

DUAL ROLE OF MATERIALISM ON LIFE SATISFACTION: A STUDY ON MIDDLE-AGED MALES

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to assess the relationship between Success Materialism and Happiness Materialism and show how these two dimensions of materialism influence an individual's life satisfaction. The sample consisted of 80 males in the age range of 40-50 years with annual income of 8-10 lakhs INR. The tools used in the study were Satisfaction with Life Scale by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin and Material Value Scale by Richins and Dawson. The results were analyzed using statistical tools for correlation and regression. The results indicated that happiness materialism has a significantly negative correlation with life satisfaction ($r=-0.339, p<0.01$). Success materialism and happiness materialism together contribute 9.4% variance in predicting life satisfaction, found to be significant at 0.01 level. The study concluded that happiness materialism can lead a person to be dissatisfied with their current standard of living and other pleasures of life which in turn negatively influence overall life satisfaction.

Keywords: Success Materialism, Happiness Materialism, Life Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Materialism

According to Beck (1984), Materialism refers to the importance an individual attaches to worldly possessions. The literature on materialism and behavioral outcomes is contradictory. On the one hand, previous research within the social sciences (economic psychology, marketing, quality of life) has suggested that materialism results in negative behavioral outcomes, such as dissatisfaction with social life, anxiety, depression, compulsive shopping, low financial well-being, etc. Conversely, there's research suggesting that materialism results in positive behavioral outcomes. For instance, Hudders and Pandelaere (2012) viewed that materialistic individuals who own or purchase luxury products report high subjective well-being, compared to those individuals who don't. The effect of luxury consumption on satisfaction with life seems to be more pronounced for top rather than low materialistic individuals (Karabati and Cemalcilar 2010). Pieters (2013) was ready to empirically demonstrate that increase in certain sorts of materialistic behaviors are linked with decreases in loneliness over time. In addition, some research suggests that materialism could bring out or cause both positive and negative behavioral outcomes, because materialism is multifaceted.

Dittmar et al. (2014) suggested that when materialism is assessed in terms of money-related goals, it fails in predicting life satisfaction significantly. However, when materialism is assessed through a broader aspect of materialistic goals (e.g. image and status), materialism seems to be a big positive predictor of life satisfaction. The author suggested that treating materialism as an aggregate phenomenon may hide its role in sort of some behavioral outcomes.

These studies clearly support the notion that the construct of materialism is multifaceted (i.e., involving more than one aspect) and certain aspects of materialism may contribute to positive behavioral outcomes while other aspects may bring about negative outcomes. How can materialism influence life satisfaction both in a positive as well as in negative terms? A study conducted by Sirgy et al. (2013) mentioned this contradiction (i.e., materialism resulting in both negative and positive consequences) by attempting to reconcile the previous two contradicting viewpoints, testing the hypothesis that materialism may cause to life satisfaction both positively and negatively. When materialistic people evaluate their standard of living using fantasy-based or

unrealistic expectations (e.g., ideal expectations), it causes them to gauge their standard of living negatively. Their satisfaction with standard of living lets them evaluate their whole life negatively.

Success Materialism

Success materialism is the tendency to value monetary success and material possession over other goals in life. Specifically, we are more likely to define success by what someone owns. If they're not deriving a way of self-worth from other parts of our lives, one might feel owning lots of things can prove they're successful.

Materialism and life satisfaction: case of Croatia. In recent years, a number of studies have used Material Values Scale (MVS) to assess beliefs about importance to own material things. The aim of these studies were to validate the MVS scale and to explore the relationships between materialistic values and well-being of Croatian citizens. The study was carried out on a representative sample of N = 1129 Croatian citizens. We used the short 9-item version of the MVS, life satisfaction rating, ratings of two positive (Positive affect) and four negative emotions (Negative affect) over the past month, and demographic variables (age, gender, income). The original dimensionality of the MVS was not confirmed; confirmatory factor analyses yielded two instead of three factors, Happiness and Centrality/Success. When controlled for income, gender and age, the Happiness dimension predicted Life satisfaction and both Positive and Negative affect, indicating that people who believed that the material goods in one's life leads to happiness reported to have lower life satisfaction, lower level of positive affect and higher level of negative affect over the past month. The Centrality/Success dimension was positively related to Positive affect, indicating that the belief that possessions play a central role in enjoyment leading to more frequent experiences of happiness and satisfaction over the past month.

Materialistic achievements are considered successful, when opinions of individuals around you matter. People recognize you and consider you successful only on the idea of it. Highly materialistic people believe that owning and buying things are necessary means to attain important life goals, like happiness, success and desirability. In order to possess more, they often side-line other important goals. Research shows that highly materialistic people tend to worry less about the environment than the “non-materialists” people do.

These findings cause the belief that highly materialistic people are largely selfish and like to create meaningful relationships with “stuff”, as against people. But other research shows that materialism may be a natural behaviour of being human and people develop materialistic tendencies as an adaptive response to deal with situations that make them feel anxious and insecure, like a difficult kinship or maybe our natural fear of death. Materialism isn't only found in particularly materialistic people. Even while relating people as “consumers”, as against using other generic terms like citizens, can temporarily activate a materialistic mind-set. As such, efforts directed towards eliminating materialism (taxing or banning advertising activities) are unlikely to be effective. These anti-materialism views also limit business activities and places considerable tension between business and policy.

Researchers believe that specialize in “success materialism” — the concept that wealth signifies success — enhances people's “economic motivation,” or their drive to figure and improve their standard of living. Materialism is the pursuit of private material well-being or an economic orientation to offer priority to materialistic needs over concerns for civil power, freedom and convictions which helps in boosting the economy. Success materialism (wealth and material consumption is that the sign of successful life) can negatively influence life satisfaction in two different ways:

1. It can lead someone to be dissatisfied with their current standard of living, which successively negatively influences overall life satisfaction.
2. It can lead someone to not find satisfaction from other important areas of life (family life, social life, health, etc.), which negatively influences overall life satisfaction.

Success materialism (wealth and material possessions are an indication of success in life) positively influences life satisfaction by boosting someone economic motivation. This will cause an increase in their future satisfaction with their standard of living, which positively influences their overall life satisfaction. A number of causes of success materialism are that in society today people are taught to believe that you need more to be the happy and we tend to believe that the more we've got the higher we are. In our society we put someone on a higher level than us if they have plenty or more stuff, we seek to be like this person. It seems to be a measure of success in our society, being admired by people who have more than. This can be where Materialism comes in effect.

Effects on the Economy- Materialism are typically used as status symbol, causing people to get items that they can't afford. Not only do they buy things to "look cool" but they also know how to flaunt their wealth. Economic materialism drives consumers to spend their incomes on unnecessary items, which translates to economic process, and producers to fulfill consumer demand. This ends up in more spending and increased GDP (Gross Domestic Production).

Effects on Teens- Teenagers are directly littered with materialism because society tells them they need to have trendy and expensive items. Materialism in teens may lead to self-esteem issues and bullying because they're pressured into buying these items and are often teased if they don't.

Effect on Personal Well-Being- There are several interpretations of such findings. Some authors claim that materialists use material goods as compensation for a few personal weaknesses which may be low self-esteem or need for security or lack of meaningful connections. Other authors suggest that materialists set unrealistically high goals such that the discrepancy between these higher expectations and actual achievement makes them unhappy.

Happiness Materialism

The Happiness Materialism is something which is related to the belief that control over things or ownership of things brings happiness to individuals. For example- "I believe I would be happier, if I could afford to buy an Audi."

It is mostly seen that materialism fades away our happiness, reduces satisfaction in our relationships and reduces the adaptation quality to deal with the changing environment. Happiness materialism makes us less likable and friendly. Moreover, it makes us less likely to help others and makes us less empathetic.

It is often seen that wealth and material utilization is a basic symbol of happiness in people's life which may adversely influence life satisfaction. Happiness materialism influences life satisfaction negatively in two different ways-

- 1) Dissatisfaction with standard of living.
- 2) Dissatisfaction with other domains such as financial life, social life, family life, etc.

Both of these lead to detraction from life satisfaction resulting from happiness materialism.

It also covers some positive aspects such as we feel good after purchasing, experience more happy emotions at the moment and get a lot of satisfaction. It has a lot of things to do which is important in terms of studying happiness. It is also found in early studies that happiness materialism is positively correlated to health and longevity. Many early researches suggest that happiness materialism increases and improves overall happiness and individual satisfaction. People can achieve happiness in various ways such as they can be happy by utilizing or by consuming material possessions. Other studies offer suggestions that interpersonal relationships affect happiness in comparison to material possessions.

However, on the other hand different studies put forward ideas which says happiness materialism many times depletes happiness instead of increasing it. Evidences tell us material possessions such as cars, houses, luxury or life experiences which includes holidays, sporting events, other life events or interpersonal relationships which one may form in social clubs, parties, etc. may lead to more happiness or may diminish it.

According to Belk (1984) "Materialism is the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions and possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction" From the definition given by Beck we can clearly showcase that material possessions are extremely important and is highly significant in people's life. Possessions as extrinsic rewards is another name of happiness materialism, which implies that these possessions are external rewards and satisfy the needs of individuals. Many studies indicate that subjective and psychological wellbeing is negatively correlated to happiness materialism. Many evidences also attempt to suggest that people continue to buy even when they have proper idea that this is related to his/her short-term happiness. For example, in the beginning buying a new video game is exciting and thus brings happiness but after a particular period of time person gets bored and demands a new one which has more attractive features and whenever it comes to a market, previous video game seems less satisfying and exciting which leads to purchasing of more goods, striving for more happiness which in turn brings optimum level of satisfaction in an individual. This whole phenomenon is based on the adaptation level theory. There are other evidences which suggests that

people often continue to purchase materialistic goods or have materialistic possessions in order to compare themselves with other people such as friends, relatives, etc. These evidences are based on the theory given by Festinger named as social comparison theory.

Materialism can hinder happiness in various ways such as the satisfaction which we get from purchasing the product does not lead to lifelong happiness and the excitement will eventually wear off. Materialistic possession leads to instant gratification which results in distraction from important goals. The fact which underlies here is that whatever we get, we will never be completely satisfied and we will crave for more things which are new and more attractive. Moreover, spending on life experiences remain life time and gives us a lot of memories which results in greater happiness whereas joy of buying something fades away overtime.

Life Satisfaction

It is the way in which people show their emotions, feelings and how they feel about their directions and options for the future. It is a measure of well-being assessed in terms of mood, satisfaction with relationships, achieved goals, self-concepts and self-perceived ability to cope with one's daily life. Life satisfaction involves a favorable attitude towards one's life rather than an assessment of current feelings. Their attitude towards life whether it is positive or negative. Life satisfaction comes from the experience and opportunities received from the past. Life satisfaction is a key part of subjective wellbeing.

Factors affecting life satisfaction are Personality, Self-esteem, Outlook on life and Age . The personality factor like openness to experience is positively correlated with life satisfaction. Socialization can also contribute to overall well-being. Social support from others has been shown to affect the well-being of adults and the overall health of those individuals. Therefore, people who tend to communicate and who are considered to be more open to others would have a higher-level of life satisfaction. Heritability has been shown to have an effect on how one is ranked in terms of life satisfaction. Heritability plays a role in both personality and individual experience.

The present study

Materialism is a belief that money and possessions are the most important aspects of life. Materialism can influence life satisfaction both positively and negatively. Definition of satisfaction and materialism differs from individual to individual.

The reason for conducting the study is due to the change in the perspective of people as they evaluate their happiness or success in terms of materialistic possessions they have. There is a need to understand the materialistic needs of an individual and how this brings them life satisfaction.

Materialism has a conflicting role in determining life satisfaction. Materialism, on the one hand, may lead to subjective wellbeing, but on the other hand, might lead to dissatisfaction with life overall.

The purpose of the research is to study the relationship between Success Materialism and Happiness Materialism and to show how these two dimensions of materialism influence an individual's Life Satisfaction.

Procedure

Permission for participation of students was obtained from authorities of the university and students voluntarily participated in the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. Prior to administration of measures, all participants were told about the purpose of the study.

Method

This study is a correlative one and the statistical population included middle aged males working in private sector with at least of 5 years of experience, residing in Jaipur. Males (40-50 years) which were selected using purposive sampling method. To analyze data, calculating mean and standard deviation were used in the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation.

TOOLS OF THE STUDY

- Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLWS) (1985)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was first created by researchers Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) and published in an article in the Journal of Personality Assessment. The SWLS is a 5-item self-report questionnaire that measures one's evaluation of satisfaction with life in general (e.g. "The conditions of my life are excellent").

- Material Values Scale (MVS) (2013)

The Material Values Scale is an instrument to assess beliefs about the importance to own material things. This instrument originally consists of the three subscales: 'centrality', 'success', and 'happiness'.

This 15 item version of the scale has three subscales namely for success, happiness and centrality. Each item is scored on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree."

RESULT

Table 1: Coefficients of Correlation between Life Satisfaction, Success and Happiness

	LIFE SATISFACTION	SUCCESS	HAPPINESS
LS Pearson Correlation Sig.(2tailed) N	1 83	-.128 83	-.339** 83
S Pearson Correlation Sig.(2tailed) N	-.128 83	1 83	.272* 83
H Pearson Correlation Sig.(2tailed) N	-.339** 83	.272* 83	1 83

**Correlation of significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation of significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result shows a significant negative correlation between success materialism and life satisfaction. The more we target achieving materialistic goals, the less we expect of success as involving character. It is seen that success materialism leads to dissatisfaction in a person with their current standard of living, which in turn negatively influences overall life satisfaction.

Materialistic success can hinder life satisfaction as it creates materialistic life goals and materialistic achievements which are considered successful, when opinions of individuals around approves it. People recognize and consider a person successful only on the idea of it which hinders the self-worth of a person and directly it effects a person's well-being leading to dissatisfaction with their life. Research studies has deliberated the roles of success materialism adversely affect the life satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

Materialism is the belief that money and possessions are the most important things in life. Success is measured based on materialism for so many reasons. These ideologies have been existing from centuries now. We tend to validate ones achievements and accomplishments based on their materialistic possessions.

Success materialism is that tendency to value monetary success and material possession over other goals in life. Specifically, we are more likely to define success by what someone owns. If they're not deriving a way of self-worth from other parts of our lives, one might feel owning lots of things can prove they're successful. Success materialism (wealth and material possessions are an indication of success in life) positively influences life satisfaction by boosting one's economic motivation. Success materialism may contribute to increased levels of subjective well-being through a different psychological path. Previous research show that materialistic people (those who believe that material acquisition and possessions is a sign of success in life) have a higher desire for money, income, and material goods, which motivates them to work harder (Richins and Dawson 1992).

According to the hypothesis (H1), it was proposed that there will be a significant relationship between Success Materialism and Life Satisfaction. The correlation between Success Materialism and Life Satisfaction was found to be -0.128 which is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In today's society, it's almost impossible not to develop any materialistic tendencies. We are taught that being successful in this world means being rich and famous. People are materialistic to the extent that they place acquiring possessions at the centre of their lives, judge success by the number and quality of ones possessions and see these possessions as vital to happiness.

Materialistic individuals are less satisfied and grateful for their lives, have less purpose, feel less competent in general, are antisocial and have weaker connections with others. Indeed, when it comes to relationships, those with materialistic goals not only rate their own social interactions more negatively, but people in general rate their relationships with materialistic as less satisfying as well.

According to Belk (1984) "Materialism is the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions and possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction" From this definition, we can clearly understand that the importance people place on their possessions, is of a high significance to them personally. Happiness Materialism is also described as possessions as extrinsic rewards. That is, possessions are external rewards in an attempt to satisfy needs. Evidence from prior research has found a negative relationship between materialism and subjective well-being, psychological wellbeing.

According to the hypothesis (H2), it was proposed that there will be a significant relationship between Happiness Materialism and Life Satisfaction. The correlation between Happiness Materialism and Life Satisfaction was found to be -0.339 which is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A potential link between materialism and happiness or life satisfaction has not been directly addressed by most critics. However, the tone of their statements implies that they expect materialistic people to be less happy than those with other values (Pollay 1986; Schudson 1984). For materialistic people, material possession is frequently characterized as an addictive drug of which consumers need larger and larger doses of, to maintain happiness.

While theoretical support for a link between material values and happiness is neither strong nor direct, adaptation theory (Brickman and Campbell 1971; Campbell 1980) seems to suggest a negative link between the two. This theory suggests that individuals adapt to a level of satisfaction or comfort. Thus, when a desired status or result is obtained, after a time the expectation level of what one's state should be rises, resulting in a gap between state and expectation. This gap between state and expectation is dissatisfaction (French, Rodgers, and Cobb 1974). Thus, those expecting material possessions to bring happiness may in fact experience satisfaction from their goods for a time, but through adaptation processes dissatisfaction will eventually reassert itself. Belk's (1984, 1985) studies of attitudes toward material possessions both found a negative relationship between these attitudes and happiness.

So the findings of previous studies support the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between happiness materialism and life satisfaction.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Consent to Participate

Informed consent was obtained from all the individuals participants included in the study.

Consent for Publication

We declare that this manuscript is original, has not been published before and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere. We know of no conflicts of interest associated with this publication. As Corresponding Author (Dr. Sneha Nathawat), I confirm that the manuscript has been read and approved for submission by another named author as well.

Author Contributions

SN conceptualized and designed the study. AS was involved in data collection. SN performed the data analyses. PS prepared the first draft of the manuscript. GC and RJ revised and improved the quality of the analyses performed, critically revised the draft, and made important contributions. All the authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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