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Prevalence of Compulsive Shopping among Chinese Populations: a Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective This meta-analysis with comprehensively analyzed studies from both Chinese and English-language sources to examine the prevalence of compulsive shopping among the Chinese populations, and to identify the relevant influencing factors.

Rationale Compulsive shopping is increasingly recognized as a public health and consumer behaviour concern. Although it has likely existed since the advent of monetary exchange and markets, the Internet has markedly amplified its accessibility and scale—particularly in China, where prevalence rates may be the highest documented globally to date. China thus constitutes a critical and distinctive context for studying compulsive shopping: it hosts the world's largest digital consumer market and exhibits rapid e-commerce expansion, widespread mobile payment adoption, and evolving regulatory frameworks. Despite a growing body of empirical research, no up-to-date systematic review or meta-analysis has synthesized prevalence estimates of compulsive shopping across Chinese populations. Current evidence remains fragmented—largely confined to localized samples, narrow demographic groups, or single-instrument assessments—and lacks robust pooled prevalence estimates, which are needed to inform evidence-based public health interventions and consumer protection policies. Moreover, key moderators of heterogeneity—including gender, population type, assessment instrument, and geographic region—have not been rigorously examined or quantified.

Condition being studied Compulsive shopping is a behavioral addiction involving excessive purchasing—online or in-store—driven by intrusive urges, poor impulse control, buying unused items, and using shopping to relieve negative emotions. It causes distress and impairs daily functioning. It is increasingly recognized as a public health and consumer behaviour concern, especially amid the rapid growth of e-commerce and mobile shopping.Compulsive shopping typically follows a

chronic or relapsing course and harms physical health, relationships, finances, and overall quality of life. Financial problems—like debt and credit damage—often arise, while anxiety and depression can worsen compulsive shopping, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of harmful consumption.

METHODS

Search strategy A systematic and comprehensive search was conducted across both English-language databases (PubMed, Web of Science, Embase and PsycINFO) and Chinese-language databases (Wan Fang and Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure) from the inception to May 29, 2025. The following search terms were applied: (“China” OR “Chinese” OR “Hong Kong” OR “Macau” OR “Taiwan”) AND ("shopping addiction" OR "online shopping" OR "compulsive shopping" OR "internet shopping" OR "compulsive online buying" OR "online buying addiction" OR "problematic buying behaviour" OR “compulsive buying” OR "compulsive buying behaviour" OR "buying-shopping disorder" OR "excessive shopping" OR "Buying-shopping disorder" OR "pathological buying" OR “obsessive buying disorder” OR "shopping disorder" OR “Shopping addiction disorder” OR "online shopping addiction" OR "internet shopping addiction" OR “compulsive buying disorder” OR “oniomania” OR “oniomanie” OR "shopping dependence" OR "shopping habits" OR “pathological spending” OR “pathological spending” OR “compulsive spending” OR “shopaholism”) AND (“prevalence” OR “survey” OR “cross-sectional study” OR “rate”).

Participant or population The study population comprised Chinese individuals (including residents of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan), with no exclusions based on age.

Intervention Not applicable.

Comparator Not applicable.

Study designs to be included The study design was a cross-sectional epidemiological study or provided baseline prevalence data from a longitudinal cohort studies.

Eligibility criteria Studies were included if they met the following PICOS-defined criteria:(P): The study population comprised Chinese individuals (including residents of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan). (I): not applicable; Comparison (C): not applicable; Outcome (O): The study reported the prevalence of compulsive shopping behavior (e.g., using rates, proportions, or percentages). Prevalence was ideally measured using validated scales(e.g., RCBS-6, CBS-7 and CSOC-SS-13); but inclusion was not limited solely to studies using these specific tools. Study design (S): The study design was a cross-sectional epidemiological study or provided baseline prevalence data from a longitudinal cohort studies. The exclusion criteria included: (a) studies lacked essential data to calculate prevalence (e.g., sample sizes ,cutoff values) ; (b) were reviews articles, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, case studies or commentaries; (c) studies focusing on clinical or specific sub-populations(e.g., patients with diagnosed psychiatric comorbidity);(d) studies were based on duplicate datasets (in which case the publication with the largest sample size was retained); or (e) the full text was unavailable.

Information sources The information sources for this meta-analysis include: Electronic Databases: PubMed, Web of Science, Embase, PsycINFO for English-language studies; Wan Fang and Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) for Chinese-language studies. Manual Search: Reference lists of selected studies will be reviewed to identify additional relevant studies.

Main outcome(s) Outcome data included prevalence of compulsive shopping, included the number of positive cases, instruments used, and cutoff values. The extracted data encompassed the following domains: Relevant information consisted of the first author, publication year, study design, survey period, geographical location, sampling method, and response rate. Sample characteristics included total sample size, proportion of male participants, mean age.

Data management Data extraction and quality assessment using a pre-piloted standardized form. The extracted data encompassed the following domains: Relevant information consisted of the first author, publication year, study design, survey period, geographical location, sampling method, and response rate. Sample characteristics included total sample size, proportion of male participants, mean age. Outcome data included prevalence of compulsive shopping, included the number of positive cases, instruments used, and cutoff values. The methodological quality of each included study was assessed using the 11-item checklist developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis The methodological quality of each included study was assessed using the 11-item checklist developed by

the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The total quality scores ranges from 0 to 11, with studies categorized as low (0–3), moderate (4–7) and high (8–11) quality.To assess potential publication bias, a funnel plot and Egger's tests were applied.

Strategy of data synthesis A random-effects model will be employed to the prevalence estimates of compulsive shopping across studies due to expected heterogeneity. The prevalence and its 95% confidence intervals will be calculated. Heterogeneity will be assessed using the I^2 statistic and Cochran's Q test. To identify potential sources of heterogeneity, subgroup analyses were conducted for categorical variables, while meta-regression analyses were performed for continuous variables. A sensitivity analysis was conducted by sequentially omitting each study one at a time to evaluate the robustness of the results. To assess potential publication bias, a funnel plot and Egger's tests were applied. Statistical significance for all analyses was defined as a two-tailed P-value of < 0.05.

Subgroup analysis Subgroup analyses were conducted for categorical variables (such as publication year, geographic regions, primary assessment tools, and sampling method), while meta-regression analyses were performed for continuous variables (including sample size, study quality assessment scores, proportion of males and response rate). Geographical regions in this study were classified into 4 levels based on the administrative divisions of the People's Republic of China: Central, Eastern, Southern and Mixed Regions (involving more than one level of the above).

Sensitivity analysis A sensitivity analysis was conducted by sequentially omitting each study one at a time to evaluate the robustness of the results. To assess potential publication bias, a funnel plot and Egger's tests were applied.

Language restriction The literature search was restricted to sources published in Chinese and English.

Country(ies) involved China.

Keywords Prevalence; Compulsive shopping; Chinese; Meta-analysis.

Contributions of each author

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