

# Gender Differences on Materialism and its Psychological Correlates

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## Abstract

Over the past years, materialism has emerged as an important topic to research in human sciences. Materialism is in simple language considered as the value system placed on the collection of material gains. We live in times when one of the most important values has come to be the possession of wealth and material goods. Materialism is growing at worldwide level. The developing countries are experiencing the effect of western culture more seriously. The present study sample contains 200 adults from Haryana state age from 21 to 30 years. The present study wants to investigate gender differences on males and female on materialism and materialism is negatively correlated with quality of life and happiness. The results of this study show that there is no significant gender difference on materialism. Materialism is not significantly correlated with quality of life and happiness in males but in females it is negatively correlated with quality of life and happiness.

**Keyword:** Gender, Adults, Materialism, Quality of life, Happiness.

## Introduction:

**Materialism** is defined as “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions” (Belk, 1984, p. 291). Belk conceptualized three traits of materialistic people: possession, non-generosity, envy. The explanation of Materialism is considered from socio-cultural views and individual differences views (Hunt et al., 1996). Materialism is called the personal values of materialism, which was first developed by Richins (1999). He considered that materialism is a system of personal values. Individuals who value materialism are particularly possible to follow material possessions and the buildup of returns and wealth (Richins and Dawson, 1992). Richins also used three concepts to explain the structure of materialism: centrality, happiness, and success. Seriously, materialism has been conceptualized by a variety of scholars according to individual differences perspective in different ways (Shrum et al., 2012). Materialism has been conceptualized as an traits, value, attitude, state, belief, lifestyle, by many researchers like Ahuvia, (2008) Belk, (1985), Chang and Arkin, (2002) and Richins and Dawson, (1992). Inglehart, (1990) felt that social milieu and formative felt affluence also contributed towards socio-political materialism. A person who lacks felt influential wealth or was raised in a materialistic social setting is likely to develop socio-political materialism. According to Inglehart socio-political materialism is triggered by a chronic focus on lower order needs. Oxford English Dictionary conceptualized materialism as “devotion to material desires and needs, to the neglect of spiritual matters; a way of opinion, tendency, and life-based entirely on material interests.” Ward and Wackman (1971) described materialism as “an orientation which considers money and material objects as critical for social progress and personal happiness.”

**Quality of life** comprises a person's appraisal of how great his life is as far as different parts of his life. In this modern world, every human wants satisfaction in their life. Man wants to consume more but the production is less than he consumes. Because of this one feels dissatisfaction in one's life. “Quality of life is a subjective, multidimensional experience of well-being that is culturally constructed as individuals seek safety and security, a sense of integrity and meaning in life, and a sense of belonging in one's social network” (Kagawa-Singer et al., 2010). Quality of life denotes one's mental and physical well-being in all spheres of life. Quality of life is a wider concept than well-being. It means sound health physically and psychologically, adequate sources in terms of education, family, employment, and in all contexts of life.

Many factors affect a person's quality of life. Such as income, bodily health, mental well-being, societal life as well as all aspects of the environment in which a person survives. Fulfillment with the way of life, thusly, is controlled by assessments of one's genuine way of life contrasted with a set objective. Many researchers have tried to investigate the link amid materialism and life contentment.

**Happiness** as Buss (2000) stated that human beings have a common goal to achieve well-being and happiness. Happiness in general is a feeling of overall well-being, a sense of achievement, positive attitudes, etc. Veenhoven (1984) defined happiness a show much an individual evaluates his overall quality of life favorable. Literature shows that when the status standard is raised, the search for happiness begins again which causes happiness to be short-lived (Michalos, 1985). Belk (1984) suggested that envy, non-generosity, and possessiveness are related negatively to happiness in life. In a study, happiness was found to be inversely related to materialism in the USA and Singapore; also adults of Singapore were less happy and higher on materialism as compared to adults of the USA (Swinyard et al., 2001). It can be stated that happiness increases with the acquisition of material goods. A

high collection of goods resulted in a high intensity of happiness and hence higher life contentment. Materialists found happiness to be positively associated with material possessions than non-materialist (Millar & Thomas, 2009).

## **Review of Related Literature**

Materialism is in a simple language considered as the worth system put on the assortment of material gains. We live on occasions when one of the main qualities has come to be the owner of assets and material merchandise. Materialism is growing at a worldwide level. One specific perspective identified with utilization that has increased boundless consideration is – materialism. Noticing the significance of materialism, Twitchell (1999) kept up, “of the 20th century’s various – isms, it has been the one that has ultimately triumphed” (p. 16). For sure, the “Association of Consumer Research” has supported a meeting dedicated to materialism, which additionally proves the significance of the subject for customer conduct specialists and advertisers (Rudmin & Richins, 1992).

## **Gender Differences on Materialism**

Investigators showed that there are gender differences that existed between men and women. It indicated that women are likely to purchase figurative and self-expressive things that are related to the feelings and outer look of personality and men pay for leisure commodities and instruments that are related to activity and independence. Bindah and Othman (2012) researched and found in their study that there is a gender difference in materialism; female adults are more positively related to materialism comparison to male adults. Rinaldi and Bonanomi (2011) found in their study that females are more materialistic and instrumentalist compare to males. Olivia et al. (2012) found in their study that adult students in Hong Kong have more attitudes toward possessing materialistic goods than females. Karebati and Cemalciar (2010) conducted a relative study among college undergraduates from three different countries like China, Mexico, and the USA in which men were more materialistic than women in the Chinese students and there is a refusal of gender difference found in USA and Mexico. Weaver et al. (2011) reported that males are unlikely to keep in obsessive buying contrast to females in Australia.

## **Quality of Life and Materialism**

In this modern world, every human wants satisfaction in their life. Man wants to consume more but the production is less than he consumes. Because of this one feels dissatisfaction in one’s life. Satisfaction with standard of living, in turn, is determined by evaluations of one’s real standard of living compared to a set goal. Materialist experience greater dissatisfaction with their standard of living, which in turn spills over on the whole life causing dissatisfaction with life in general. Materialists experience dissatisfaction with their standard of living because they set standard of living goals that are exaggerated and idealistically high. Materialists’ deserved standard-of-living expectations are affected by the tendency to engage in equity comparisons involving income and work. Thus, materialists compare themselves with others that appear to have extra income and worked no harder. These equity comparisons generate feelings of unfairness, inequality, annoyance, or jealousy. Materialists’ standard-of living prospect based on minimum needs are influenced by the predisposition to spend more than generate income. This liking to over consume and under produce may be partly responsible for materialists’ exaggerated and value-laden hope of their standard of living. In a meta-analysis of studies treating the association, Wright and Larsen (1993) found a stable, medium-sized negative correlation. Many theorists argue that the negative relationship between materialism and life satisfaction can be explained through the mediation effect of self-evaluations of standard of living. Over all life satisfaction (quality of life) is partly determined by satisfaction with standard of living. Sirgy (1998) disclosed that materialism is caused for disappointment in life. Person’s set objectives contrast with real objectives in life. When an individual is high on materialism and sets his life objective very high, he often encounters disappointment and trouble in life. When materialistic individuals think about the way of life and they will in general utilize full of feeling-based desires in the spot of intellectually based desires. Materialists experience more prominent disappointment with their way of life. Materialists get the experience of disappointment with their way of life since they place a way of life objective that is overstated and hopefully high. Materialists’ merited way of life desires is influenced by the propensity to take part in value correlations including pay and work. In this way, materialists contrast themselves with others that show up to have additional pay and worked no harder. These value examinations produce sensations of shamefulness, disparity, disturbance, or envy. Materialists’ way of life possibilities dependent on the least necessities is impacted through the inclination to pay out additional than produce pay. The fondness of over-devour and less produce might be incompletely answerable for materialists’ misrepresented and worth loaded any desire for their way of life.

## **Happiness and Materialism**

Buss (2000) stated that human beings have a common goal to achieve wellbeing and happiness. Happiness in general is feeling of overall well-being, a sense of achievement, positive attitudes, etc. Happiness will be defined as the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his or her life-as-a-whole favorably (Veenhoven, 1984). Literature shows that when the status standard is raised, the search for happiness begins again which causes happiness to be short-lived (Michalos, 1985). Belk, 1984 suggested that envy, non-generosity and possessiveness are related negatively to happiness in life. In a study, happiness was found to be negatively related to materialism in USA and Singapore, also adults of Singapore were less happy and higher on materialism as compared to adults of USA (Swinyard, Kau & Phau, 2001). It can be stated that happiness increases with acquisition of material

goods. High level of goods resulted in high level of happiness and hence higher life satisfaction. Materialists found happiness to be positively associated with material possessions than non-materialist (Millar & Thomas, 2009). In a study conducted on students of age 18-30 years, it was found that male and female respondents are equally materialistic and happiness levels moderate materialism levels and life satisfaction. This study explained the role of happiness and materialism in life satisfaction (Sidhu & Hean Foo, 2015). According to Van Boven & Gilovich, (2003) when people purchase things for gain experiences that gives them more happiness compare to those people purchase things for only their possession. They found that 57% participants felt much happier from their experiential purchases and only 34% participant felt happiness from their material purchases. They also studied correlations between gender, age, level of education, annual income in the USA and the preference for material purchases or experiential purchases. But the correlation was not significant (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003; Witter et al., 1984). Most critics or researchers did not find any direct link between happiness and materialism. However, the voice of their writings showed that they suppose materialistic persons feel less happiness compare to other people with other values (Polly, 1986; Schudson, 1984). Materialism possession is assumed many times as a addictive drug of which materialistic requires more and more to get or maintain happiness.

### **Rationale of the present research**

In the developed and developing countries, there is development of money and wealth; everyone wants to spend their money to get happiness and satisfaction in their life. India is facing the influence of western modernization. Materialism is in a simple language considered as the worth system put on the assortment of material gains. We live on occasions when one of the main qualities has come to be the owner of assets and material merchandise. Materialism is growing at a worldwide level. One specific perspective identified with utilization that has increased boundless consideration is – materialism. Noticing the significance of materialism, Twitchell (1999) kept up, “of the 20th century’s various – isms, it has been the one that has ultimately triumphed” (p. 16). For sure, the “Association of Consumer Research” has supported a meeting dedicated to materialism, which additionally proves the significance of the subject for customer conduct specialists and advertisers (Rudmin & Richins, 1992). Previous research considered materialism as evil as well as worth. Materialism is correlated with other variables with different degree. There are few studies conducted in this area particularly in Indian perspective. Present research is a co-relational study that wants to investigate gender differences on materialism and its relationship with other psychological correlates like quality of life and happiness.

### **Objectives:**

1. To find out the gender difference in materialism.
2. To study relationship between quality of life and materialism.
3. To study relationship between happiness and materialism.

### **Hypotheses:**

1. There will be significant gender differences on materialism among adults.
2. There will be significant relationship between quality of life and materialism.
3. There will be significant relationship between happiness and materialism.

### **Methodology**

#### **Sample**

Sample of this research consist 200 adults from Fatehabad district. Out of these 100 is adult males and 100 is adults female.

#### **Tools/Instruments scheduled to be used in this research**

New Materialism Scale (Trinh and Phau, 2012)

This scale was developed by Trinh and Phau in 2002. This scale is based on the idea of the materialism of Richins and Dawson. Richins and Dawson (1992) define “materialism as acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness and possession-defined success.”

WHO Quality of Life Brief – ( World Health Organization, 1996)

This test was developed from the WHO QOL-100, to assess the mental health of a person. Today there is a need to assess mental health beyond diseases. Most of the measures of the quality of life have been constructed in America and the U.K. so translation and use of this type of scale in a different culture are not satisfactory. It has been constructed for a humanistic and holistic approach to health care. It is a shorter version of the original scale. The original scale is suitable for large research projects.

Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle and Hill, 2002)

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) derived from Oxford happiness inventor. This is a good way to get a snapshot of the

current level of happiness. It is a compact scale for psychological well-being. It is easy to use. It comprises 6 points Likert scale. This scale is uni-dimensional and it includes 29 items.

## Results & Discussion

One of the objectives of this study was to compare the male and female on materialism. The hypothesis related to this objective was that *there will be significant difference between male and female on materialism*. The mean scores on 10 different measures and respective t-values for different measures are shown in table 1.1.

A perusal of Table 1.1 shows that males and females differed significantly ( $p < .01$  and  $p < .05$ ) on measures of materialism.

**Table 1.1**

**Descriptive analysis and comparison of males and females on the tested variables**

Variable	Males (100)		Females (100)		t	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Success	11.15	4.45	12.35	5.323	-.20	.984
Happiness	13.51	4.416	13.55	4.953	.45	.656
Essentiality	14.28	4.274	15.11	5.243	.57	.572
Distinctiveness	13.83	4.546	15.23	5.111	-.14	.891
Overall Quality and General Health	7.72	1.596	7.69	1.468	-1.32	.189
Physical Health	23.43	4.284	24.74	3.463	<b>-.2.61*</b>	.009
Psychological Health	21.23	4.197	21.65	3.726	1.52	.129
Environment	26.67	5.168	5.168	5.168	-1.11	.268
Social Relationship	10.90	2.414	11.55	1.935	<b>-.3.17**</b>	.002
Happiness (Measured by Oxford Happiness Questionnaire)	115.40	17.082	118.70	13.723	<b>-.4.67**</b>	.000

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$  level, \* significant at  $p < .05$  level

Hypothesis about difference in male and female on all measures of materialism is rejected. The t-value is not significant for any of the dimensions of materialism. This is consistent with the study of Sindhu and Foo (2015) that showed Singaporean males and females are equal in their materialistic qualities. But many studies contrast this, as Parasher and Jain (2017) pointed out in their study that men were found to be more materialistic than women in materialistic values. Previous studies show the difference between male and female likewise Moschis and Churchill (1978) directed an examination to inspect the connection between man and woman and whether they differ in their materialistic qualities. The result revealed that young men were caught in the trap of materialism. Moore and Moschis (1981) led an investigation with youths to look at family and friend correspondence, and whether gender had any impact on materialism. The outcomes showed males had a more grounded direction towards materialistic mentalities when contrasted with the female. Hypothesis about the difference in male and female on all dimensions of quality of life is partially accepted because only two dimensions physical health and the social relationship has significant t-value for male and female. Hypothesis about the difference in male and female on happiness is accepted. Man and woman have a great difference in happiness measured by oxford happiness questionnaire. Women scored higher on happiness assessed oxford happiness questionnaire than men.

### Intercorrelations among Tested Variables

The aim of the study was to study materialism concerning the quality of life and happiness measured by the oxford happiness questionnaire in different groups for male and group for female. And the hypothesis related to this objective was that *there will be significant relationship of quality of life, happiness (measured by the oxford happiness questionnaire) with materialism.*

Pearson product-moment method was applied to all the variables and the group separately for males and females. For the sake of convenience and meaningful presentation, the bivariate correlation is shown in Table 1.2 to 1.3 for males and female having groups. These have been discussed under the following headings:

**Table 1.2**

**Intercorrelation Matrix (21-30 Male: N= 100)**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Q
A	1	<b>.52**</b>	<b>.46**</b>	<b>.53**</b>	.02	.03	.12	.08	.04	-.07
B		1	<b>.69**</b>	<b>.59**</b>	.06	-.03	-.08	.06	-.03	-.13
C			1	<b>.58**</b>	.02	.04	-.04	.01	-.11	-.03
D				1	.01	.02	-.02	.04	-.10	-.09
E					1	<b>.54**</b>	<b>.66**</b>	<b>.45**</b>	<b>.39**</b>	<b>.45**</b>
F						1	<b>.62**</b>	<b>.58**</b>	<b>.51**</b>	<b>.58**</b>
G							1	<b>.59**</b>	<b>.46**</b>	<b>.49**</b>
H								1	<b>.39**</b>	<b>.49**</b>
I									1	<b>.37**</b>
Q										1

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$  level, \* significant at  $p < .05$  level

Codes of Variables (A= Success, B= Happiness, C= Essentiality, D= Distinctiveness, E= Overall Quality and General Health, F= Physical Health, G= Psychological Health, H= Environment, I=Social Relationship, Q= Happiness (Measured by Oxford Happiness Questionnaire))

First objective of the study was to study the materialism in relation with quality of life. And the hypothesis related to this objective was that *it is expected that there will be relationship between quality of life, happiness and materialism.* For this purpose, correlational analysis was performed on 2 groups. Table 1.2 to 4.24 shows the results of these correlational analyses.

Table 1.2 shows a correlation between materialism and quality of life that none of the dimensions of materialism and quality of life is correlated with each other in the males for the 21 to 30 age groups.

Table 1.2 shows the association between materialism and happiness measured by the oxford happiness questionnaire in males who are in the 21-30 age groups. None of the dimensions of materialism and happiness measured by the oxford happiness questionnaire significantly correlated with each other in the male in the age range of 21-30 years.

Hypothesis about the inverse relationship between both variables is rejected. This finding is consistent with earlier studies. The expression "Quality of life" comprises a person's appraisal of how great his life is as far as different parts of his life. Kahle et al. (1986) discovered in their study that materialistic people give less importance to interpersonal relations and give more importance to personal financial security. Wright and Larsen (1993), in their meta-study, found that there is a steady, not so high negative relationship. Many scholars argued that there is an inverse link between materialism and life fulfillment that can be clarified through the intervention impact of self-assessments on the way of life.

**Table 1.3****Intercorrelation Matrix (21-30 Female: N= 100)**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Q
A	1	<b>.66**</b>	<b>.60**</b>	<b>.57**</b>	.00	<b>-.23*</b>	-.10	-.16	-.13	<b>-.29**</b>
B		1	<b>.73**</b>	<b>.63**</b>	.02	<b>-.32**</b>	-.18	<b>-.24*</b>	-0.8	<b>-.23*</b>
C			1	.69	.04	<b>-.27**</b>	-.10	-.17	.02	-.16
D				1	.05	-.10	-.03	-.08	.12	-.07
E					1	<b>.33**</b>	<b>.41**</b>	<b>.45**</b>	.16	<b>.23*</b>
F						1	<b>.50**</b>	<b>.59**</b>	<b>.36**</b>	<b>.35**</b>
G							1	<b>.59**</b>	<b>.20*</b>	<b>.39**</b>
H								1	<b>.31**</b>	<b>.28**</b>
I									1	<b>.37**</b>
Q										1

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$  level, \* significant at  $p < .05$  level

Codes of Variables (A= Success, B= Happiness, C= Essentiality, D= Distinctiveness, E= Overall Quality and General Health, F= Physical Health, G= Psychological Health, H= Environment, I=Social Relationship, Q= Happiness (Measured by Oxford Happiness Questionnaire))

Table 1.3 shows that success is significantly and negatively correlated with physical health ( $r = -.23$ ,  $p < .05$  level) measures of the quality of life in females who are between 21 to 30 years old. Essentiality is negatively and significantly correlated with physical health ( $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .01$  level). Happiness is negatively and significantly related to physical health ( $r = -.32$ ,  $p < .01$  level) and environment ( $r = -.24$ ,  $p < .05$  level) in females who are between 21 to 30 years old. Females may have in good physical conditions, active in daily activities and free from substance abuse, they may have freedom, physical safety, and security, good home environment. They may fewer chances of females to engage in material thought that property is essential to satisfaction and well-being in life. The correlation presented in Table 4.25 reveals that only two measures of materialism success ( $r = -.29$ ,  $p < .01$  level) and happiness ( $r = -.23$ ,  $p < .05$  level) is negatively and significantly correlated with happiness measured by the oxford happiness questionnaire in the females for the 21-30 age group. Literature shows that when the status standard is raised, the search for happiness begins again which causes happiness to be short-lived (Michalos, 1985). Belk (1984) suggested that envy, non-generosity, and possessiveness are related negatively to happiness in life.

### Conclusion

The results of this study show that there is no significant gender difference on materialism. Materialism is not significantly correlated with quality of life and happiness in males but in females it is negatively correlated with quality of life and happiness. On the basis of results the hypothesis related to gender difference on materialism is rejected. The hypothesis regarding to significant correlation among materialism, quality of life and happiness is partially accepted because materialism is negatively correlated with quality of life and happiness in females groups only. There is no correlation found in males group among them.

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