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DRESS TO IMPRESS: EXPLORING HOW FASHION CONCIOUSNESS, NARCISSISM AND COMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR CONNECT IN GENERATION Y

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Abstract

The current study investigated the relationships among fashion consciousness, narcissism, and compulsive buying behaviors within Generation Y, with a focus on gender differences. Employing data from 300 participants, the study utilized three psychological instruments: the Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS), the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS), and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). Results unveiled significant positive correlations between fashion consciousness and compulsive buying, as well as between compulsive buying and narcissistic traits. Surprisingly, Generation Y females scored higher in both fashion consciousness and compulsive buying, challenging gender stereotypes, while no significant gender difference were observed in narcissism. The study not only contributed to consumer behavior literature but also emphasizes the need for significant strategies in marketing and interventions. Further research is recommended to shed light on the underlying mechanisms and developmental trajectories of these traits within Generation Y.

Keywords: Fashion Consciousness, Narcissism, Compulsive Buying Behavior, Generation Y, consumer behavior.

Introduction

In the vibrant landscape of today's Generation Y, fashion isn't merely about clothing (Gwozdz et al., 2013); it's a language of expression (Parreira, 2022), a mirror reflecting self-perception (Choi, 2020), and a pathway to the alluring world of consumerism (Babu et al., 2020). As young individuals navigate the realms of style and self-image, the complex interplay of these factors unfolds, revealing insights into their purchasing decisions and the psychological underpinnings that drive the desire for the latest trends (Kaur & Anand, 2021; Lee, Tee & Dada, 2022). This study seeks to unravel the intricate web of connections between fashion consciousness, narcissism, and compulsive buying behavior within the context of the contemporary youth. As individuals navigate the realms of style and self-image, the interplay of these factors unveils profound insights into their purchasing decisions and the psychological dynamics that fuel the desire for the latest trends.

In the realm of contemporary culture, understanding fashion consciousness is imperative as it intricately intersects with the self-perception and behaviors of Generation Y. Defined by a keen interest in the latest trends and a willingness to invest in fashionable products, fashion consciousness influences consumers who actively seek to stay abreast of evolving styles (Gula, Shahzada & Khan, 2014). This engagement with fashion involves a constant pursuit of luxury, substantial financial commitment, and heightened sensitivity towards physical appearance (Wan et al., 2001). Adopting the latest styles becomes a means for individuals to assert themselves within social networks, preserving their status and uniqueness (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012). Studies in the Pakistani context reveal that the urban youth's changing lifestyles underscore the increasing influence of fashion consciousness, leading to a more consumerist mindset (Zafar, 2013).

The pervasive nature of narcissism, conceptualized as a non-pathological individual trait, has garnered significant attention in contemporary society, prompting discussions about its prevalence and impact (Remes, 2016). Rooted in Greek mythology, the term "narcissism" has evolved into a multifaceted personality trait characterized by an unrealistic self-view, a strong desire for admiration, and a lack of empathy (Sedikides, Gregg, Cisek, & Hart, 2007). Scholars, such as Sedikides and Campbell, emphasize the continuum of normal narcissism, asserting its

rise to prominence in diverse societies (Pedersen, 2014). The current generation, often described as Generation Y, exhibits heightened levels of narcissistic traits, as evidenced by a growing body of literature highlighting their desires for uniqueness, attention, and admiration (Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Barry & Lee-Rowland, 2015).

Generation Y, or Millennials, stands out as a compelling force in the consumer landscape, marked by remarkable purchasing power and a distinct inclination towards compulsive buying behavior. With their heightened fashion consciousness, this cohort, comprising individuals in their 20s and 30s, emerges as a significant consumer group known for spending 25 to 40 percent more than the average consumer. Extensive research underscores their materialistic tendencies and fashion-oriented spending patterns (Valentine & Powers, 2014; Tyler, 2008). Millennials are not only recognized as sophisticated shoppers but also exhibit a unique trait of compulsive buying, characterized by impulsive and excessive purchasing behaviors (Rosenburg, 2008). This behavior is particularly pronounced in their penchant for fashion goods and personal services, with studies suggesting that two-thirds of their spending revolves around clothing and fashion-related accessories (Bakewell et al., 2006; Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). The interplay of narcissism further amplifies this compulsive buying tendency, as narcissistic traits have been linked to a proclivity for luxury brands and a desire to showcase status through conspicuous consumption (Durvasula & Lysonski, 2010; Sedikides, Cisek & Hart, 2011). In essence, the Generation Y's fashion-conscious and narcissistic inclinations intertwine to shape a distinctive and compelling profile characterized by compulsive buying behavior.

Numerous studies contribute valuable insights into the realm of compulsive buying behavior, shedding light on various factors that influence this phenomenon among different populations. For example, Moon, Faheem, and Farooq (2022) delve into the connection between self-conceptual traits and compulsive buying behavior, emphasizing the role of personal identity in driving consumer choices. Otero-López, Santiago, and Castro (2021) extend the exploration to university students, examining the impact of life aspirations and generativity on compulsive buying. Also, Islam et al. (2017) focus on young adults, investigating the determinants of compulsive buying with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of materialism. Gohar et al. (2023) specifically targets university students, examining the antecedents of obsessive-compulsive buying behavior in the apparel sector, highlighting the mediating role of brand

attachment. Despite the comprehensive nature of these studies, it is noteworthy that none of them specifically address the crucial dimensions of fashion consciousness, narcissism, and compulsive buying behavior among the current generation Y. Thus, there is a notable gap in the existing literature that warrants further exploration into the intricate interplay between these aspects within the context of contemporary consumer behavior.

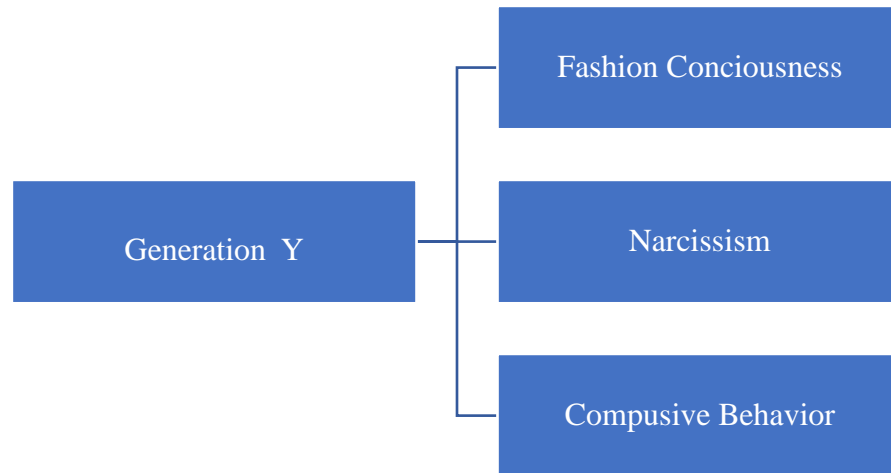


Figure 1. Unraveling the Psyche of Generation Y: Fashion Consciousness, Narcissism, and Compulsive Buying Behavior

Objectives

The specific objectives include:

- Investigate the potential correlations between compulsive buying, narcissism, and fashion consciousness.
- Examine gender-based differences among Generation Y individuals concerning their levels of compulsive buying, narcissism, and fashion consciousness.

Hypotheses

- Significant positive correlations existed among compulsive buying, narcissism, and fashion consciousness.
- Generation Y females were expected to demonstrate higher scores in narcissism, fashion consciousness, and compulsive buying behavior compared to Generation Y males.

Methodology

Research Design

A cross-sectional and correlational research was used for the current study.

Population

The population of the present study was all Y-Generation individuals from Peshawar region, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Sample

300 individuals (50% male and 50% female) using purposive sampling were chosen from Peshawar randomly with date of birth between 1980 to 2000.

Inclusion and exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: Participants born between 1980 to 2000 with matriculation were included.

Exclusion Criteria: Participants lacking formal education, professional models, those born outside the years 1980 to 2000, and clinically diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder or Compulsive Buying Disorder were excluded.

Instruments

Instruments used were:

Generation Y: In measuring Generation Y, the study utilized a Demographic Information Sheet, considering individuals born between 1980 and 2000.

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16): Narcissism within this cohort was assessed using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) by Ames, Rose, and Anderson (2006), comprising 16 items with a reliability of $\alpha = .72$, with 0= Non-Narcissism and 1= Narcissism.

Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS-22): Fashion consciousness was gauged through the Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS) modified by Naim and Khan (2012), consisting of 22 items and demonstrating reliability between .724 and .870. The scale's scoring involved computing mean scores, with a cutoff at 3.0 to distinguish between high and low fashion consciousness ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Compulsive Buying Behavior (CSB-13): The study also employed the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS) developed by Valence, D'Astous, and Fortier (1988) to measure buying addiction, featuring 13 items with a reliability range of $\alpha = .78-.92$ with score ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scoring method involved totaling scores ranging from 0 to 42.2, with a cutoff at 42.2 indicating compulsive buying symptoms. All three scales proved effective, reliable, and valid for assessing the specified traits in the Generation Y cohort.

Procedure

To conduct this correlational study, 300 participants from Generation Y were surveyed in Peshawar, Pakistan. Subjects were approached at various locations such as institutions, homes, hostels, and workplaces. After obtaining informed consent and explaining the research purpose, data collection commenced. Three standardized self-report instruments were used to collect primary data in Peshawar. Questionnaires were distributed among Generation Y respondents, evenly across gender groups. Participants expressed interest and curiosity towards the questionnaires, taking 10-15 minutes to complete. Non-probability purposive sampling ensured representation of the Universe. The researcher introduced herself, explained the study's purpose, and verbally instructed participants on questionnaire completion. Confidentiality was emphasized, assuring respondents that the information provided would remain confidential for research purposes only. Participants were thanked for their contribution, and questionnaires were collected with a good response rate. Upon collecting 300 completed questionnaires, data were compiled and arranged for statistical analysis. An appropriate Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)-23 was used to analyze the data, and the reliability of research instruments was tested.

Results

This section summarizes the results of hypothesis testing and statistical analysis from the empirical study. Utilizing SPSS, reliability statistics, correlation, and t-tests were applied to examine relationships between compulsive buying behavior, narcissism, and fashion consciousness, as well as gender differences in Generation Y.

Table 1 Summary of Intercorrelations, Means and Standard Deviations for Scores on the Fashion Consciousness Scale, Compulsive Buying Scale and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (n=300)

Scales	M	SD	FCS	CBS	NPI
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FCS	80.59	15.11	-		
CBS	43.15	9.79	0.56**	-	
NPI	5.85	2.89	0.27**	0.22**	-

** $p < 0.01$, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note. FCS = Fashion Consciousness Scale; CBS=Compulsive buying Scale; NPI= Narcissistic Personality Inventory.

Table 1 presents a summary of intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations for scores on three psychological scales: the Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS), the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS), and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). The sample size for this study is 300 individuals.

The mean score for the Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS) is 80.59, with a standard deviation of 15.11. In terms of intercorrelations, the FCS shows a significant positive correlation with the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS) at the 0.01 level (two-tailed), indicated by the correlation coefficient of 0.56. This suggests that individuals who score higher on the Fashion Consciousness Scale are also more likely to exhibit compulsive buying tendencies.

Moving on to the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS), the mean score is 43.15, and the standard deviation is 9.79. Apart from the correlation with the FCS, the CBS also exhibits a significant positive correlation with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) at the 0.01 level, with a correlation coefficient of 0.22. This implies that individuals with higher scores on the CBS are more likely to possess narcissistic personality traits.

Finally, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) has a mean score of 5.85 and a standard deviation of 2.89. The NPI does not show a significant correlation with the Fashion Consciousness Scale, but it does exhibit a significant positive correlation with the Compulsive Buying Scale at the 0.01 level, with a correlation coefficient of 0.27. This suggests a relationship between narcissistic personality traits and compulsive buying tendencies.

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation and *t*-values showing differences between male and female groups on Fashion Consciousness Scale Compulsive Buying Scale and Narcissistic Personality Inventory ($N=300$)

Scales	Male (n=150)		Female (n=150)		t (298)	P	95% CI		Cohen's D
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
	FCS	75.91	14.35	85.26			14.43	5.62	
CBS	40.66	9.32	45.64	9.65	4.53	0.001	-7.13	-2.81	-0.52
NPI	5.77	2.85	5.93	2.94	0.478	0.633	-.819	.499	-0.05

df=298, p<.0001

Note. FCS = Fashion Consciousness Scale; CBS=Compulsive buying Scale; NPI= Narcissistic Personality Inventory.

The table presents a comparison between male and female groups comprising 300 participants in total, focusing on three psychological constructs: Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS), Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS), and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). The means (M), standard deviations (SD), t-values, and other statistical indices are reported for each scale, along with 95% confidence intervals (CI) and Cohen's D effect size.

For the Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS), the mean score for females (M=85.26, SD=14.43) is significantly higher than that for males (M=75.91, SD=14.35). The t-value of 5.62 is highly significant (p<.001), indicating a substantial difference between the two groups. The effect size (Cohen's D) is -0.64, suggesting a moderate effect with females scoring higher on fashion consciousness.

Similarly, on the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS), females (M=45.64, SD=9.65) score significantly higher than males (M=40.66, SD=9.32), as evidenced by a t-value of 4.53 (p<.001) and a Cohen's D of -0.52, signifying a moderate effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference does not include zero, further supporting the significance of this difference.

On the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), the mean score for females (M=5.93, SD=2.94) is also significantly higher than that for males (M=5.77, SD=2.85), with a t-value of 0.478 (p=0.633). However, the effect size is minimal (Cohen's D = -0.05), suggesting a negligible practical difference between the two groups in narcissistic personality traits.

Discussion

This chapter discusses findings from a study exploring relationships and gender differences in Compulsive Buying Behavior, Narcissism, and Fashion Consciousness among Generation Y in Peshawar, Pakistan. Using questionnaires from 300 participants, results indicated positive correlations among variables. Females scored significantly higher in compulsive buying and fashion consciousness, but no gender difference was found in narcissism. Alpha reliability coefficients confirmed scale suitability. Statistical analyses, including t-tests and correlations, supported study hypotheses. The findings align with proposed literature, reinforcing the study's empirical investigation.

The results of this study provide support for the hypothesis suggesting significant positive correlations among compulsive buying, narcissism, and fashion consciousness. The intercorrelations between the three psychological constructs—Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS), Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS), and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI)—reveal meaningful associations. Specifically, the positive correlation between FCS and CBS suggests that individuals with a higher inclination towards fashion consciousness are more likely to exhibit compulsive buying tendencies. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the link between fashion interest and compulsive buying behaviors (Lee, 2009; Lambert, 2019).

Moreover, the positive correlation between CBS and NPI indicates that individuals with higher scores on the Compulsive Buying Scale are more likely to possess narcissistic personality traits. This finding is consistent with existing literature that has linked narcissism with compulsive buying tendencies, emphasizing the role of self-related motives and a desire for uniqueness in driving excessive purchases (Harnish & Bridges, 2015; Cunningham & Darke, 2010). Overall, these results contribute to the understanding of the complex interplay between fashion consciousness, narcissism, and compulsive buying behaviors among Generation Y individuals.

The second hypothesis posited that Generation Y females would demonstrate higher scores in narcissism, fashion consciousness, and compulsive buying behavior compared to Generation Y males. The data reveal significant gender differences in both fashion consciousness and compulsive buying behavior. Generation Y females scored significantly higher on the

Fashion Consciousness Scale (FCS) and the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS) compared to their male counterparts. These findings resonate with existing literature suggesting that females tend to be more fashion-conscious and engaged in compulsive buying behaviors (Cho, Gupta & Kim, 2015; Maraz, Griffiths & Demetrovics, 2016). The higher scores among females in fashion consciousness and compulsive buying align with societal expectations and the stereotype of females being more inclined towards shopping and fashion-related activities.

Surprisingly, no significant gender difference was found in narcissistic personality traits. This contradicts some previous studies that suggested gender variations in narcissism, with women exhibiting higher levels (Ching et al., 2016; Maraz, Griffiths & Demetrovics, 2016). However, this finding is in line with recent research indicating no significant gender differences in narcissism (Fernie et al., 2016; Malik & Khan, 2015). The negligible gender difference in narcissism observed in this study challenges traditional stereotypes and emphasizes the need for a more nuanced understanding of gender variations in personality traits.

Implications and Future Research

Understanding the intricate relationships between fashion consciousness, narcissism, and compulsive buying behaviors among Generation Y individuals holds practical implications for marketers, retailers, and psychologists. Marketers can tailor their strategies to target the specific preferences and tendencies of this demographic, considering the observed gender differences. Moreover, interventions aimed at addressing compulsive buying tendencies may benefit from recognizing the role of fashion consciousness and narcissism in influencing behavior.

Future research should delve deeper into the mechanisms driving the observed correlations and gender differences. Exploring the role of social media, peer influence, and cultural factors in shaping fashion consciousness and compulsive buying behaviors can provide a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, longitudinal studies can shed light on the developmental trajectories of these traits within Generation Y over time.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the existing body of literature by examining the interconnections among fashion consciousness, narcissism, and compulsive buying behaviors

within Generation Y, with a focus on gender differences. The results highlight the complex dynamics at play and challenge traditional gender stereotypes. As Generation Y continues to shape consumer trends, understanding their psychological characteristics becomes crucial for marketers and researchers alike.

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