

A Study to Assess the Correlation Between Compulsive Buying Behavior and Psychological Distress Among Sri Manakula Vinayagar Nursing College Students, Puducherry

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Abstract

Background: Compulsive buying behavior (CBB) is a psychological condition involving excessive, repetitive purchasing driven by emotional needs. College students are increasingly vulnerable due to digital exposure and social influences. Psychological distress, including anxiety and depression, is also prevalent in this population. Understanding the link between CBB and distress is vital for developing effective mental health interventions.

Methods: A quantitative correlational research design was used to assess 200 nursing students at Sri Manakula Vinayagar Nursing College, Puducherry. Participants were selected via simple random sampling. Data collection utilized demographic tools, the Compulsive Buying Behavior Scale (CBBS), and the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). Analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and chi-square tests.

Results: Findings indicated that 62.5% of students had low CBB levels, 35.5% moderate, and 2% high. Regarding psychological distress, 68% reported low, 14.5% moderate, 12.5% high, and 5% very high levels. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.766, p < 0.01$) was identified, showing that increased distress is associated with higher buying tendencies. CBB significantly associated with age, gender, and daily digital usage, while distress associated with religion, academic performance, and online usage frequency.

Conclusion: Compulsive buying is significantly linked to psychological distress among nursing students. Higher distress levels increase the likelihood of maladaptive buying patterns. Early identification, awareness programs, and counseling are essential to promote healthy coping and protect students' mental health and academic performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Compulsive buying behavior (CBB), or oniomania, is a psychological condition marked by an uncontrollable urge to purchase goods, driven by emotional needs rather than utility. While purchasing offers temporary gratification, it is often followed by guilt, regret, and financial strain. This phenomenon has gained significant attention among college students due to its rising prevalence and impact on mental health. In the student population, CBB is fueled by academic stress, peer pressure, and easy access to e-commerce. The digital expansion of social media and influencer promotions often creates a desire to maintain a specific social image, leading to excessive, unjustified spending. Psychologically, students may use shopping as a coping mechanism for anxiety related to academic performance or future uncertainties. Low self-esteem and the need for social acceptance further drive these habitual behaviors, which eventually become difficult to control. The consequences of CBB extend beyond finances, negatively affecting academic focus and increasing emotional dissatisfaction. This is closely linked to psychological distress—a state of emotional suffering characterized by anxiety, depression, and helplessness. Students face various stressors, including financial constraints and adjustment to new environments, which can overwhelm their coping abilities. Factors such as gender, academic performance, and frequent digital usage influence these vulnerabilities. Nursing students are particularly at risk due to the demanding nature of their clinical and academic training. Consequently, assessing the correlation between these variables is crucial for developing targeted mental health interventions. This study aims to assess the correlation between compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress among students at Sri Manakula Vinayagar Nursing College, Puducherry, to enhance student well-being and prevent maladaptive behaviors.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Compulsive buying behavior (CBB) and psychological distress are significant global concerns, with nearly 10–15% of college students exhibiting CBB and 20–30% suffering from distress. In India, approximately 12% of university students demonstrate compulsive buying patterns, fueled by social media and digital marketing. Furthermore, nearly 30% of Indian students experience moderate to severe psychological distress, with high prevalence noted in Tamil Nadu. Despite these trends, research exploring the link between CBB and mental health among nursing students remains limited. Nursing students face unique stressors, including rigorous academic demands and emotional challenges in clinical practice, which may increase their reliance on maladaptive coping mechanisms like compulsive purchasing. Understanding the correlation between these variables is vital for the early identification of at-risk individuals. Such insights facilitate the development of targeted interventions, including counseling and stress management programs, to promote healthy coping strategies. Therefore, this study assesses the relationship between CBB and psychological distress at Sri ManakulaVinayagar Nursing College to provide evidence-based insights for improving student well-being and promoting responsible behavioral practices

Statement of the problem

A STUDY TO ASSESS THE CORRELATION BETWEEN COMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG SRI MANAKULA VINAYAGAR NURSING COLLEGE STUDENTS AT PUDUCHERRY.

Objectives:

1. To assess compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress among college students.
2. To correlate the compulsive buying behavior with psychological distress among college students.
3. To associate the compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress among college students with selected demographic variables.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a quantitative research approach with a correlational research design to assess the relationship between compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress among nursing students. The study was conducted at Sri ManakulaVinayagar Nursing College, Puducherry. The target population included all undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students, and a sample size of 200 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique. The inclusion criteria comprised students who were willing to participate and available during the data collection period. Students who were not willing to participate were excluded from the study. Data were collected using a structured demographic proforma, the Compulsive Buying Behavior Scale (CBBS), and the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the concerned authorities, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality of the data was strictly maintained. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage, and inferential statistics including Pearson's correlation and chi-square tests to determine relationships and associations between variables.

Description of Data collection instruments:

Section A: Demographic variables

The demographic variables consist of age, gender, educational qualification, religion, family income, academic performance, area of residence, type of gadgets used, frequency of online, number of siblings, hours spent on digital platforms daily, parents' education, parents' occupation and source of information.

Section B: COMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR SCALE (CBBS)

The Compulsive Buying Behavior Scale (CBBS) particularly focused on identifying compulsive buying tendencies among individuals. This scale is effective, comprising only seven statements. It contains 7 questions with five responses where 1 means 'Strongly Agree' and 5 means 'Strongly Disagree'.

Table1: Scoring interpretation for Compulsive Buying Behavior Scale

S.NO	LEVEL	SCORE RANGES
1.	Low	7-14
2.	Moderate	15-27
3.	High	25-35

Section B: KESSLER PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS SCALE (K10)

The K10 is designed to measure non-specific psychological distress, which includes symptoms of anxiety and depression. It consists of 10 questions that ask respondents about their feelings over the past four weeks.

Table 2: Scoring interpretation for Kessler Psychological Distress Scale

S.NO	LEVEL	SCORE RANGES
1.	Low or no distress	10-15
2.	Moderate distress	16-21
3.	High distress	22-29
4	Very high distress	30-50

Data collection procedure

After obtaining formal permission, the researcher proceeded with data collection. Informed consent was obtained from college students who are studying in Sri ManakulaVinayagar Nursing College, Puducherry who fulfill inclusion criteria. The sample consists of 200 college students which was selected using a convenient sampling technique. Demographic data was collected. Compulsive buying behaviour was assessed by Compulsive buying behaviour scale. **Psychological stress was assessed by Kessler psychological distress scale** the investigator assured the study participants that the study information will be kept confidential.

Plan for data analysis

The collected data were coded and analyzed by using descriptive and Inferential Statistics. The analysis of data was done by the following methods.

Descriptive statistics

1. Demographic variable of college students was analyzed by using frequency and percentage distribution.
2. Assessment of Compulsive buying behaviour and psychological stress among college students was analyzed by using frequency and percentage distribution.

Inferential statistics

1. **Chi – square test** was used to find out the association between Compulsive buying behaviour and psychological stress among college students with selected demographic variables.
2. **Pearson’s correlation analysis** was used to find out the correlation between Compulsive buying behaviour and psychological stress among college students.

IV. RESULT

In analysis Most participants (67%) were aged 17–20 years, followed by 29.5% aged 21–23. Only 3% were in the 24–26 age group, and 0.5% were 27–30 years old.

The majority were female (77%), while 23% were male, with no transgender participants. Most students (95.5%) were pursuing B.Sc. Nursing, with small proportions in M.Sc. (2%) and P.B.B.Sc. (2.5%). Regarding religion, 89% were Hindu, followed by 8% Christians, 2.5% Muslims, and 0.5% others.

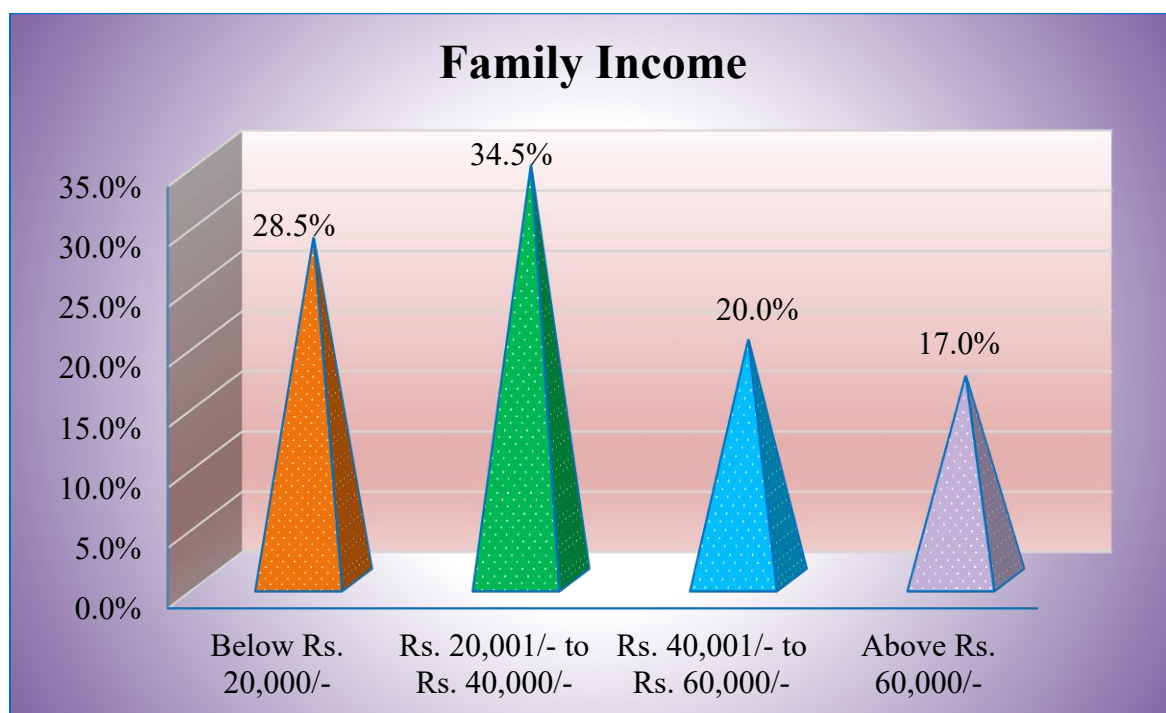


Figure 1: Percentage wise distribution of the college students according to the family income.

When analyzing family income, 34.5% of the students reported a monthly income between 20,001 and 40,000, while 28.5% belonged to families earning below 20,000. Furthermore, 20% of the students had a family income between ₹40,001 and ₹60,000, and 17% reported a monthly income above ₹60,000.

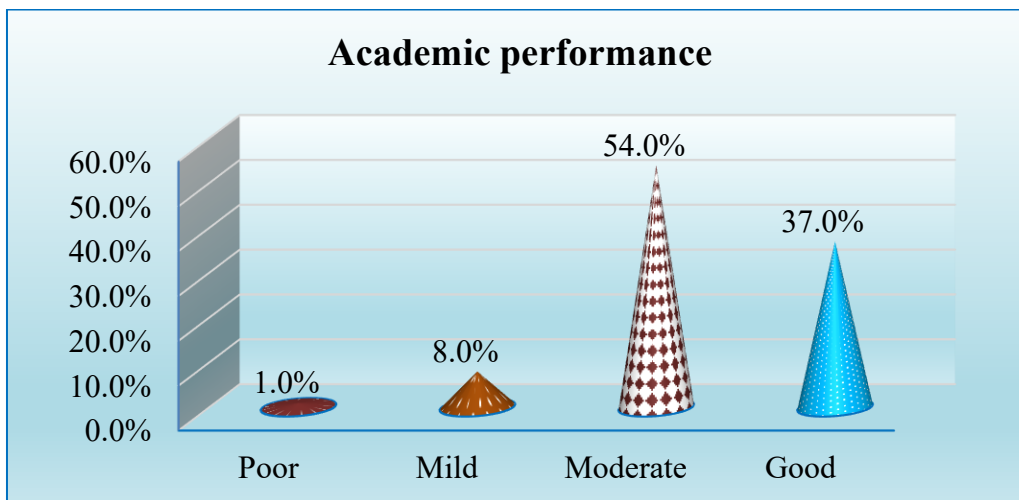


Figure 2: Percentage wise distribution of the college students according to the academic performance.

Regarding academic performance, more than half of the students (54%) had moderate academic performance, 37% were in the good category, 8% were mild, and 1% were poor performers.

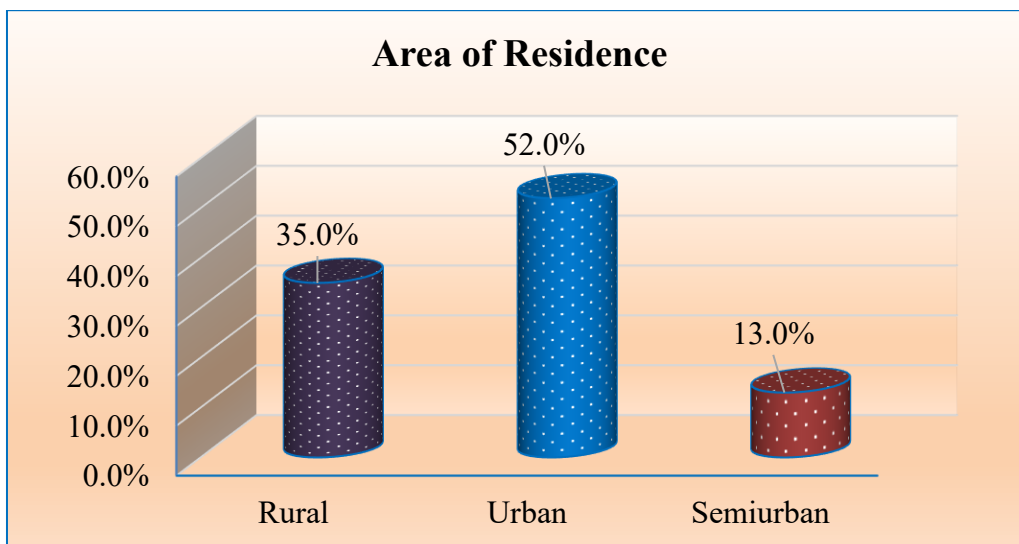


Figure 3: Percentage wise distribution of the college students according to the area of residence.

In terms of residential area, 52% of the participants resided in urban regions, 35% in rural areas, and 13% in semi-urban regions.

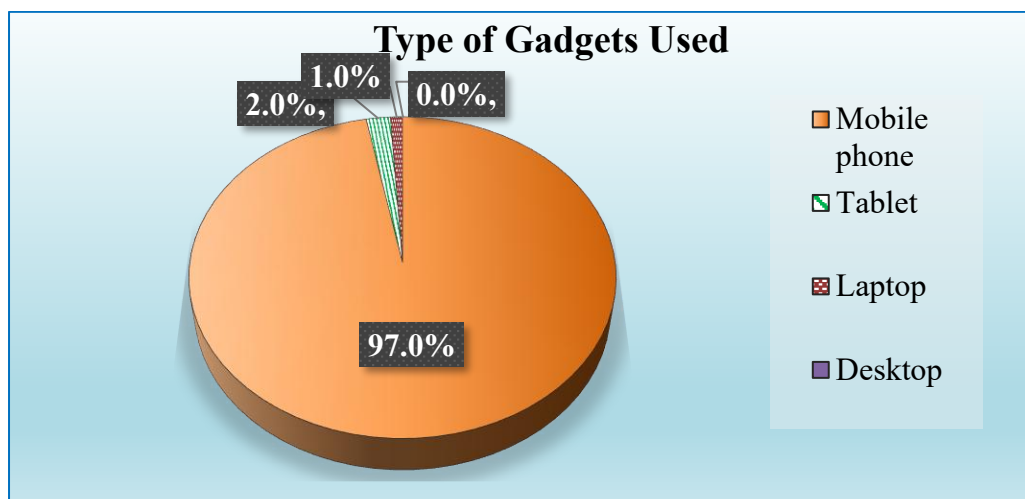


Figure 4: Percentage wise distribution of the college students according to the type of gadgets used.

Concerning gadget usage, mobile phones were the most commonly used device (97%), followed by tablets (2%) and laptops (1%); no students reported using desktop computers.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage wise distribution of the compulsive buying behavior among college students.

(N = 200)

S. No	Level of Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
1	High	4	2%
2	Low	125	62.5%
3	Moderate	71	35.5%

Most students (62.5%) showed a low level of compulsive buying behavior, indicating controlled purchasing habits. About 35.5% had a moderate level, suggesting occasional impulsive buying tendencies. Only 2% exhibited a high level of compulsive buying behavior.

Overall, compulsive buying exists but is not widespread among students.

Table 4: Frequency and percentage wise distribution of the psychological distress among college students.

(N = 200)

S. No	Level of psychological distress	Frequency	Percentage
1	High	25	12.5%
2	Low	136	68%
3	Moderate	29	14.5%
4	Very high	10	5%

The findings show that 68% of students had low psychological distress, indicating generally stable mental well-being. About 14.5% experienced moderate distress, while 12.5% had high levels of distress. Additionally, 5% of students reported very high psychological distress, indicating risk for severe mental health issues. Overall, these results highlight the need for early support and preventive mental health programs in the college setting.

Table 5: Correlation between Compulsive Buying Behaviour and Psychological Distress among College Students

(N = 200)

Variables	r-value	p-value	Significance
Compulsive Buying Behaviour vs Psychological Distress	0.766	0.000	p < 0.01 (Highly significant)

The results show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.766$, $p < 0.01$) between the two variables, indicating statistical significance. This suggests that higher compulsive buying behavior is associated with increased psychological distress among students.

The findings highlight a close relationship between behavioral patterns and emotional well-being.

In Overall associations, only age, gender, and time spent on digital platforms were significantly associated with compulsive buying behavior, while other variables showed no significant relationship.

V. DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to assess compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress, to determine the correlation between these variables, and to identify their association with selected demographic variables among nursing students. The findings revealed that the majority of students had low to moderate levels of compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress. This indicates that although severe levels are less common, a considerable proportion of students are still at risk.

Regarding the second objective, a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.766$, $p < 0.01$) was found between compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress. This suggests that students experiencing higher levels of psychological distress are more likely to engage in compulsive buying as a coping mechanism. These findings are consistent with previous studies that highlight emotional distress as a key predictor of maladaptive buying behavior.

With respect to the third objective, significant associations were observed between compulsive buying behavior and variables such as age, gender, and daily digital usage. Similarly, psychological distress was significantly associated with religion, academic performance, and frequency of online usage. These results emphasize the influence of both personal and lifestyle factors on students' mental health and behavior. Overall, the study highlights the need for early identification and intervention strategies.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress are prevalent among nursing students, with most exhibiting low to moderate levels. A strong positive correlation between the two variables indicates that increased psychological distress contributes to higher compulsive buying tendencies. Significant associations with selected demographic variables further highlight the influence of personal and lifestyle factors. These findings emphasize the need for early identification, mental health awareness, and appropriate interventions such as counseling and stress management programs. Promoting healthy coping strategies and responsible spending habits can help improve students' psychological well-being and overall quality of life.

NURSING IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study on the correlation between compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress among college students in selected colleges at Puducherry have significant implications for nursing practice, nursing education, nursing administration, and nursing research.

NURSING PRACTICE

- The study results will help nurses understand the strong association between compulsive buying behavior and psychological distress among college students, enabling them to identify at-risk individuals early.
- Nurses can provide timely psychological support and counseling interventions to students, focusing on stress management, financial literacy, and healthy coping mechanisms.
- By incorporating screening tools into routine student health programs, nurses can play a pivotal role in preventing the escalation of psychological distress related to compulsive buying.

NURSING EDUCATION

- Nursing curricula should include education on the psychological and behavioral aspects of compulsive buying and its impact on mental health among young adults.
- Training should emphasize the use of appropriate assessment tools and evidence-based interventions to address psychological distress in students.
- Nursing education should also strengthen students' skills in counseling, behavioral modification strategies, and early identification of risk behaviors related to compulsive buying.

NURSING ADMINISTRATION

- Nursing administrators should develop and implement programs that focus on mental health promotion, financial awareness, and behavioral counseling within college health settings.
- Policies should be formulated to include regular screening for psychological distress and compulsive buying behavior in student wellness programs.
- Administrators should ensure the availability of trained nurses to provide preventive, therapeutic, and referral services for students exhibiting high levels of psychological distress.

NURSING RESEARCH

- This study provides a foundation for future research exploring the relationship between behavioral patterns, such as compulsive buying, and psychological distress among students.
- Further studies can examine the effectiveness of targeted interventions, such as financial education, stress management programs, and counseling, in reducing compulsive buying behavior and improving mental health.
- The findings contribute to evidence-based nursing practice, offering insights into developing integrated mental health promotion strategies for students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Similar studies with larger sample sizes and diverse educational settings should be conducted to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
- Comparative research should be carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of different psychosocial and behavioral interventions in reducing compulsive buying and psychological distress.
- Educational materials should be developed for students, parents, and faculty to raise awareness of compulsive buying behavior, its psychological impact, and available support services.

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