **Data Analysis**

Materialistic individuals prioritize possessions and associate them with happiness and social status (Richins & Dawson, 1992). This constant desire for "more" can fuel impulsive buying behavior. Self-control allows individuals to resist impulsive urges and make rational purchase decisions (Baumeister et al., 1998). When materialism fosters a strong desire for possessions, individuals with lower self-control may struggle to resist the urge to buy, leading to compulsive behavior. Materialistic individuals may experience anxiety when they cannot obtain desired possessions (Kasser & Sheldon, 2000). This anxiety can further fuel compulsive buying as a coping mechanism to alleviate the negative emotions (Frost & Steketee, 1997). By examining self-control and anxiety as potential mediators, we gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving compulsive buying behavior. Therefore, we proposed one mediation model to examine the effect between materialism and CBB.

**Serial mediator model 1 (SMM1)**, proposed to investigate the effect of materialism on CBB through Self-Control (M1) and Anxiety (M2)

The current study adopted correlation, regression, and mediation analysis using SPSS software. To avoid over-inflated indirect effects (Hayes, 2013), non-parametric bootstrapping analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) was used to test the mediation model of self-control and anxiety as sequential mediators of the relationship between materialism and CBB. Demographic characteristics (age, gender, education) were included as covariates. Using 5000 bootstrap samples, standard errors and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were obtained for the direct, indirect, and composite effects of each form of materialism on CBB. If 95% of the indirect effects of correction and acceleration of CI deviation (lower limit, LL and upper limit, UL) do not include 0, then this intermediate analysis is important (Preacher et al., 2007, Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The Hayes process macro in SPSS Model 6 was used in the Serial Mediation Model (SMM) for testing direct and indirect hypothesized relationships (Hayes, 2013). This method provides a more accurate estimate of indirect effects than the normal theory-based Sobel test and does not require a normal distribution of samples (Hayes, 2013). In addition, a separate regression analysis was also performed to investigate the relationship between demographic characteristics, materialism, and CBB.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

The single-source data used for the current cross-sectional study has some limitations, but it was still used. The estimated variance, skewness, and kurtosis all fell within acceptable ranges, i.e., skewness falls within 3- to +3 and kurtosis acceptable range between +10 to +10. (Brown, 2006). Socio-demographic variables were also included in the statistical analysis as a covariate.

#### **Correlation Analysis**

Table 2 showed correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. The result revealed several notable correlations among the variables under study. Gender exhibits significant positive correlations with

age ( $r=0.103$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), education ( $r=0.151$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and marital status ( $r=0.131$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that males in the sample tend to be older, have higher education levels, and are more likely to be married compared to females. Interestingly, gender has a negative correlation with materialism ( $r=-.086$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that females tend to be more materialistic than males in this sample. However, gender does not show significant correlations with family size, income, self-control, anxiety, or compulsive buying behavior.

Age emerges as a crucial factor, having strong positive correlations with education ( $r=0.645$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), marital status ( $r=0.805$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and income ( $r=0.407$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that older individuals in the sample are more educated, more likely to be married, and have higher incomes. Education, too, exhibits positive correlations with marital status, income, and self-control, indicating that higher education levels are associated with a greater likelihood of being married, earning higher incomes, and having better self-control.

Materialism, self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior (CBB) demonstrate intriguing interrelationships. Materialism has positive correlations with self-control ( $r=0.265$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), anxiety ( $r=0.196$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and CBB ( $r=0.219$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that more materialistic individuals tend to have lower self-control, higher anxiety levels, and engage in more compulsive buying behavior. Similarly, self-control has positive correlations with anxiety ( $r=0.223$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and CBB ( $r=-0.313$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), implying that individuals with lower self-control experience higher anxiety and exhibit more compulsive buying tendencies. Notably, anxiety and CBB ( $r=0.346$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) are positively correlated, indicating that individuals with higher anxiety levels are more likely to engage in compulsive buying behavior. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 will be accepted.

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### Serial Mediation Model

The serial mediation model (SMM) hypothesized a chain linking the two mediators (self-control and anxiety) with a particular direction flow. In other words, increased materialism leads to self-control, which exacerbates anxiety and thus increases the tendency of CBB (i.e., materialism->self-control->anxiety->CBB) represented in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1  
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The findings presented in Table 3 provides estimates of direct effects for the paths of serial mediation model (SMM) examining the relationships among materialism, self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior (CBB). It is important to note that the significance of these indirect and total effects is determined by the lower and upper limits of the confidence intervals (LL and UL), which do not include zero, indicating a statistically significant effect.

Materialism exerts a significant positive direct effect on self-control ( $\beta = 0.249$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.363$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 6.88$ ,  $LL\text{-}UL = 0.178 - 0.321$ ), indicating that higher levels of materialism are associated with higher levels of self-control. Additionally, materialism has a significant positive direct effect on anxiety ( $\beta = 0.168$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.045$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.69$ ,  $LL\text{-}UL = 0.078 - 0.251$ ) and CBB ( $\beta = 0.119$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.041$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.89$ ,  $LL\text{-}UL = 0.038 - 0.200$ ). These findings suggest that individuals with higher levels of materialism tend to experience greater anxiety and engage in more compulsive buying



behavior. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Self-control, in turn, has a significant positive direct effect on anxiety ( $\beta = -0.215, p < 0.01, SE = 0.048, t\text{-value} = -4.47, LL\text{-}UL = -0.309 - -0.120$ ) and CBB ( $\beta = -0.254, p < 0.01, SE = 0.043, t\text{-value} = -5.80, LL\text{-}UL = -0.340 - -0.168$ ). These results indicate that individuals with lower levels of self-control are more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety and lower level of self-control exhibit more susceptible for compulsive buying behavior (Baumeister, 2002; Vohs & Faber, 2007). Hence, hypothesis 3 is accepted.

Furthermore, anxiety has a significant positive direct effect on CBB ( $\beta = 0.262, p < 0.01, SE = 0.035, t\text{-value} = 7.35, LL\text{-}UL = 0.192 - 0.332$ ), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of anxiety are more prone to engaging in compulsive buying behavior, which may serve as a coping mechanism or a means of alleviating anxiety (Müller et al., 2015). Hence hypothesis 4 is accepted.

It is important to note that these direct effects are estimated while controlling for other paths of serial mediation model, providing a more robust understanding of the relationships among the variables under investigation. The significance of the direct effects is determined by the t-values and the confidence intervals (LL-UL), which indicate the precision of the estimates.

The data presented in Table 4 provides insights into the indirect and total effects of the serial mediation model (SMM) examining the relationships among materialism, self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior (CBB). The significant total indirect effect ( $IE_{\text{Total}} = 0.121, SE = 0.021, LL = 0.081, UL = 0.164$ ) of materialism on compulsive buying behavior, mediated through self-control and anxiety. This finding suggests that higher levels of materialism are associated with increased compulsive buying behavior, and this relationship is influenced by the mediation effects through self-control and anxiety. Therefore, hypothesis 5 is accepted.

Specifically, the analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of materialism on compulsive buying behavior through the path of self-control ( $\beta = -0.063, SE = 0.015, LL = 0.096, UL = 0.034$ ). This indicates that higher levels of materialism are associated with lower levels of self-control, which in turn contributes to increased compulsive buying behavior (Vohs & Faber, 2007).

Additionally, there is a significant indirect effect of materialism on compulsive buying behavior through the path of anxiety ( $\beta = 0.044, SE = 0.014, LL = 0.018, UL = 0.074$ ). This finding suggests that higher levels of materialism are associated with increased anxiety, which subsequently leads to more compulsive buying behavior, potentially as a coping mechanism or a means of alleviating anxiety (Müller et al., 2015).

Moreover, the SMM revealed a significant indirect effect of materialism on compulsive buying behavior through the sequential path of self-control and anxiety ( $\beta = 0.014, SE = 0.004, LL = 0.006, UL = 0.024$ ). This indicates that higher levels of materialism are associated with lower levels of self-control, which in turn contribute to increased anxiety, ultimately leading to more compulsive buying behavior.

These findings highlight the complex interplay among materialism, self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior, and provide insights into the potential mechanisms underlying these relationships. The serial mediation model suggests that materialism can influence compulsive buying behavior through multiple pathways, including the direct effect as well as indirect effects mediated by self-control and anxiety, both individually and sequentially.

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## Discussion

Current study aimed to assess the relationship between materialism and Compulsive buying behavior (CBB) through self-control and anxiety. Our study showed the important role of self-control and anxiety as mediator in Indian culture. The current study aimed to investigate the indirect effect of materialism on compulsive buying behavior, mediated by self-control and anxiety. The findings supported a serial mediation model, with materialism positively associated with compulsive buying behavior and both self-control and anxiety acting as significant mediators in the SMM model.

Our finding that materialism is positively associated with compulsive buying behavior aligns with previous studies (Kasser & Sheldon, 2000; Richins & Dawson, 1992; Dittmar, 2005; Müller et al., 2015). Individuals who prioritize materialistic values tend to desire more possessions and associate them with happiness and social status. This constant yearning for “more” can fuel compulsive buying behavior to fulfill unfulfilled needs or desires.

The significant positive direct effect of materialism on anxiety (0.168) suggests that individuals with higher levels of materialism tend to experience greater anxiety. This relationship may be attributed to the psychological stress and pressure associated with the constant pursuit of material possessions and the inability to attain desired material goals (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002).

Furthermore, the model revealed a significant negative direct effect of materialism on self-control (-0.249), implying that higher levels of materialism are associated with lower levels of self-control. This finding is consistent with the notion that materialistic values and the pursuit of material possessions can deplete an individual's self-regulatory resources, leading to reduced self-control (Vohs & Faber, 2007).

The results also demonstrate that self-control plays a crucial role in curbing compulsive buying tendencies associated with materialism. When individuals with high materialism experience a desire to acquire possessions, their ability to regulate emotions and resist impulsive urges (Baumeister et al., 1998) becomes critical. Our finding that lower self-control weakens the association between materialism and compulsive buying behavior suggests that interventions aimed at strengthening self-control could be beneficial. For instance, mindfulness training or cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) could equip individuals with strategies to manage emotions and resist impulsive buying urges.

Furthermore, the study highlights the role of anxiety as a mediator in the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying behavior. Individuals who score high on materialism might experience anxiety when they cannot obtain desired possessions (Kasser & Sheldon, 2000). This anxiety can serve as a trigger for compulsive buying behavior as a coping mechanism to alleviate the negative emotions (Frost & Steketee, 1997). The model also revealed a significant negative direct effect of self-control on anxiety (-0.215), indicating that individuals with lower levels of self-control are more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety. This finding aligns with the self-control theory, which posits that deficits in self-control can contribute to negative emotional states, such as anxiety (Tangney et al., 2004). Our finding that anxiety mediates the relationship between self-control and compulsive buying behavior suggests that addressing the underlying anxieties associated with materialism could be crucial. Therapy could help individuals develop healthier coping mechanisms to deal with negative emotions, reducing the urge to resort to compulsive buying.

Interestingly, the results demonstrated significant positive direct effects of self-control on compulsive buying behavior (0.254) and anxiety on compulsive buying behavior (0.262). These findings suggest that individuals with lower levels of self-control and higher levels of anxiety are more prone to engaging in compulsive buying behavior, potentially as a coping mechanism or a means of alleviating negative emotions (Müller et al., 2015; Faber & O'Guinn, 1992).

The indirect effects further elucidate the complex interplay among these variables. The model reveals significant mediating effects of materialism on compulsive buying behavior through self-control (0.063), anxiety (0.044), and the sequential path of self-control and anxiety (0.014). These findings suggest that materialism can influence compulsive buying behavior not only directly but also indirectly

through its impact on self-control and anxiety, both individually and sequentially.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study hold significant implications for understanding and potentially preventing compulsive buying behavior. By acknowledging the mediating roles of self-control and anxiety, we can move beyond solely targeting materialistic values. Interventions that incorporate strategies to strengthen self-control, manage anxiety, and develop healthier coping mechanisms could be more effective in curbing compulsive buying behavior.

The SMM model contributes to the existing theoretical understanding of compulsive buying behavior by integrating the roles of materialism, self-control, and anxiety within a unified framework. The serial mediation model provides a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms and pathways through which these variables interact and influence compulsive buying behavior.

The study highlights the importance of considering multiple mediating variables and their interrelationships when investigating compulsive buying behavior. Future research could explore additional mediators or moderators, such as social influences, coping strategies, or personality traits, to further refine the model and enhance our understanding of compulsive buying behavior.

The findings of this study have practical implications for developing targeted interventions and prevention strategies for compulsive buying behavior. By understanding the roles of materialism, self-control, and anxiety, interventions can be designed to address these underlying factors. For example, interventions could focus on promoting non-materialistic values, developing self-control skills, and providing strategies for managing anxiety and stress.

The study's results may inform the development of therapeutic approaches for individuals struggling with compulsive buying behavior. Clinicians and mental health professionals could incorporate techniques aimed at reducing materialistic tendencies, enhancing self-control, and addressing underlying anxiety issues as part of a comprehensive treatment plan.

Future research could explore additional factors that might influence compulsive buying behavior in the context of materialism. Social media use and exposure to materialistic portrayals could be further investigated as potential contributing factors. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into the causal relationships between materialism, self-control, anxiety, and compulsive buying behavior over time.

### **Limitations**

The current study has some limitations. First, the correlational design limits our ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. Future research could employ experimental designs to manipulate materialism or self-control to examine causal effects on compulsive buying behavior. Second, the study relies on self-reported measures, which can be susceptible to bias. Future studies could incorporate objective measures of compulsive buying behavior, such as tracking spending patterns, to strengthen the validity of the findings. The study was conducted on a specific sample of 639 participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or cultural contexts. The sample may not be representative of diverse socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds, potentially introducing biases in the results. The study employed a cross-sectional design, which means that data was collected at a single point in time. This design does not allow for the examination of causal relationships or the assessment of how the variables may change over time. A longitudinal or experimental design could provide stronger evidence for causality and temporal dynamics. The study relied on specific scales and measures to assess the variables of interest. While these scales were validated, they may not have captured the full complexity or nuances of the constructs being measured. Alternative or more comprehensive measures could potentially yield different results. The study focused on a non-clinical sample, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to individuals with clinically diagnosed compulsive buying disorder or other mental health conditions.

Additional research is needed to examine the applicability of the proposed model to clinical populations.

#### **4. Conclusion and future scope**

The present study represents a significant contribution to the understanding of compulsive buying behavior (CBB) by proposing and testing a serial mediation model that integrates the roles of materialism, self-control, and anxiety. The findings provide valuable insights into the complex interplay among these variables and their influence on CBB. The results demonstrate that materialism exerts both direct and indirect effects on CBB. Individuals with higher levels of materialism are more likely to engage in compulsive buying tendencies, potentially driven by the desire to acquire material possessions and the associated psychological and emotional benefits. Notably, materialism also impacts self-control and anxiety, which act as mediating variables in the model. From a practical perspective, the results offer valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and prevention strategies. By addressing materialistic values, promoting self-control skills, and providing strategies for managing anxiety and stress, interventions can tackle the underlying factors that contribute to compulsive buying behavior. Such interventions could be implemented in various settings, including clinical contexts, educational programs, and consumer education initiatives.

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