



Commentary

Shopaholic Syndrome: Navigating Compulsive Buying Disorder

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Received date: 26 March, 2024, Manuscript No. JABTR-24-136983;

Editor assigned date: 28 March, 2024, PreQC No. JABTR-24-136983 (PQ);

Reviewed date: 15 April, 2024, QC No. JABTR-24-136983;

Revised date: 22 April, 2024, Manuscript No. JABTR-24-136983 (R);

Published date: 29 April, 2024, DOI: 10.4172/2324-9005.1000096

Description

Compulsive Buying Disorder (CBD) is a behavioural addiction characterized by repetitive and excessive purchasing that leads to distress and impairment in various areas of life. This study provides an in-depth consideration of CBD, including its definition, diagnostic criteria, prevalence, risk factors, clinical presentation, and treatment options. By shedding light on this often overlooked disorder, this aims to increase awareness, improve assessment techniques, and promote effective interventions for individuals struggling with compulsive buying behaviours. Compulsive Buying Disorder (CBD), also known as shopping addiction or compulsive shopping, is a behavioural addiction characterized by an overwhelming urge to shop and an inability to control or resist the impulse to buy. While shopping is a common and often enjoyable activity for many individuals, for some, it can become a problematic behavior that has serious consequences for their financial, emotional, and psychological well-being. Despite its significant impact, CBD remains relatively under recognized and poorly understood compared to other addictive disorders.

This document aims to provide a comprehensive overview of CBD, including its definition, diagnostic criteria, prevalence rates, risk factors, clinical presentation, and treatment approaches. Compulsive Buying Disorder is characterized by recurrent and persistent episodes of excessive buying that are accompanied by a lack of control over the impulse to shop and significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Individuals with CBD often experience preoccupation with shopping, frequent thoughts about buying, and a sense of tension or anxiety that is relieved by making purchases. Despite negative consequences, such as financial debt, relationship problems, or emotional distress, individuals with CBD continue to engage in compulsive buying behaviours. While CBD is not formally recognized as a distinct disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), it shares similarities with other impulse control disorders and addictive behaviours.

Estimating the prevalence of CBD is challenging due to variations in definitions and assessment methods across studies. However, research suggests that compulsive buying behaviours are relatively common, with prevalence rates ranging from 2%-8% in the general

population. CBD is more prevalent among certain demographic groups, such as women, younger adults, individuals with higher socioeconomic status, and those with co-occurring mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety. The proliferation of online shopping platforms and easy access to credit has contributed to the increased prevalence of CBD in recent years, making it a significant public health concern. Several factors may contribute to the development and maintenance of CBD, including individual, social, and environmental variables.

Social factors, such as peer influences, societal norms regarding consumption and materialism, and cultural messages promoting material possessions, can shape attitudes and behaviours related to shopping. Additionally, environmental factors, such as easy access to shopping opportunities, advertising, and online retail platforms, play a significant role in the onset and progression of CBD. Individuals with CBD often exhibit a range of emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and interpersonal symptoms. Emotional symptoms may include feelings of guilt, shame, or anxiety related to their compulsive buying behaviours, as well as mood fluctuations and irritability when unable to shop. Cognitive symptoms may involve obsessive thoughts about shopping, an exaggerated sense of excitement or anticipation when contemplating purchases, and distorted beliefs about the value or necessity of material possessions.

Behavioural symptoms may manifest as spending excessive amounts of time shopping or browsing online, making impulsive or irrational purchasing decisions, and experiencing difficulties controlling or reducing shopping behaviours despite negative consequences. Interpersonal symptoms may include conflicts with family members or significant others related to financial issues or secrecy surrounding shopping activities. Assessing CBD requires a comprehensive evaluation that considers the individual's shopping behaviours, financial status, psychological symptoms, and impact on daily life. Standardized assessment tools, such as the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS) and the Bergen Shopping Addiction Scale (BSAS), can help clinicians screen for compulsive buying behaviours and assess the severity of addiction symptoms.

The treatment of CBD typically involves a multidimensional approach that addresses the underlying factors contributing to compulsive buying behaviours. Psychotherapy, particularly Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT), has shown promise in helping individuals identify and challenge maladaptive thoughts, develop coping skills to manage urges to shop, and modify behaviours associated with CBD. Financial counselling and debt management strategies can help individuals regain control over their finances and develop responsible spending habits. Group therapy and support groups, such as Debtors Anonymous (DA) or Compulsive Eaters Anonymous (CEA), can provide a sense of community and peer support for individuals struggling with CBD. Additionally, pharmacological interventions, such as Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) or mood stabilizers, may be considered for individuals with co-occurring mental health disorders, such as depression or anxiety. However, medication should be used cautiously and in conjunction with psychotherapy, as there is limited evidence supporting the efficacy of pharmacological treatments for CBD.

Citation: Fossati A (2024) Shopaholic Syndrome: Navigating Compulsive Buying Disorder. *J Addict Behav Ther Rehabil* 13:2.