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# Material values: A study of some antecedents and consequences

*Valores materiales: un estudio de algunos antecedentes y consecuencias*

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## Abstract

Two studies were conducted to analyze some antecedents and consequences of holding material values among college students from Mexico. Participants completed a battery of questionnaires measuring social comparison orientation, autonomy support, materialism, life satisfaction, positive and negative affect, and job preferences. Results showed that social comparison was a robust predictor of materialism in both studies. Materialism was related to lower levels of positive affect and life satisfaction and to higher levels of negative affect. Materialism was also related to a preference for jobs that pay more money at the expense of working longer hours or doing more routine tasks. The implications of the results were discussed.

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*Keywords:* Material values; Consumer behavior; Subjective well-being

*JEL classification:* M31; I31; J00

## Resumen

Se realizaron dos estudios para analizar algunos antecedentes y consecuencias de la presencia de valores materiales entre estudiantes universitarios en México. Los participantes completaron una batería de cuestionarios que miden orientación a la comparación social, apoyo a la autonomía, materialismo, satisfacción con la vida, afecto positivo y negativo, y preferencias laborales. Los resultados mostraron que la comparación social fue un predictor robusto del materialismo en ambos estudios. El materialismo se relacionó con los

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niveles más bajos de afecto positivo y satisfacción con la vida y con los niveles más altos de afecto negativo. El materialismo también se relacionó con una preferencia por los trabajos que pagan más dinero a costa de trabajar más horas o hacer las tareas más rutinarias. Las implicaciones de los resultados fueron discutidas. © 2017 Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Contaduría y Administración. Este es un artículo Open Access bajo la licencia CC BY-NC-ND (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

*Palabras clave:* Valores materiales; Comportamiento del consumidor; Bienestar subjetivo  
*Códigos JEL:* M31; I31; J00

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## **Material values: an exploration of some antecedents and consequences**

Values play a central role since they influence the goals and life styles people choose and the emotions they feel (Schwartz, 2005). Values also play an important role in consumer research (Pepper, Jackson, & Uzzell, 2009). Specifically, investigators, interested in understanding the social psychology of consumer behavior, have turned their attention to the examination of some antecedents and consequences of holding material values. Examining the antecedents and consequences of holding material values seems particularly relevant given the economic uncertain times we are living in. Consequently, the present investigation, using the theory of material values as guiding framework (Kasser, 2002), attempts to make a contribution by: (1) examining the role of social comparison orientation, and autonomy support as antecedents of material values and also (2) assessing the affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences of holding material values. In order to accomplish this goal, we first review the relevant literature on values.

### *Material values*

Even though there are different values that individuals might hold, material values seem particularly relevant for understanding consumer behavior (Grougiou & Moschis, 2015). Material values give importance to the acquisition of material goods and possessions (Richins & Dawson, 1992) and consumer style (Zampieri et al., 2012). The theory of materialistic values (Kasser, 2002) seeks to answer two important questions: (1) what drives individuals to value material possessions and (2) what are some of the consequences of holding material values. Even though consumer researchers (Kasser, 2002; Richins & Dawson, 1992) have warned us about the widespread endorsement of material values, we would expect consumers to have significant variation in their levels of endorsement of material values and this is precisely one of the things that we would like to explain. That is, we would like to identify which variables act as antecedents of materialism.

### *Antecedents: social comparison and autonomy support*

The theory of materialistic values (Kasser, 2002) suggests that individuals might come to endorse material values for two main reasons: (1) social models endorsing the importance of material possessions, a socialization process and (2) lack of fulfillment of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence, which creates feelings of insecurity. Both factors can act as independent antecedents or in conjunction. In the present investigation, we analyze the role of social comparison orientation (study 1 and 2) and autonomy support (study 2) as proxies

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