

Research Progress on the Influence of Materialism and Its Interventions

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Abstract

In recent years, related research on materialism has been widely concerned by scholars at home and abroad, but most of the research is based on its negative influence. Will materialism have a positive impact? How to deal with the negative effects of materialism? It should also cause our concern. This paper introduces the positive and negative effects of materialism from four levels of individual, consumption, organization and society, and summarizes the interventions of materialism. Future research should continue to improve the concept of materialism, expand research levels, and develop effective intervention strategies.

Keywords

Materialism, Influence, Interventions

1. Introduction

With the development of economic reforms and large-scale urbanization, the privatization of property and the establishment of commercial real estate have initiated “the greatest transfer of wealth in human history”. Chinese people are living in the era of wealth explosion with the success of material desire to keep climbing. The trend of materialism prevails in contemporary work and life, and there are many different definitions of materialism, including personality traits (Belk, 1984), values orientation (Richins & Dawson, 1992) and goal orientation (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996). The empirical research on materialism mostly follows the value/target orientation and reflects the values or goals that emphasize the importance of material wealth, social prestige and external image to personal life. High-level materialists usually focus on low-level needs, have high extrinsic motivation and have lower happiness. In recent years, scholars have expanded

the concept of materialism from different perspectives. Recent theory holds that materialism is an identity goal pursuit (Shrum et al., 2013). Materialism is not just equivalent to a specific set of behaviors (such as conspicuous consumption, luxury purchases). Materialism is not a simple dichotomy (materialist and non-materialist), but as a continuum from low to high (Richins, 2017). The extension of these concepts provides a new perspective for the study of the positive effects of materialism.

In recent years, related research on materialism has been widely concerned by psychologists, consumer researchers, and sociologists. Most of the current domestic research focuses on the negative effects of materialism, such as: compulsive consumption, life satisfaction and the decline of happiness level, which has the most research on materialism and happiness, but less research on the positive influence of materialism. In view of this, it is of great practical significance to enhance the research on the positive influence of materialism and to effectively intervene in its negative influence.

This study will systematically review and summarize the positive and negative effects of materialism from four levels of individual, consumption, organization and society, and summarizes the interventions of materialism. In order to understand the weak links of current materialist research, promote the research and application of materialism and point out the direction for future research.

2. The Influence of Materialism

At present, most research has been done on the relationship between materialism and happiness (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002; Richins, 1987), but the research is loose, old and not comprehensive. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive and comprehensive theoretical framework. This research will focus on the positive and negative effects of individuality, consumption, organization and society, as presented in **Table 1**.

2.1. The Influence of Materialism on the Individual Level

Materialism can play an important role in individual life. According to Shrum et al. (2013), materialism has the role of managing identity and maintaining self-awareness. Material pursuits help to meet the need for uniqueness and belonging, and can compensate for threatened self-esteem, because people believe that material and wealth make them more socially attractive, or react to the threat of self-esteem, especially when people think when they are excluded by society (Jiang et al., 2015). In addition, material wealth can help restore and maintain a sense of stability, identity, control and positive self-image, and is a means of reducing stress (Brouskeli & Loumakou, 2014).

Because of the importance of external goals, high-level materialists have unmet internal needs and have many negative effects on individuals' psychology, emotions, and behaviors. For example, materialism and well-being (Kasser et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2017b), self-realization (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002), life satisfaction

Table 1. The influence of materialism.

Classification	Detailed description	Representative research
Individual level	manage identity, maintain self-awareness	Shrum et al., 2013
	Meet the need for uniqueness and belonging	Wong et al., 2011
	Make up for threatened self-esteem	Wong et al., 2011 Jiang et al., 2015
	Relieve pressure	Brouskeli & Loumakou, 2014
	Reduce happiness	Kasser et al., 2014 Wang et al., 2017b
	Reduce life satisfaction	Tsang et al., 2014
	Reduce the quality of life	Roberts & Clement, 2007
	Less positive emotions, higher levels of depression, loneliness, anxiety and substance abuse	Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996; Pieters, 2013
	Reduce self-awareness, quality of relationships, and willingness to participate in community activities	Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002
	promoting economic prosperity and social progress	Sirgy et al., 2013
Consumption level	Driving fashion innovation	Goldsmith et al., 2013
	Marketing staff design promotional information	Heath & Chatzidakis, 2012
	Poor money management skills	Donnelly et al., 2013
	More gambling problems	Carver & McCarty, 2013
	Accumulate huge debts	Watson, 2003
	Compulsive consumption	Donnelly et al., 2013 Dittmar et al., 2014
	Conspicuous consumption	Podoshen, Li, & Zhang, 2011 Dittmar et al., 2014
	Positively related to consumer behavior and attitudes triggered by hedonism, image and status values	Kamal et al., 2013 Workman & Lee, 2011 Srivastava et al., 2001
	Work hard to complete challenging tasks	Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006
	Increase the profits of enterprises and create funds for research and development	Richins & Rudmin, 1994 Kasser et al., 2007
Organizational level	Lower quality of work life	Deckop et al., 2010
	Increase in work-family conflict	Promislo et al., 2010
	Have a negative impact on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs	Vansteenkiste et al., 2007
	Negative correlation with work-related happiness indicators	Deckop et al., 2010
	Organizational citizenship behavior and workplace deviation behavior	Deckop et al., 2015
	Reduce environmental concerns and environmental responsibility	Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008 Hurst et al., 2013
	Ecological environment deterioration	Kasser, 2016
Social level	Racism	Roets, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2006
	Fewer philanthropy, like individual activities and less physical contact	Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006
	Enhance personal material wealth and reduce the wealth of others	Chowdhury & Fernando, 2013
	Prosocial behavior reduction	Wierzbicki & Zawadzka, 2016
	Immoral behavior	Gino & Mogilner, 2014

(Tsang et al., 2014), quality of life (Roberts & Clement, 2007) is negatively correlated; in addition, a series of studies have found that people with high levels of materialism have less positive emotions, higher levels of depression, loneliness, anxiety and drug abuse (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996; Pieters, 2013); tend to reduce investment in intrinsic value such as self-fulfillment and contributions to families, friends, and communities, thereby reducing self-awareness, quality of interpersonal relationships, and willingness to participate in community activities (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002). A possible explanation for this is that the focus on material and wealth leads to neglect of social relationships and other areas of life such as the family, thereby reducing mental adjustment and social adaptability.

2.2. The Influence of Materialism on Consumption Level

Materialism has a positive impact on individual consumption behavior. Materialism can stimulate consumer desire to some extent and stimulate achievement motivation. This achievement motivation can not only improve individual income and living standards, but also stimulate commodity demand, thereby promoting economic prosperity and social progress (Sirgy et al., 2013, 2015). For consumers, Goldberg et al. (2003) found that younger people with higher levels of materialism tend to shop more often, have more knowledge about products and services, and are most sensitive to advertising and promotions. Therefore, they may be early adopters, trendsetters, and opinion leaders. In addition, the study found that the center, as an important dimension of materialism, dominates consumer innovation and is a major driver of fashion innovation (Goldsmith et al., 2013). For marketers, sales information can be designed to identify target customers, promote strategic brand communication, and positive consumer behavior that is beneficial to society (Heath & Chatzidakis, 2012).

High-level materialists place material wealth at the core of their lives, have a strong desire for expensive consumer goods, and hope to obtain social status and social recognition through material products, rather than through self-awareness or carefully planned consumption, usually Lack of control over consumption can lead to irrational consumer attitudes and behaviors. Materialism is positively correlated with high consumption, and high-level materialists tend to save less money because they have poorer money management skills (Donnelly, Ksendzova, & Howell, 2013) and more gambling problems (Carver & McCarty, 2013), and accumulate huge debts (Watson, 2003), promoting compulsive consumption (CB) (Donnelly et al., 2013; Dittmar et al., 2014) and conspicuous consumption (Podoshen, Li, & Zhang, 2011), but Johnson and Attmann (2009) did not find a link between materialism and CB in the sample of female college students, but this is probably because materialism is also affected by other factors (such as neuroticism, fashion interest).

In addition, materialism is also positively related to consumer behavior and attitudes triggered by hedonism, image and status values. For example, Dittmar et al. (2014) meta-analysis shows that materialism is positively involved in en-

gaging in health-hazardous behaviors that involve not only consumption (such as cigarettes, alcohol, etc.) but also strong hedonism; materialism also Maintaining image-related attitudes and behaviors positively, including positive attention to fashion and apparel and cosmetic surgery (Kamal, Chu, & Pedram, 2013; Workman & Lee, 2011); materialistic motives should also be of concern, and high-level materialists usually want to have better houses and cars than their neighbors (Srivastava, Locke, & Bartol, 2001).

2.3. The Influence of Materialism on the Organizational Level

Researchers have extended the study of materialism to the organizational domain and found that the level of materialism of employees may be regarded as an important factor in organizational productivity and can promote the realization of organizational goals. Materialists tend to spend time on hard work rather than leisure activities, work harder to complete challenging tasks, and want to take on more work (Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006); high levels of production and consumption not only Can increase the profits of enterprises, and can create funds for research and development, better research and development will produce higher productivity, technological breakthroughs, and bring a higher standard of living (Kasser, Cohn, Kanner, & Ryan, 2007; Richins & Rudmin, 1994).

However, because high-level materialists spend too much time and energy on hard work, achieving personal goals, and achieving higher performance, their basic psychological needs are not met, which may result in lower work input. (Schreurs, Van Emmerik, Anja, & Guenter, 2014) and occupational satisfaction (Deckop, Jurkiewicz, & Giacalone, 2010), higher emotional exhaustion and willingness to leave (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007), affecting the quality of work and life of individuals and Work-life balance (Deckop et al., 2010) leads to an increase in work-family conflicts (Promislo et al., 2010). In turn, it affects the work-related personal well-being indicators (such as internal and external reward satisfaction, job satisfaction, and professional satisfaction). This negative relationship is determined by the materialistic dimension of happiness and central dimension rather than the dimension of success. Driven by the study, the investigation further investigated the effects of two behavioral indicators of materialism and work (including organizational citizenship behavior and workplace deviation behavior). The results showed that there was a significant negative correlation between materialism and organizational citizenship behavior, and individual deviation. Positive correlation, but not significantly associated with tissue bias (Deckop et al., 2015).

2.4. The Influence of Materialism on the Social Level

Although high-level materialists do not necessarily appear to be selfish and greedy, they also engage in philanthropy and support green. But more research shows that the continued development of materialism will bring negative and extreme social consequences.

According to the theory of value conflict, materialism is a selfish value that conflicts with the altruistic values of environmentalism and prosocial behavior. Therefore, materialism increases the importance of values that are harmful to the environment, and at the same time reduces people's values of pro-social values. Pay attention to it. For example: reducing environmental concerns and environmentally responsible behavior (Hurst et al., 2013; Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008), promoting ecological degradation (Kasser, 2016) and racism (Roets, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2006); Communicating is more self-directed, less helpful, less charitable, often prefers individual activities and less physical contact (Vohs et al., 2006), more competitive and less cooperative (Sheldon, Sheldon, & Osbaldiston, 2000); high-level materialists tend to increase their personal material wealth and reduce material wealth by paying more attention to wealth, achievement, power, and status (Chowdhury & Fernando, 2013), resulting in reduced prosocial behavior (Wierzbicki & Zawadzka, 2016) and even unethical behavior (Gino & Mogilner, 2014).

3. The Interventions of Materialism

In view of materialism has brought about many bad consequences, it is of great practical significance to explore how to effectively intervene and intervene in materialism. The following will propose materialist interventions from the perspective of activating and encouraging internal and self-transcending values/objectives, increasing security and reducing the impact of social factors.

3.1. Activate the Intrinsic Goal

Self-determination theory believes that when the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and belonging are met, the individual will develop in a positive and healthy direction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When people are guided to focus on internal and self-transcending values/goals, there are less materialist tendencies, quoting Kasser's words: "The inner goal is often to promote greater happiness, and is an antidote to the values of materialism".

Experimental studies have found that participants who are immersed in nature (and thus activate self-transcendence value) report higher intrinsic value expectations than those who are immersed in an unnatural environment (Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2009); And experimental studies have found that those who reported higher levels of mental activity and those who were asked to recall mental events reduced their desire for materialism (Stillman et al., 2012). In addition, gratitude and learning mindfulness skills are possible to reduce materialist goals and mitigate the negative effects of materialism (Polak & McCullough, 2006; Wang et al., 2017a). Some studies have also found that allocating disposable money to experiential consumption (tourism, watching performances) will be more enjoyable, satisfaction and happiness than investing in material wealth (clothing, jewelry) (Kumar & Gilovich, 2016). This is because experience buyers mainly evaluate material wealth based on their functional utility and the satisfac-

tion of basic human needs. They will have better experience memories, more resistance to unfavorable comparisons, and tend to be more closely related to self, and more likely to meet Social and emotional needs.

3.2. Improve Safety and Security

The lack of hypothesis suggests that individuals lacked a sense of security and urged them to use material as a compensatory strategy to reduce pain and anxiety. Materialism, as an external motivation, often drives people to pursue happiness from external goals such as money, status, and appearance, and may ignore the inner satisfaction of basic psychological needs.

For example, the study found that the level of materialism among adolescents whose self-esteem was temporarily elevated was significantly reduced (Chaplin & John, 2007); thinking about high-quality interpersonal relationships would keep people away from the external goals of materialism (Clark et al., 2011). Nostalgic memories also reduce people's attachment to money because they usually involve positive interpersonal activities (Lasaleta, Sedikides, & Vohs, 2014). In addition, although the previous research starts from the theory of fear management, trying to understand the antecedents of materialism from the perspective of insecurity, that when human beings realize that death is inevitable, they will pursue the acquisition and consumption of material wealth more and show strong materialist tendencies. A short-term confrontation with death may lead to self-defense and promote materialism, but when people are deeply involved or continue to reflect on death for a long time, they will transcend defense, from external, materialistic values to intrinsic values (Cuzzolino et al., 2004; Lykins et al., 2007).

3.3. Reduce the Impact of Social Factors

The socialization hypothesis believes that individuals in the socialization stage will continue to strengthen their materialist values if they frequently contact various materialist information. Socialized information comes from the mass media, peers and families, so these social factors will reduce materialism to a certain extent.

Intervention studies have found that children's materialist values are not influenced by advertising when parents use positive methods to criticize commercial advertising or involve children in discussing household consumption decisions (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2005). Experimental evidence also shows that when adults use the facts (those ads are for sale) or to evaluate (these ads are stupid) sexual speech discussion ads, the children report more negative attitudes towards the ads, which reduces the desire for advertising products (Buijzen & Mens, 2007).

4. Summary and Outlook

In summary, the current research on the influence of materialism clearly shows

the following characteristics: the research mainly focuses on the individual level and the consumption level, among which there are many researches on materialism and subjective well-being, on the organizational level and society. There are relatively few studies at the level. This paper systematically summarizes the influence of materialism and its interventions, but the internal mechanism of the influence of materialism is insufficient. The future research should explore the mediation and adjustment mechanism of the influence of materialism, and build up a more comprehensive theoretical framework.

Contemporary society is full of various materialist clues. Materialism has an important influence on individuals, consumption, organization, and society. It has a strong practical significance for the prevention of materialism. In order to reduce materialism and get more fun from life, it is best to focus on the inner goal rather than the external goal, improve the sense of security, reduce the influence of social factors, and promote the public through the guiding role of the mass media. Recognizing the negative impact of materialism, we encourage everyone to actively participate in charitable activities and charities and reshape good values. Parents should play a good role in modeling and reducing the bad guidance of their children's materialist values. Educators can set up health-oriented courses and conduct psychosocial services to provide counseling and protection. Future research can conduct in-depth analysis and discussion on the following aspects.

4.1. Improve the Concept of Materialism

Materialism is a complex term which concept has not yet reached a consensus conclusion. Future research should clarify the dimensions of materialism and form a unified concept that will help us build measurement tools that can be evaluated in different cultures in an effective and reliable manner.

4.2. Expanding the Scope of Research

First of all, most of the materialist related research is carried out in the western individualistic culture, but there is less research in the eastern collectivist culture. Materialism as a kind of value should be in the background of the greater value system owned by the individual. Under the circumstance, research in the oriental cultural background and cross-culture should be expanded.

Second, most studies regard materialism as an individual difference variable, focusing on the relationship between materialism and individual well-being, and lacking research on organizational, social, and potential motivational processes. Organizations and society provide a rich background for investigating the impact of materialism, and organizations can play an important role through work practices and improve the quality of work. The role of materialism in relation to economic remuneration is deeply rooted in the organization. For example, the organization's provision of employee compensation is the main criterion for its survival. Because of the importance of money in organizations and society, the influence of materialism on organizations and society is widespread. Therefore, it is necessary to extend relevant research on materialism to the organizational

and social levels.

Third, at present, some researchers have been done on the relationship between materialism and its related variables, but most of its related research is based on cross-disciplinary research, which fails to accurately reflect the dynamic characteristics of materialism, while vertical research will help reveal Causality and underlying mechanisms explore whether changes in the consequences are caused by changes in materialism. For example, materialism leads to lower happiness, or lower happiness leads to materialism, or has a two-way trajectory over time. Therefore, in the field of materialist research, research and design improvement is necessary, and future research requires more longitudinal, experimental and developmental research.

4.3. Development Interventions

Although research on material interventions is accumulating, further development and improvement are still needed. First, most research on materialist interventions only implements short one-time interventions, and only a few studies (Kasser et al., 2014; Lekes et al., 2012) explore interventions that may lead to sustained changes in materialism, the future. Research needs to do more research on the latter type. Second, most of the interventions are carried out in samples with better economic conditions, so is it effective in individuals with more economic pressure? Further research is still needed. Third, the exact process of positive effects from certain interventions remains unknown. For example, why does reflective intervention reduce materialism? What is its internal mechanism? Is it because of the reduction in insecurity or the development of values/objectives that contribute to internal and self-transcendence? Understanding the underlying mechanisms is conducive to the exploration of more effective interventions.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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