

The Impact of Individual Traits on Compulsive Buying: A Study on Millenials Generations

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the influence of stress, hedonic shopping value, and self-esteem on compulsive buying, with impulsive buying as an intervening variable. The research applied a quantitative method utilizing a random sampling technique, administering a questionnaire to 201 participants. Employing SEM PLS for data analysis, the study revealed several key findings. Firstly, stress was found to have a significant impact on both compulsive buying and impulsive buying, indicating that higher levels of stress may lead to an increase in these behaviors. Secondly, the hedonic shopping value exhibited less significant effects on compulsive buying. However, it had a significant influence on impulsive buying. Thirdly, self-esteem showed less significant effects on compulsive buying but had a significant impact on impulsive buying. Furthermore, the study found that impulsive buying significantly influenced compulsive buying. This study underscores the need for more research to develop effective interventions for managing compulsive and impulsive buying.

Keywords: Stress, Hedonic Shopping Value, Self-esteem, Compulsive Buying.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has significantly impacted various aspects of life, including how we shop and engage in online purchasing (Grunert & Ramus, 2005). Online shopping offers convenient access without requiring people to leave their homes, thereby enhancing the practicality and comfort of shopping. The latest report from *We Are Social* indicates that approximately 56.1% of global internet users shop online weekly. Some countries such as Thailand, South Korea, and Turkey have the highest percentages of online shopping. However, Indonesia ranks 9th, with 59,3% of its internet users shopping online weekly. Women tend to shop online more frequently than men, especially in the age categories of 35-40 years old and 25-34 years old (katadata, 2024). The rise of online shopping reflects a shift towards digital lifestyles, where convenience and accessibility play significant roles in

shaping consumer preferences and behaviors. The integration of social media and shopping platforms has heightened pressure on individuals to engage in shopping to follow trends and establish a particular self-image, thereby elevating shopping to a significant activity in consumers' lives. Increased involvement in shopping activities correlates with a higher susceptibility to compulsive behavior. The power of social media in marketing products has also been researched by Phan (2024), taking a sample of 361 people in Vietnam, the results show that trustworthiness and expertise have strong direct effects on source credibility and indirect effects on purchase intention through the mediating role of source credibility. Purchase intention is also significantly influenced by Key Opinion Consumer's expertise, trustworthiness, and source credibility. This research explores TikTok as a case, and the findings can be generalized to other social media platforms because of their similarities in use and sharing purpose.

Compulsive buying is a consumer behavior problem prevalent in modern society. This behavior is characterized by an overwhelming urge to purchase goods or services excessively, often causing individuals to lose control over their spending (Müller et al., 2018; O'Guinn & Faber, 1989; Otero-López et al., 2021). Studies conducted in various countries across America, Europe, and Asia have revealed a steady increase in the phenomenon of compulsive buying, particularly affecting individuals in their teenage to adult years (Grant et al., 2011; Maraz et al., 2016; Neuner et al., 2005; Pérez de Albéniz-Garrote et al., 2021; Villella et al., 2011). For instance, research findings indicate that 3.5% of college students in the United States, 7.4% in Spain, 10.4% in China, and 16.1% in South Korea exhibit compulsive buying behavior (Harvanko et al., 2013; He et al., 2018; Koh et al., 2020; Villardefrancos & Otero-López, 2016). This global prevalence suggests that compulsive buying is not merely a localized issue but a worldwide concern, transcending national and cultural boundaries. Therefore, findings from studies on compulsive buying can potentially be generalized to other countries or contexts that face similar challenges. However, the applicability of such findings requires careful consideration of specific cultural, social, and economic factors unique to each country.

Individuals experiencing compulsive buying tendencies often engage in recurrent purchases as a primary response to negative events and emotions (Csilla Horváth, 2017). Under certain conditions, individuals may make unplanned purchases, often to project their ideal selves rather than their true selves (Miltenbenger, et al., 2003). Several factors and circumstances can trigger excessive and uncontrolled compulsive buying behavior (Black, 2007). Personality traits are inherent characteristics that exert a substantial influence on an individual's range of relevant responses. Personality can be described as a behavioural manifestation of underlying traits (Ratnamiasih, et al., 2024). This behavior manifests when individuals experience a strong and uncontrollable urge to make repeated purchases in large quantities without considering the long-term consequences, including emotional and financial issues (Neale & Reed, 2023). Stress, a potential trigger for negative emotions such as anxiety and depression, is a psychological factor associated with *compulsive buying*. Individuals with chronic or high levels of stress often seek ways to cope with their negative emotions, and one such coping mechanism they may choose is compulsive buying (Faber & Christenson, 1996).

Stress has a significant impact on impulsive buying (Rodrigues et al., 2021). Research indicates that individuals experiencing high levels of stress are more prone to engaging in impulsive buying behavior (Mittal et al., 2015). When stressed, individuals often seek ways to cope with negative emotions or distract themselves from worries. Impulsive buying serves as a form of distraction from stress, providing temporary pleasure and satisfaction (Iyer et al., 2020). This behavior can be viewed as a compulsive aspect of impulsive buying, wherein individuals engage in buying activities to manage negative affective states such as depression and low self-esteem (Yu & Bastin, 2010). The cognitive aspect of impulsive buying,

characterized by less planning in purchasing decisions, is negatively correlated with subjective well-being. Studies suggest that high levels of stress may trigger compulsive buying, as individuals shop and consume to alleviate stress and anxiety related to uncertain and stressful situations (Gallagher et al., 2017). Thus, stress can act as a primary trigger for compulsive shopping behavior, particularly in situations that evoke uncertainty and high anxiety (Faber & Christenson, 1996).

Studies have shown that impulsive buying can significantly impact individuals' self-esteem and contribute to compulsive buying behavior (Dittmar et al., 2000). Individuals with low self-esteem often seek recognition or acceptance from others through their purchases, sometimes opting for luxurious and expensive items to enhance their self-branding (Zhang et al., 2017). The motivation behind hedonic shopping can influence impulsive buying by strengthening the urge to purchase items for personal pleasure and satisfaction. Hedonistic individuals seek positive experiences and instant pleasure through purchases, which can further trigger compulsive buying (Lejoyeux et al., 2011). The sensation and pleasure of impulsive buying provide a temporary boost to self-esteem; however, this is often followed by feelings of guilt and regret. Impulsive buying involves making unplanned purchases driven by sudden impulses or desires. Various studies have suggested that impulsive buying is often motivated by emotions and hedonic motivation (Flight et al., 2012; Rook, n.d.; Silvera et al., 2008). In light of these findings, the aim of this study was to examine how individual traits, i.e. stress, hedonic shopping value, and self-esteem, influence compulsive buying, with impulsive buying serving as an intervening variable.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Stress

Stress is a part of individuals' physical and emotional reactions, encompassing both mental and psychological aspects, to changes in their surroundings that require adaptation to the current situation. Stress is a causal factor in individuals' impulsive and compulsive buying behaviors. Negative emotions such as boredom, discouragement, and pressure from work, tasks, and daily activities can evoke stress.

This stress can lead to emotional dissatisfaction and emptiness. Stress is defined as a stimulus, a response, or a combination of both. Which are termed as stressors in that they create a change in human life (either positive or negative) that requires a readjustment. Millennials (Ages 18-33) as a generational group enjoy extreme fun, yet they have the highest levels of stress of any other age group, with 39% reporting that their stress has increased compared to the previous year. To fill this emptiness, individuals are likely to seek instant pleasure by purchasing items (Zhang et al., 2017). Several studies indicate that stress can be a primary trigger for individuals to engage in impulsive and compulsive buying.

Therefore, the hypotheses of this research are as follows:

H1: Stress influences compulsive buying

H2: Stress influences impulsive buying

2.2 Hedonic Shopping Value

Hedonic shopping value refers to purchasing activities undertaken for the sake of pleasure and satisfaction derived from shopping. Additionally, hedonism can enhance the "reward-seeking" aspect of compulsive buying, whereby individuals experience pleasure and satisfaction immediately after shopping. The urge to obtain instant rewards and the positive sensations associated with shopping may reinforce the cycle of compulsive buying (Zhang et al., 2017).

Hedonic shopping value have been defined as the drivers of behavior that bring consumers to the marketplace to satisfy their internal need. Additionally, it has been well known that people do not only shop to fulfill their needs, but also for hedonic reasons: a typical consumer tends to engage in shopping when he needs attention, wants to be with peers, desires to meet people with similar interests, feels a need to exercise, or needs leisure time. The literature identifies hedonic value for shopping that maybe related to compulsive buying. In this section we develop hypotheses about how hedonic shopping value is related to compulsive buying.

In accordance with the description above, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:

H3: Hedonic shopping value influences compulsive buying,

H4: Hedonic shopping value influences impulsive buying.

2.3 Self-Esteem

Individuals with low self-esteem tend to have negative perspectives about themselves and are likely to seek confirmation of these negative views through harmful consumption behaviors, such as choosing low-quality products. In the context of consumer behavior, self-esteem can affect product preferences, responses to feedback, and purchasing decisions (Stuppy et al., 2020). Such individuals often believe that buying things can improve their *mood* and provide a sense of accomplishment. Self-esteem is an attitude one has toward one's self, and it is a mental representation of self-worth and self-acceptance.

In line with the description above, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:

H5: Self-esteem influences compulsive buying.

H6: Self-esteem influences impulsive buying.

2.4 Impulsive Buying

Impulsive buying occurs when consumers, often driven by a powerful and persistent urge, suddenly decide to purchase something without any prior planning. This behavior typically takes place without considering the potential consequences. Impulsive buying can be triggered by various factors such as mood, sales promotions, or high visual stimuli (Darrat et al., 2016). Impulsive buying behaviour was introduced as a lifestyle trait, which involves materialism, sensation seeking and recreational aspects of shopping. It was further improvised as a personality trait comprising a spontaneous urge to buy immediately with disregard to consequences equating it to a toddler's candy tantrum. It is associated with both positive and negative feelings. It is important to distinguish between impulsive and compulsive buying.

Impulsive buying is a spontaneous and isolated event, while compulsive buying is a recurring and uncontrollable behavior, often associated with deeper emotional or psychological issues (Darrat et al., 2016). It is regarded as an irresistible, less deliberate and more arousing buying behavior in contrast to a planned consumption behavior. Impulsive buying behavior has been associated with dispositional negative affect and several negative outcomes in different fields including social reactions, post-purchase satisfaction, personal finance, and overall self-esteem. Impulse buying behavior as a spontaneous purchase portrayed by a moderately speedy decision-making and a subjective predisposition for having an instant possession of the goods. Impulse buying as an 'enigma within the marketing world' because it is believed to be normatively wrong; yet, it accounts for a huge percentage of retail sales internationally.

Therefore, the hypothesis of this research is:

H7: Impulsive buying influences compulsive buying

2.5 Compulsive Buying

Compulsive buying is characterized by an uncontrollable urge to purchase unnecessary items in excessive and repetitive ways. This behavior is typically driven by the need to feel occupied through shopping, seeking temporary relief rather than out of necessity for the items purchased (Granero et al., 2016).

There are various reasons to explain why consumers purchase compulsively (Flight et al., 2012; Watson et al., 1988). For example, Faber's (2004) study revealed that while compulsive buying is provoked by negative affect (e.g., distress, nervousness, stressfulness, and fear), impulsive buying behavior is sustained by positive affect (e.g., happiness, enjoyment, and excitement). Solomon (2002) argued that impulsive buying happens only at particular times, whereas compulsive buying is a continuous process. Silvera et al. (2008) and Verplanken et al. (2005) argued that compulsive buying behaviors are usually the issue of customers' negative experience. Online compulsive buying refers to the tendency of consumers to engage in uncontrolled online shopping without considering the consequences (Zheng et al., 2020).

Consequently, this research identifies a mediation variable and proposes the following hypotheses to be tested:

H8: Stress has a direct influence on compulsive buying through impulsive buying.

H9: Hedonic shopping value has a direct influence on compulsive buying through impulsive buying.

H10: Self-esteem has a direct influence on compulsive buying through impulsive buying.

Based on these hypotheses, the conceptual model of this current research is as follows:

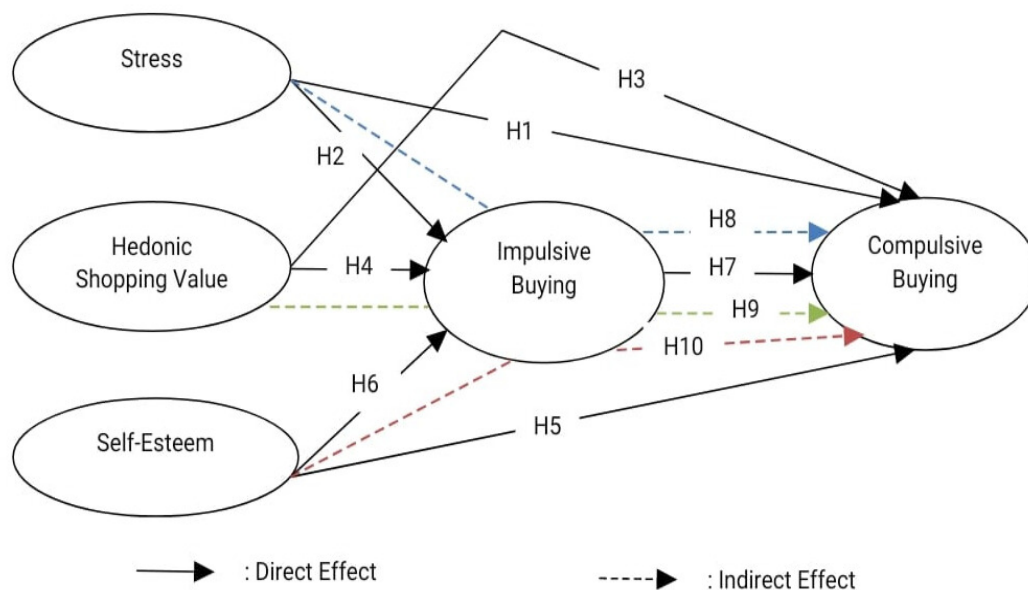


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

This research makes a significant scientific contribution to the literature on consumer behavior, particularly regarding compulsive buying and its relationship to impulsive buying behavior. It explores how impulsive buying mediates the influences of stress, hedonic shopping value, and self-esteem, as illustrated in the following figure.

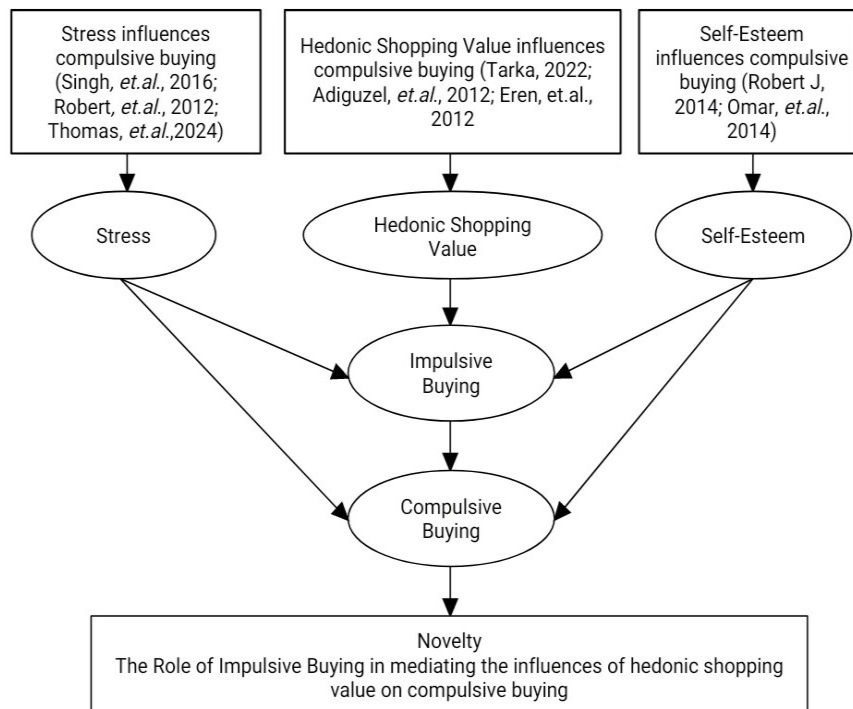


Figure 2. The Method for Novelty

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative method, utilizing questionnaires for data collection. The subjects involved were Indonesian consumers aged 27 to 43 years who engaged in online shopping and had made at least three online purchases in the past month. A total of 241 respondents participated in the research. The sampling method used was accidental sampling with total sample of 241 respondents. All data were collected using questionnaires. Each positively-worded questionnaire item offered five response choices: strongly agree (scored as 5), agree (scored as 4), neutral (scored as 3), disagree (scored as 2), and strongly disagree (scored as 1). The variables examined included stress, hedonic shopping value, self-esteem, impulsive buying, and compulsive buying. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Model (SEM). Smart PLS 3 was used for instrument analysis. PLS-SEM is suitable for exploratory theoretical models because the existing literature on this topic is still limited. The research model analysis was conducted with two main steps, viz: examining the measurement model, and investigating the structural model.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile

Table 1 illustrates that 241 questionnaire responses were collected in February 2024. For gender, female account for 67.2%, while men accounted for 32.8% of respondents, showing that the proportion of female is significantly higher than that of men. In terms of age, the participants are mainly concentrated within the group of 28-33 years old (13.7%), 34-39 years old (39%), and 40-43 years old (47.3%). Regarding occupation, 40.2% were office staff, experts occupied 14.2%, self-employed was 42.3%, and there were only 3.3% of respondents with other occupations.

Table 1: Demographic Data for Respondent

Criterion	Item	Factor	Percentage
Gender	Male	79	32.8%
	Female	162	67.2%
Age	28 – 33	33	13.7%
	34 – 39	94	39%
	40 – 43	114	47.3%
The Graduate	Less than Senior High School	24	10%
	Senior High School	134	55.6%
	Bachelors	83	34.4%
Occupation	Office Staff	97	40.2%
	Experts Occupied	34	14.2%
	Self-Employed	102	42.3%
	Other Occupations	8	3.3%

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were tested to determine whether they were supported or rejected, based on the significance values of t-statistics and p-values. This method involved estimating measurements and standard errors not through statistical assumptions, but rather based on empirical observation. A hypothesis was considered supported if the significance value of the t-statistic was greater than 1.96 and/or the p-value was less than 0.05. This indicates that the critical value for testing both sides with an alpha of 0.05 and infinite degrees of freedom was a t-statistic value greater than 1.96. The hypotheses to be tested are presented in the following figure.

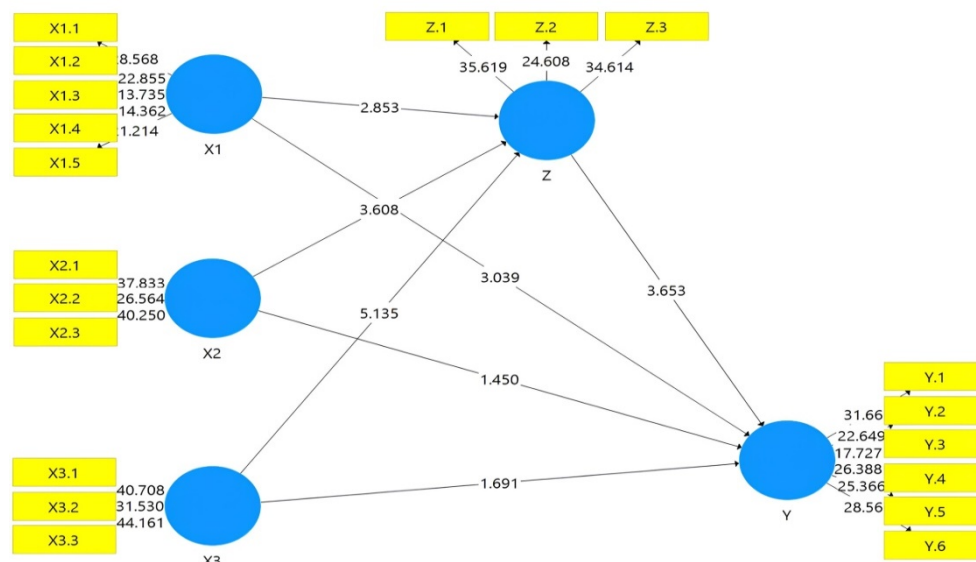


Figure 3: Structural Model (Path Coefficient)
Source: Authors' Data Processing Results (2024)

Table 2: Result of Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
X1 → Y	0.273	0.272	0.094	2.912	0.004
X1 → Z	0.271	0.257	0.093	2.911	0.004
X2 → Y	0.119	0.131	0.085	1.397	0.164
X2 → Z	0.254	0.268	0.073	3.506	0.001
X3 → Y	0.193	0.186	0.109	1.783	0.076
X3 → Z	0.409	0.408	0.074	5.499	0.000
Z → Y	0.356	0.353	0.097	3.662	0.000

Source: Data of Test by Smart PLS 3.2.7, 2024

Based on the data presented in Table 2, the study tested several hypotheses to examine the influence of different variables on compulsive and impulsive buying behaviors. Firstly, the analysis showed that stress significantly influenced compulsive buying. The t-statistic value for stress was 3.156, with an original sample value of 0.273, indicating a 27.3% positive influence on compulsive buying. This result was supported by a p-value of 0.002, which is less than the significance standard of 5%. Therefore, **the first hypothesis**, which states that stress has a significant influence on compulsive buying, was **supported**.

Secondly, stress also had a significant influence on impulsive buying. The t-statistic value for stress was 2.823, with an original sample value of 0.271, indicating a 27.1% positive influence on impulsive buying. This result was supported by a p-value of 0.005, which is less than the significance standard of 5%. Therefore, **the second hypothesis**, which suggests that stress has a significant influence on impulsive buying, was **supported**.

On the other hand, the analysis revealed that hedonic shopping value did not have a significant influence on compulsive buying. The t-statistic for hedonic shopping value was 1.363, with an original sample value of 0.119, indicating an 11.9% positive influence on compulsive buying. However, this result was not supported by a p-value of 0.174, which is greater than the significance standard of 5%. Therefore, **the third hypothesis**, which suggests that hedonic shopping value has a significant influence on compulsive buying, was **rejected**.

In contrast, hedonic shopping value had a significant influence on impulsive buying. The t-statistic for hedonic shopping value was 3.569, with an original sample value of 0.254, indicating a 25.4% positive influence on impulsive buying. This result was supported by a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance standard of 0.05. Therefore, **the fourth hypothesis**, which suggests that hedonic shopping value has a significant influence on impulsive buying, was **supported**.

Regarding self-esteem, the analysis showed that it did not have a significant influence on compulsive buying. The t-statistic for self-esteem was 1.891, with an original sample value of 0.193, indicating a 19.3% positive influence on compulsive buying. However, this result was not supported by a p-value of 0.060, which is greater than the significance standard of 0.05. Therefore, **the fifth hypothesis**, which suggests that self-esteem influences compulsive buying, was **rejected**.

In contrast, self-esteem had a significant influence on impulsive buying. The t-statistic for self-esteem was 4.844, with an original sample value of 0.409, indicating a 40.9% positive influence on impulsive buying. This result was supported by a p-value of 0.000,

which is less than the significance standard of 0.05. Therefore, **the sixth hypothesis**, which suggests that self-esteem influences impulsive buying, was **supported**.

Lastly, the analysis revealed that impulsive buying had a significant influence on compulsive buying. The t-statistic for impulsive buying was 3.660, with an original sample value of 0.356, indicating a 35.6% positive influence on compulsive buying. This result was supported by a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance standard of 0.05. Therefore, **the seventh hypothesis**, which suggests that impulsive buying influences compulsive buying, was **supported**.

4.2 Test On Mediating Variable

Table 3: Specific Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
X1 → Z → Y	0.097	0.090	0.043	2.259	0.025
X2 → Z → Y	0.091	0.093	0.034	2.698	0.008
X3 → Z → Y	0.146	0.145	0.051	2.868	0.005

Source: Data of Test by Smart PLS 3.2.7, 2024

Table 3 presents the results of testing the mediating variable in relation to the last three hypotheses. Firstly, H8 proposed that impulsive buying could mediate the positive influence of stress on compulsive buying. The test results for the stress variable on compulsive buying, with impulsive buying acting as a mediating variable, yielded a t-statistic of 2.222 and a p-value of 0.027. Since the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05, H1 was considered **supported**. This finding suggests that impulsive buying significantly influenced the correlation between stress and compulsive buying when acting as a mediating variable.

Secondly, H9 suggested that impulsive buying could mediate the positive influence of hedonic shopping value on compulsive buying. The test results for the hedonic shopping variable on compulsive buying, with impulsive buying acting as a mediating variable, yielded a t-statistic value of 2.673 and a p-value of 0.008. Since the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05, H2 was considered **supported**. This finding suggests that impulsive buying could significantly mediate the influence of hedonic shopping value on compulsive buying.

Lastly, H10 proposed that impulsive buying could mediate the positive influence of self-esteem on compulsive buying. The test results for the self-esteem variable on compulsive buying, with impulsive buying acting as a mediating variable, yielded a t-statistic value of 2.536 and a p-value of 0.012. Since the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05, H3 was considered **supported**. This result suggests that impulsive buying could significantly mediate the influence of self-esteem on compulsive buying.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study found that compulsive buying was significantly predictable based on the variables of stress and self-esteem, but not hedonic shopping value. This suggests that there may be another determinant factor that could either directly or indirectly influence compulsive buying in addition to stress and self-esteem. However, regarding the mediating variable,

impulsive buying was found to mediate the influence of stress, hedonic shopping value, and self-esteem on compulsive buying.

This study focuses specifically on Indonesia, but it employs a representative sample and robust statistical methods, which allow its findings to be generalized to broader populations. The results can serve as a theoretical foundation for research in other countries and can be adapted through localized studies to align with specific cultural, social, and economic contexts. For example, the findings on compulsive buying behavior can be applied to other countries by taking into account cultural factors similar to those in Indonesia, such as the influence of extended family, the role of familial self-esteem, or shopping trends on local platforms.

Moreover, future researchers may conduct further investigations on hedonic shopping value (X2), which this study found to have less influence on compulsive buying (Y). Qualitative approaches could be particularly insightful in uncovering the nuanced patterns and motivations behind consumers' compulsive buying behavior.

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