

# From Peer Pressure to Retail Therapy: Mapping the Interpersonal Dynamics of Materialism

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## **Abstract**

Materialism is linked to lower social well-being, yet little is known about how specific relationships shape its three dimensions: centrality, happiness, and success. Drawing on consumer socialisation and compensatory consumption theories, this study tests two pathways: (1) a “peer pressure” or socialisation pathway, where interpersonal interaction facilitates value internalisation (success and centrality), and (2) a “retail therapy” or compensation pathway, where relational frustrations drive consumption as a coping mechanism (happiness). A novel social mapping methodology was employed (N=673; 13,603 relationships). Structural equation modelling supported a dual-pathway model: contact with socialisation agents (friends, family) was associated with success and centrality, while relational conflict and low support predicted happiness. Findings challenge materialism as a unitary trait, revealing it as both socially learned and a specific compensatory response to interpersonal strain.

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour