


# Factors Affecting Problematic Internet Shopping: A Cross-Sectional Study Among Taiwanese University Students

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## ABSTRACT

The study aimed to examine internet shopping patterns and factors affecting problematic online shopping behavior among university students. A total of 364 Taiwanese university students were conveniently recruited online using the Online Shopping Addiction Scale (OSAS) to assess the severity of problematic internet shopping. Fisher's exact test and hierarchical regression analysis were used to examine the difference among internet shoppers and explore the determining factors for problematic internet shopping. Results revealed that 2.47% of the students in the sample suffered from problematic internet shopping. Hierarchical regression analysis suggested that internet experience has an inverse significant influence on problematic internet shopping. Furthermore, daily internet shopping usage and frequency appear to be the most critical determinants of problematic internet shopping ( $p < .01$ ). The current study has provided some worthwhile insights that can serve as a guideline to more elaborate studies.

## KEYWORDS

College Students, Compulsive Shopping, Online Shopping Addiction, Problematic Internet Shopping, Shopping Addiction, University Students Compulsive Online Buying

## INTRODUCTION

Buying and shopping can introduce a regulatory mechanism for individual ambivalences and is typically associated with emotional impairment (Müller, Claes, & Kyrios, 2021). In contrast to store-fronts buyers, online consumers have both utilitarian and hedonic purchasing inspiration, acquired product value and the feeling of pleasure, and enjoyment all over their buying-shopping episodes (To, Liao, & Lin, 2007). Popular e-commerce platforms even comprise features that possibly stimulate unregulated buying (LaRose, 2001). Meanwhile, irresistible and uncontrolled shopping may be

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abused by a minority of individuals and resulted in a detrimental psychiatric problem which was called compulsive buying behavior (Duroy, Gorse, & Lejoyeux, 2014), buying-shopping disorder (Müller et al., 2019), or shopping addiction (Jiang, Zhao, & Li, 2017; Rose & Dhandayudham, 2014).

The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated ramifications have significantly disrupted the daily life of many people worldwide. The closure of educational institutes worldwide has forced students to switch from physical face-to-face instruction to digital education, which might induce heightened screen times and elevate the development of online addictive behaviors. Meanwhile, the vulnerability of accelerated diffusion and increased engagement in several reinforcing online addictive behaviors in particular problematic internet consumption (Király et al., 2020), internet gaming disorder (King et al., 2020), social media misuse (Wiederhold, 2020), and cyber-pornography use (Mestre-Bach, Blycker, & Potenza, 2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic has been documented. The authors contend that it is significant to investigate the consumer behavior patterns during the COVID-19 crisis, given that this pandemic can represent a critical catalyst for compulsive buying (Jaspal, Lopes, & Lopes, 2020).

People are increasingly embracing online purchases as an effect of the pandemic, which is inclined to keep up even beyond this pandemic. According to the recent Market Intelligence & Consulting Institute survey, 64.9% of Taiwanese netizens reported using smartphones or tablets for online purchases (91APP, 2020). Besides, the e-commerce prospect was expected to burgeon at a 9.0 percent compound annual growth rate, from “US\$35.4 billion in 2020 to US\$49.9 billion in 2024” (GlobalData, 2020).

Nevertheless, although the influence of compulsive buying has extensively been scrutinized by the scholarly community within the store-front consumption environment, little attention has been given to concede the relationship between problematic buying-shopping and potential predecessors in the digital condition. Given the paucity of research on the problematic buying-shopping phenomenon in Taiwan, particularly among the youngsters, the present study sought to explore the determinants of problematic internet shopping among Taiwanese university students to illuminate potential factors associated with this particular behavior.

The present paper proceeds as follows: First, the authors review theoretical background leading to a comprehension of critical variables related to e-shopping and problematic internet shopping behavior. A couple of hypotheses are then offered and tested, followed by discussing limitations and managerial implications for the results. Recommendation for future research is also discussed.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Compulsive buying has been at the forefront of numerous studies and became a progressively critical concern in the scholarly community of consumer behavior. The internet has become a medium facilitating the use of several addictive behaviors which already existed in an offline context, such as video gaming, gambling, and buying/shopping. The migration of conventional compulsive buying manifested in store-front context to virtual space was suggested to remunerate insufficient offline desires (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014). Compulsive buying has variously been debated and conceptualized as an impulse-control disorder (Black et al., 2012), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Frost, Steketee, & Williams, 2002; Ridgway, Kukar-Kinney, & Monroe, 2008), or behavioral addiction (Lejoyeux, & Weinstein, 2010). Many efforts have been devoted to characterizing compulsive buying as a noticeable mental health condition, arguing its correspondence with substance use and gambling disorders. A representative survey reported the global prevalence estimation of 4.9% for compulsive buyers in which women and younger people are groups with higher incident rates (Maraz, Griffiths, & Demetrovics, 2016). Nevertheless, results should be interpreted with rigorous consideration, given substantial heterogeneity and variations between samples (Kyrios et al., 2018).

Prior studies have reported attributes of e-commerce such as effortless convenience, perpetual inventory, and appealing product arrangements (Duroy, Gorse, & Lejoyeux, 2014; Kukar-Kinney, Ridgway, & Monroe, 2009) to emphasize the critical distinction between buying/shopping disorder

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