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Review of the Doctoral Dissertation

by Agata Kocimska-Bortnowska, MA, entitled *Excessive Buying as a Means of Regulating Boredom: Moderating Role of Materialism*, prepared under the supervision of Professor Agata Gąsiorowska.

The doctoral dissertation submitted to me for review addresses the question of whether excessive buying behavior may serve a compensatory function in response to the experience of boredom, with materialism considered as a potential moderator of this relationship. The doctoral candidate conducted an extensive research program comprising five studies. The dissertation is 120 pages long, including the references and appendices. It consists of a theoretical introduction providing the basis for the hypotheses, a presentation of the successive empirical studies, and a general discussion integrating the findings obtained across the studies.

I consider the research topic to be interesting, timely, and relevant from the perspectives of both the psychology of emotion and consumer psychology. Boredom is a common experience, and the question of the strategies people use to regulate it is important not only theoretically but

also practically. Particularly interesting is the conceptualization of buying behavior as a potential means of both increasing stimulation and restoring a sense of meaning.

The dissertation is written clearly and concisely. The text is well structured, and the Author skillfully presents the theoretical foundations of boredom and its potential consequences. I also positively evaluate the use of up-to-date international literature on the subject.

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest strengths of the dissertation is its extensive and methodologically diverse research program. The Author does not limit herself to the commonly used cross-sectional design but combines experimental and diary studies, employing different methods of boredom induction as well as different approaches to its measurement. This approach allows for greater triangulation of the findings: diary studies make it possible to examine the relationships of interest in everyday life, whereas experiments enable more rigorous testing of the proposed causal relationships. This is also consistent with the assumptions underlying the research program, in which methodological complementarity was adopted as one of its key elements. The use of preregistration in conducting the studies also deserves particularly positive recognition.

I have several comments regarding the reporting of the studies. In my view, the methodological descriptions could be structured more consistently in accordance with the logic of the Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS). In particular, the Method section and its subsections covering participants, procedure, materials and measures should be clearly distinguished, as should a section describing the statistical analysis plan, especially for more complex models. Some passages in the Results section, for example on pages 50 and 86, appear

to go beyond the reporting of findings and include their interpretation; I would suggest moving such comments to the Discussion section.

In a multi-study dissertation, it would also be helpful to include a brief discussion following each individual study. Although this is not a prerequisite for an appropriate dissertation structure, it would make it easier for the reader to follow how the findings of each study inform the subsequent stages of the research program. It would also help distinguish conclusions that follow directly from a particular study from interpretations formulated at the level of the research program as a whole.

One question that arose for me when reading the dissertation concerns the conceptual scope of the term *excessive buying*. It would be useful to clarify the extent to which the individual studies address excessive buying as opposed to increased buying activity. A greater number of items purchased or a larger amount of money spent on a given day does not, in itself, necessarily indicate problematic or compulsive behavior. In the literature on compulsive buying, key definitional features include, among others, loss of control, recurrent behavior, and the presence of distress or negative consequences. Therefore, the Discussion should distinguish more clearly between increased buying, impulsive buying, excessive buying, and compulsive buying, and the scope of the conclusions should be appropriately limited where the dependent variable primarily reflects the intensity of consumer behavior.

In the Introduction, the Author formulated three main hypotheses and provided a theoretical rationale for them. She also formulated study-specific hypotheses before each individual study. However, I found the theoretical justification for these specific hypotheses to be insufficiently developed.

Evaluation of the Studies

In Study 1, the Author presented a review of experimental paradigms for inducing boredom. This is a valuable component of the dissertation, particularly because different experimental procedures are employed in the subsequent studies. The identification of five main experimental methods for measuring boredom appears particularly valuable.

Study 2 employed an experimental design, which I evaluate positively. I have, however, several comments. The description lacks some information necessary for a more comprehensive evaluation of the procedure. Most importantly, it is unclear how the participants were recruited and from which population they were drawn. There was also a marked gender imbalance in the sample. Such an imbalance does not necessarily undermine the validity of the experimental effect, provided that participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions; however, it may limit the generalizability of the findings. It would also be interesting to examine, at least exploratorily, whether gender moderated the observed effects.

In my view, the compensation procedure also requires further clarification. Did participants receive real money, and were they allowed to keep any unspent amount? Did the products they purchased actually become their property? If participants selected products from a physical pool of items, was this pool replenished after each session so that every participant had the same set of options available? In the case of the option to retain the money for later use, it would also be important to specify exactly when the payment was made. These issues are relevant for assessing the extent to which the purchasing decisions were consequential and the potential role of preferences for immediate versus delayed gratification.

The issue of delayed gratification also appears at the level of the hypotheses, but in my view it requires a more extensive theoretical justification. If one of the assumed consequences of boredom is an increased preference for immediate rewards, the role of this mechanism within the main theoretical model should be explained more clearly.

Study 3, which employs a diary study design, is particularly interesting. Its strengths include the large sample size and the opportunity to examine the relationships of interest in participants' natural environments. The study included 1,006 participants from Poland and the United Kingdom. At the same time, in the case of diary data, not only the number of participants but also the number of observations per participant and the completeness of the data are particularly important.

The description of this study lacks detailed information on how participants were recruited in both countries, the platform and devices used to complete the assessments, the reminder system, the methods used to encourage participants to continue their participation, and the compensation scheme. It would also be useful to report the total number of daily observations obtained, the mean, median, and range of completed assessments per participant, the compliance rate for the planned assessments, and the pattern of missing data.

The decision to include in the analyses participants who completed only a single diary assessment requires particular clarification. This approach is not necessarily statistically inappropriate; however, a participant with only one observation provides no information about within-person change.

An interesting extension of the analyses would be to make use of the temporal structure of the data. It would be possible to examine whether boredom on day t predicts buying behavior on

day $t + 1$ after controlling for prior levels of buying behavior and, conversely, whether buying behavior on day t predicts boredom on day $t + 1$ after controlling for boredom on day t , using, for example, a multilevel lagged model or a Dynamic Structural Equation Modeling (DSEM) approach.

Another issue concerns conducting the study simultaneously in Poland and the United Kingdom. The theoretical rationale for selecting these two countries is not entirely clear to me. Was the aim to replicate the same effect across two different contexts and thereby increase its generalizability, or were theoretically meaningful differences between the countries expected? If a similar pattern of results was hypothesized, this expectation should be justified more thoroughly. If, on the other hand, country-specific effects emerged, these differences deserve more extensive analysis in the dissertation and in the General Discussion.

The role of demographic variables also raises an important question. They could be treated as control variables, but their potential role as between-person predictors or moderators is also worth considering. It would be interesting to examine whether the main associations are similar across groups differing in gender and age. With regard to actual buying behavior, a discussion of financial resources also seems particularly relevant, as these may constrain an individual's ability to engage in buying behavior regardless of their motivation to do so.

Study 4 employs a novel method of boredom induction. A particular strength of the research program is the prior validation of the Clock Task.

In the description of the Study 4 sample, participants are reported as being from the US, whereas compensation is subsequently reported in pounds. The difference in currency does not

necessarily indicate an error, as it may reflect the payment system used by the recruitment platform; however, this issue requires clarification and greater consistency in reporting.

The General Discussion provides a clear summary of the findings from the entire research program and outlines its contribution to the literature. In my view, however, more attention should be devoted to comparing the findings obtained in Poland and the United Kingdom and to explaining the theoretical implications of any similarities and differences between the two countries.

In the section on limitations and future research directions, it would also be interesting to consider alternative ways of regulating boredom. Buying is only one of many possible activities undertaken in response to boredom. Future research could compare buying behavior with other strategies, both potentially adaptive and potentially problematic, and examine the factors that determine the choice of a particular regulation strategy.

The question also arises as to whether excessive buying should be considered an adaptive or maladaptive strategy. Buying may increase stimulation or effectively reduce boredom in the short term. Its problematic nature should be considered primarily when it becomes excessive, difficult to control, or leads to negative consequences. An interesting question, therefore, is whether the same behavior can function as an adaptive regulation strategy in the short term but become maladaptive in the long term.

I also wonder whether the findings obtained in this dissertation could serve as a basis for designing intervention studies and, if so, what form such interventions might take.

In conclusion, I evaluate the research program presented in the dissertation very highly. The Author demonstrates a very strong theoretical and methodological background, as well as the

ability to formulate original research questions, design methodologically diverse studies, and analyze and interpret their findings. I particularly appreciate the move beyond a single methodological approach through the combination of experimental and diary studies and the use of different methods of boredom induction and measurement. The comments raised in this review do not detract from my highly positive assessment of the scientific value of the research program presented in the dissertation. It is also worth emphasizing that the doctoral candidate has successfully published her research as part of several international research collaborations, which provides a strong basis for anticipating her continued successful academic development.

Taking all of the above into consideration, I conclude that the doctoral dissertation of Agata Kocimska-Bortnowska, MA, meets the requirements for doctoral dissertations set out in Article 187 of the Act on Higher Education and Science and may therefore proceed to the subsequent stages of the doctoral degree procedure.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Bortnowska', is placed below the concluding text.