

Shopping 'til you drop? Now the experts have a diagnosis

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For the first time, international experts in psychology have built a framework to diagnose Compulsive Buying-Shopping Disorder—promising help for people struggling to manage their spending behaviour and mental wellbeing.

The new guidelines, published in the *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, confirms that excessive buying and shopping can be so serious as to constitute a disorder. Hence, researchers and clinicians need to develop more targeted interventions for this debilitating condition.

The [international collaboration](#), led by Professor Mike Kyrios from Flinders University's Órama Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing and Professor Astrid Müller from the Hannover Medical School in Germany, say evidence-based criteria for Compulsive Buying-Shopping Disorder (CBSD) are long overdue.

The phenomenon of excessive or uncontrolled buying or shopping has been described in a clinical setting for more than a century. Surprisingly, to date there is no formally accepted diagnosis for the disorder, despite being a highly prevalent, disabling and growing problem that contributes to overconsumption and debt.

Professor Kyrios describes the findings as a "game-changer" for research in the area of excessive buying, providing a springboard for much-needed treatments and better diagnostic processes in the future.

"In over 20 years, since I started investigating excessive buying, there has been an absence of commonly agreed [diagnostic criteria](#) which has hampered the perceived seriousness of the problem, as well as research efforts and consequently the development of evidence-based treatments," Professor Kyrios says.

This will now be possible with the world's leading experts agreeing on diagnostic criteria for the disorder, he says.

In the study, 138 international experts (researchers and clinicians) from 35 countries were evaluated to develop a consensus about proposed diagnostic criteria.

A key feature of the new diagnostic criteria is "excessive purchasing of items without utilising them for their intended purposes," with excessiveness described as "diminished control over buying/shopping." Another characteristic of the disorder is that "buying/shopping is used to regulate internal states, e.g. generating [positive emotions](#) or relieving negative mood."

"Clients who show excessive buying behaviour commonly have difficulties in regulating their emotions, so buying or shopping is then used to feel better. Paradoxically, if someone with Compulsive Buying-Shopping Disorder goes on a [shopping](#) trip, this will briefly improve their negative feelings, but will soon lead to strong feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment."

More information: Astrid Müller et al. Proposed diagnostic criteria for compulsive buying-shopping disorder: A Delphi expert consensus study, *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* (2021). [DOI: 10.1556/2006.2021.00013](#)

Provided by Flinders University

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