Interpersonal Sensitivity and Sex as Determinants of Compulsive Buying behaviour among Workers

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Abstract

This study investigated interpersonal sensitivity and sex as determinants of compulsive buying behaviour among workers. A total of 285 workers, 145(50.9%) males and 140(49.1%) females were randomly selected through systematic sampling techniques. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 55 years with a mean age of 32.77 and standard deviation of 7.59. 2 by 2 factorial design was adopted for the study while a two way analysis of variance was used for analyzing the two hypotheses. The first hypothesis of the study which stated that there will be a significant difference between workers who have high interpersonal sensitivity and workers who have low interpersonal sensitivity on their compulsive buying behaviour was rejected at f(1,281)=.360, p>.05 level of significance. The second hypothesis of the study which stated that there will be a significant difference between male and female workers on compulsive buying behavior was also rejected f(1,281)= .830, p>.05 level of significance. Hence, Findings were discussed and recommendations were also made.

Keywords: Compulsive buying, Interpersonal sensitivity and Sex.

Introduction

Nigeria has witnessed a lot of changes due to global competitions, modern technology, economic recession, unemployment and so on. These changes are seen even in organizations and families where there are excessive demand to acquire benefits, personal items and properties which are basically out of compulsion. This compulsion has led to divorce in families due to reckless, unimportant and selfish acquisition of properties by parents or either partner resulting in the neglect of basic responsibility. In most organizations, appointment of workers even at the management level have been terminated due to indulgent in some fraudulent activities to satisfy an uncontrollable impulse of compulsive buying.

McElroy, Keck, Pope, Smith & Strakowski [1] submitted that compulsive buying has been characterized in psychology as an irresistible urge to buy with some form of tension relief or gratification (usually temporary) following the purchased. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary.”To be compulsive is to be irresistible, compelling, or resulting from compulsion against one’s conscious wishes”. Compulsive buying is a “chronic, repetitive purchasing that becomes a primary response to negative events or feelings” [2]. This means that whenever individuals are unhappy or in a bad situation, they tend to go on a shopping binge. These individuals have uncontrollable urge to purchase [3]. It is hard for them to stop spending money even if they cannot afford to. Compulsive buyers overspend their money to fill internal emptiness and to make themselves feel more complete [4]. Research on compulsive buying behavior has demonstrated a strong relationship to perceived social status, associated with buying, materialism, self esteem and apparel product involvement [3].

Compulsive buying is a phenomenon with serious societal and personal consequences. Researchers in consumer behavior have been exploring this phenomenon in an effort to describe and identify it’s antecedents as clearly as possible. Compulsive buying behavior is characterized by undue or uncontrollable urge to shop and spend money. According to Edward [5], compulsive buying behavior occurs when a consumer experiences powerful and uncontrollable urge to shop and purchase. Some researchers consider compulsive buying behavior to be a dichotomous behavior [6]
meaning that individuals can be classified as either compulsive or non-compulsive.

However, research by Edward [5] also indicates that compulsive buying just like other consumer behavior occurs over time. In other words, consumers experience no compulsive consumption, some compulsive consumption tendencies or chronic levels of this behavior. The act of buying may temporarily elevate the mood and self-esteem of compulsive buyers; however, it is followed by feelings of shame and depression. Consumers especially workers may compulsively buy products to match their subjective perceptions of themselves with a socially desirable or required appearances as a self-defining goal [7]. A good number of people experience compulsive behaviors like shopping, drug abuse, eating, gambling and variety of other obsessive compulsiveness [7]. A compulsive person is trapped in a pattern of repetitive and senseless thinking which is quite difficult for him or her to overcome. The personality disorder like anxiety and substance use are common in compulsive buying [8]. Most workers are compulsive buyers because it is a way the person overcomes feelings of depression, loneliness and anxiety. Workers are also compulsive buyers because they want to have a sense of belonging.

In a bid to have a clearer view, attempts have been made by researchers to identify the root causes of compulsive buying. However, the antecedents or determinants of compulsive buying behavior are yet to be well established [9]. To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, adequate research has not been conducted especially in the area of identifying the psychological antecedents of compulsive buying behavior, most especially as it affects the internal disposition of Nigerian workers. Hence, in reaction to this research gap, the researchers viewed the need for a greater research attention on identifying the impact interpersonal sensitivity and sex has on compulsive buying behavior among Nigerian workers. Interpersonal Sensitivity

A lot factors like self-efficacy, obsessive compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, age and anxiety are likely to determine worker’s compulsive behavior. Among these factors that can predispose one to compulsive buying is interpersonal sensitivity. Interpersonal sensitivity is the ability to accurately assess others abilities, states and traits from non-verbal cues. Interpersonal sensitivity is the ability to assess another’s states and traits correctly [10]. Schmid & Ickes [11] defined interpersonal sensitivity as having the accurate assessment of others. Interpersonal sensitivity often conceptualized as “ability” is central to adaptive social functioning [12]. Research has shown that people are able to correctly infer other people’s emotions, motives and thoughts [13]. Interpersonal sensitive individuals are often compulsive buyers. Workers who are very sensitive tend to hide their compulsive nature to avoid being criticized or mocked. Compulsive buyers tend to be ashamed of their spending habit but at the same time cannot stop because it is either a habit or an addiction. Interpersonal sensitivity is also related to social skills.

Individuals who are interpersonally sensitive tend to hide their compulsive buying behavior to avoid being mocked or criticized. Compulsive buyers realize that their behavior can cause interpersonal problems, social problems which might in turn make people less sensitive to those behaviors that might negatively affect others. Workers who are compulsive in nature are usually sensitive to their spending habit. This in turn causes emotional breakdown [14]. Interpersonal sensitive individuals who are pathological compulsive buyers usually have mood swings. Most times there is this ungratified urge to go out and buy, keep buying till they are satisfied and other times they worry about their spending habit and how to remedy it. They often become conscious of what people say about them. Although not all compulsive buyers are interpersonally sensitive but quite a number of them are. McElroy [1] reported that 17 of 18 compulsive buyers studied had mood disorder. Research also showed that compulsive buyers themselves have frequently had a history of substance abuse, mood disorder and anxiety disorder [1, 14, 15].

Sex

Another factor that can affect one’s compulsive buying behavior is sex. Sex in this context can be seen as biological state of being male or female. In recent consumer research, there is an ongoing debate about relationship between compulsive buying and sex. Previous studies have found that women suffer from compulsive buying more than men [8, 16]. Shopping is described as a gendered activity, part of “women’s work” in their roles as housewives [7, 17]. Women are taught that shopping is “pleasurable” [18] They use shopping as a form of “self-expression” to enhance their self-image because society places importance on outward appearance [7, 19]. Krueger [4] suggests that “women who shop compulsively are driven to

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Ogueb Tochukwu Matthew et.al. | August 2014 | Vol.2 | Issue 8|01-05
attempt to restore a depleted self” (the empty self), that is they seek validation of self-worth through consumption. Based on these obvious impacts of compulsive buying, this study, in attempting to identify the roles of interpersonal sensitivity and sex as determinants of compulsive buying behavior among workers in Nigeria will answer the following questions:

- Will there be any significant difference between workers who are high on interpersonal sensitivity and workers who are low on interpersonal sensitivity on their compulsive buying behavior?

- Will there be any significant difference between male and female workers on their compulsive buying behavior?

In answering these questions, the study will test the following alternate hypotheses:

- There will be a significant difference between workers who are high on interpersonal sensitivity and workers who are low on interpersonal sensitivity on their compulsive buying behavior.

- There will be a significant difference between male and female workers on compulsive buying behavior.

**Methods**

**Participants**

The participants were two hundred and eighty five (285) workers drawn from five ministries in Anambra State, Nigeria. They were randomly selected through systematic sampling techniques. 145(50.9%) were males while 140(49.1%) were females, their age ranged from 21 to 55 with a mean age of 32.77 and standard deviation of 7.59.

**Instruments**

The study made use of a 23-item questionnaire on interpersonal sensitivity developed by Omoluabi [20] which is anchored on a 4 point likert response pattern. Omoluabi obtained a concurrent validity of the instrument. The other instrument used in this study is 19-item questionnaire on compulsive buying behaviour by Edwards [5] anchored on a 5 point likert response format. For the purpose of the present study, the researchers conducted a pilot study to determine the internal consistency of the scale for compulsive buying and interpersonal sensitivity and obtained .87 and .82 respectively. This indicated that the instruments have high internal consistency.

**Procedure**

The researchers went to the ministries and met the heads of each department and introduced themselves as researchers. 300 copies of the questionnaire were administered while 285 were properly filled and returned. Hence was used for the present study.

**Design and Statistics**

The study adopted a 2 (high & low) x 2 (male & female) factorial design. Accordingly, a two way analysis of variance was used for the analyses.

**Results**

**Table 1: Summary table of means and standard deviation of interpersonal sensitivity and sex with respect to compulsive buying behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal sensitivity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>53.44</td>
<td>16.76</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>51.78</td>
<td>14.72</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52.49</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52.72</td>
<td>15.55</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>52.60</td>
<td>15.76</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: summary table of two-way analysis of variance on interpersonal sensitivity and sex as determinants of compulsive buying behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>111 sum of squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal sensitivity</td>
<td>209.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>209.64</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>11.534</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal sensitivity x sex</td>
<td>210.95</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>210.95</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>70093.89</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>249.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>859142.00</td>
<td>285</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the above table 2, the first hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant difference between high and low interpersonal sensitivity on compulsive buying behaviour was rejected F(1,281)=.84 at p>.05.

The second hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant difference between male and female workers on compulsive buying behavior was also rejected F(1,281)=.05 at p>.05. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between interpersonal sensitivity and sex on compulsive buying behavior of workers.
Discussion
In the study, the first hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant difference between workers interpersonal sensitivity on compulsive buying behaviour was rejected. This indicated that interpersonal sensitivity is not one of the contributing factors to compulsive buying behaviour. The result showed no significant difference on high and low interpersonal sensitivity on compulsive buying behaviour. The findings is not in consonance with the findings of McElroy et.al [1] who found that compulsive buying may cause significant psychological, interpersonal and financial difficulties which may also occur with other psychiatric disorders.

Also the second hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant difference between male and female workers on compulsive buying behaviour was rejected. Female workers did not differ significantly from male workers on compulsive buying behaviour. This indicated that sex is not a predictor on compulsive buying behaviour. The findings negate the findings of O'Guinn & Faber [2] which provided support that more women than men suffer from compulsive buying disorder. The findings also did not support the work of Black [21,22] who reported that gender difference in compulsive buying research could be artifactual, as more women acknowledge that they enjoy shopping as compared to men.

References

Previous authors such as Mc Elroy, O’Guinn and Faber reported that females are more of compulsive buyers than the males. They stated that females are usually “impulsive” in their buying behaviour.

Recommendations
Because of the overwhelming nature of compulsive buying behavior, the researchers suggest that further studies should be conducted with greater number of participants in order to make for more inferences on the subject of compulsive buying and its antecedents.

Limitations of the Study
The researchers found it difficult to get enough participants. Even when the participants were obtained they did not readily respond to the construct properly. More so, there was not enough literature to widen the scope of the research. Finally, the population sample was not sufficient to confidently generalize the findings.

Conclusion
Based on the research findings, the researchers conclude that interpersonal sensitivity is not a determinant of compulsive buying behaviour. The researchers also conclude that sex significantly does not determine a worker’s attitude to compulsive buying.


