



Are Compulsive Buyers Impulsive? Evidence of Poor Response Inhibition and Delay Discounting

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Abstract

Compulsive buying (CB) is not formally classified in the diagnostic and statistical manual (DSM), but it is widely considered an impulse-control disorder not otherwise specified. However, relatively few studies have systematically examined impulsivity or inhibition-related functions in CB. The aim of the present study was therefore to examine impulsivity as indexed by a multidimensional self-report measure of impulsivity (BIS) and behavioural paradigms that assess impulsive responding in the form of delay discounting and response inhibition. In a sample of compulsive buyers ($n = 26$), pathological gamblers ($n = 23$), and healthy controls ($n = 26$) analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that both self-report and behavioural responses of the CB group were comparable to that of pathological gamblers, reflecting elevated impulsivity in comparison to healthy controls. Results may be interpreted in the context of models of gambling pathology that underscore the failure of heavily discounted consequences to deter engagement in maladaptive behaviours and that highlight the role of poor response inhibition in disorder maintenance. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

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Keywords: compulsive buying; impulse control; impulsivity; pathological gambling; delay discounting; response inhibition

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