

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# PERCEPTION OF HOARDING BEHAVIOR AMONG GENERAL POPULATION OF RAWALPINDI AND ISLAMABAD CITIES OF PAKISTAN: AN EXPLORATORY QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Fauzia Malik, Anila Kamal

National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Hoarding is a complex phenomenon that has received extensive attention in recent years. Most studies have been conducted in Western culture with few from other regions of world, which advocates need to explore the phenomenon in different cultural contexts. Objective of this study was to ascertain the perception of hoarding behavior among general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan.

**Materials & Methods:** This exploratory qualitative study with grounded theory design was conducted in National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan from September 2015-May 2016. Sample of 46 subjects from different socio-cultural backgrounds was selected from otherwise healthy adult (20-60 years) population of Rawalpindi & Islamabad cities of Pakistan by purposive sampling. A qualitative research methodology was employed to develop theoretical understanding of phenomenon. Focus group discussions with six groups were conducted to assess existence and phenomenology of hoarding behavior in present cultural framework. Data was analyzed using grounded theory method.

**Results:** Findings of this study support current literature concerning the role of emotional attachments, associated positive and negative affect, certain personality characteristics and early experiences in development and maintenance of hoarding behavior. This study also confirms that material possessions are source of security by providing sense of identity to owner, and are considered symbols of status in society. Finally, it involves the account of socio-cultural aspects like status transformation, with resulting sense of competition, gender role, impact of material deprivation, and religious construction of phenomenon that emerged as more of culture specific elements in indigenous settings of Pakistan.

**Conclusion:** This study addresses factors that underpin major themes in relation to form and prevalence of hoarding behavior in cultural context of Pakistan and discusses the findings in reference to the similarities and differences with extant literature.

**KEY WORDS:** Hoarding; Material Culture; Psycho-social Aspects; Qualitative Research; Grounded Theory; Focus Groups.

**Cite as:** Malik F, Kamal A. Perception of hoarding behavior among general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan: an exploratory qualitative inquiry. *Gomal J Med Sci* 2020 Jul-Sep; 18 (3):83-92. <https://doi.org/10.46903/gjms/18.03.833>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1 Background:** Hoarding is a complex phenomenon that has recently been added in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)<sup>1</sup> as a

### Corresponding Author:

Fauzia Malik  
Ph.D. Scholar  
National Institute of Psychology  
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad  
E-mail: [fauziamalick@gmail.com](mailto:fauziamalick@gmail.com)

**Date Submitted:** 22-01-2020

**Date Revised:** 09-04-2020

**Date Accepted:** 16-05-2020

new distinct disorder. It involves difficulty discarding a number of possessions regardless of their actual value that results in substantial amount of clutter. This clutter precludes active use of space for intended purposes and brings significant impairment in daily functioning. People involved in hoarding behavior tend to collect excessively and use to save almost all type of items. The reasons for their saving behavior are similar to those given by most people without hoarding behavior.<sup>2</sup> However, what distinguishes pathological nature of behavior is the quantity of items hoarded, intensity of attachment formed, and the inability to discard most of the acquired possessions.<sup>3</sup>

Historically hoarding has ordained differently across times and cultures. Earlier as a mean to protect basic necessities, it advanced as a way to secure valuables to maintain social welfare in face of war and political uncertainty.<sup>4</sup> Relationship between human life and material belongings go beyond need and utility value. Objects are considered markers of social status and import with them emotional and symbolic significance. They mean more than an exchangeable commodity and are important to all humans irrespective of being hoarder or not. The reality and meanings of possessions are therefore socially constructed through the transactions that we make with them.<sup>5</sup>

In field of Psychology, William James<sup>6</sup> for the first time described hoarding as an instinct and characterized it as a type of mental illness in his book "The Principles of Psychology" (1893). However, the work of Freud<sup>7</sup> relating hoarding to anal personality with characteristic features of parsimony, perfectionism, and orderliness served the ground for the condition to be considered as criteria for classification of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-2). In subsequent additions it was considered as symptom of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and several other conditions. The first systematic investigation of phenomenon came to surface with the work of Frost & Gross<sup>2</sup> and then it is with publication of cognitive behavioral model of hoarding proposed by Frost and Harit<sup>8</sup> that led to remarkable increase in awareness and research into the topic. Since then much about phenomenology of behavior has been learnt and density of condition has been delineated.

According to cognitive-behavioral model, there are number of associated aspects with hoarding problem like emotional attachments, related beliefs about value of possessions, perceived future use, memory deficits, and problems with information processing and decision making that initiate and exacerbate the manifestation of condition.<sup>3</sup> Role of etiological factors like early life experiences, trauma,<sup>9</sup> anxiety sensitivity, and distress tolerance<sup>9</sup> can't also be denied. The interaction of all such variables make it an intricate phenomenon difficult to approach and challenging to deal with.

Prevalence of hoarding behavior is found to be comparable to major disorders in psychiatric health conditions. It is present in approximately 1.5% to 4.6% of people, much more common than obsessive compulsive disorder.<sup>10</sup> It initiates in childhood,<sup>3</sup> and gets severe with every passing decade, while becomes unmanageable in later ages.<sup>11</sup> Hoarders usually keep poor insight into their problem and seldom seek help which leads to strained relationships and rejection towards hoarders. It brings with it significant distress and impairment not only for the person suffering it but also for the family, friends and

community as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

Hoarding has now been classified as a distinct disorder. It may also exists as an associated symptom in many of psychiatric as well as medical conditions and frequently co-occur with a number of Axis I and Axis II mental health disorders.<sup>13</sup> Depression, anxiety, social phobia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are found to be frequently occurring comorbid conditions as compared to obsessive compulsive disorder, it has traditionally been associated with.<sup>14</sup> Similarly certain personality characteristics like perfectionism, impulsivity, and dependency have been linked with the condition and it has been found associated with paranoid, avoidant, obsessive compulsive, and schizotypal personality disorders.<sup>15</sup> The impairment it causes is considerably much more than most prevalent conditions like mood and anxiety disorders.<sup>12</sup> It is estimated that 2% to 5% of hoarding occur among general population<sup>15</sup> which indicates that it's a significant mental health concern.

Though hoarding behavior has received extensive attention in recent years and much about the phenomenon has been known. However, most of studies have been conducted in Western culture with few supplementary reports from various other regions like India, Iran, China, and Japan.<sup>16</sup> This suggests presence of some evidence about existence and similar presentation of the condition across globe, at the same time advocates need to explore the phenomenon in different cultural contexts.

**1.2 Objective & Significance:** The objective of this study was to ascertain the perception of hoarding behavior among the general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan. The present study has explored the condition in cultural context of Pakistan. For this purpose qualitative method has been applied to conceptualize the phenomenon in indigenous settings as it helps in gaining insight by capturing the meanings that informants bring to it. Accordingly in absence of indigenous literature, grounded theory method was employed to construct the concepts grounded in data. The process helps not only to understand a phenomenon of interest but to cover the gaps in literature and to extend the extant knowledge. The focus is on gaining insight and familiarity of the phenomenon.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**2.1 Design, Setting & Duration:** This exploratory qualitative study with grounded theory design was conducted in the National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan from September 2015 to May 2016. A sample of 46 subjects from different socio-cultural backgrounds was selected from otherwise healthy adult (20-60 years) population of Rawalpindi & Islamabad cities of Pakistan by purposive sampling. Refusal to join the study was the only exclusion criteria. The study

was approved by the Advance Studies and Research Board of Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

**2.2 Conduct of Procedure:** Purpose of the study was briefly explained and informed consent was taken from the participants before inclusion in the study. The sample of 46 participants was divided into six focus groups, each with 5-10 subjects. Meetings were arranged at the time and place suitable to the groups. For this purpose, focus group guide was designed which was later modified according to the needs as the data emerged. Focus group discussions were audio taped along with thorough note taking, so as to avoid missing any information revealed and therefore to facilitate transcription process. To maintain anonymity of participants, information is presented as aggregate. Exemplary data is also presented without any identifying information of the participants.

**2.3 Data Collection Plan:** Data was collected for the following six categorical demographic variables (with attributes); sex (men/ women), age groups (20-30/ 31-40/ 41-50/ 51-60 years), education (up to Matric/ Masters/ M.Phil and Ph. D.), marital status (single/ married/ widow or widower/ divorced), socio-economic status (low/ middle/ high), and family system (nuclear/ joint). The single construct/ concept of interest was “perception of participants regarding hoarding behavior”, for which data was collected through focus group discussions.

**2.4 Data Analysis Plan:** All the demographic vari-

ables were measured on categorical scale and were analyzed by count and percentage. “Perception of participants regarding hoarding behavior” was analyzed by grounded theory methodology which helps to develop a theoretical understanding of phenomenon of interest through a systematic procedure of data collection and analysis. As a first step initial coding was done that involved naming or labeling of segment of data. The next phase involved focused coding that referred to selecting most significant or frequently occurring initial codes. The final step of analysis involved more sophisticated level of coding i.e. theoretical codes meant to integrate categories, which were developed in focused coding.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. RESULTS

Results for the demographic variables of the study participants are presented as counts and percentages. (Table 1)

Next grounded theory analysis of focus group discussions was done that revealed four main aspects of phenomenon that were: cognitive component, an affective component, personality dynamics and the socio-cultural aspect. Each concept entailed different categories, comprising of significant and frequently occurring codes that made analysis explicit. However, inclusion of any code in one category does not warrant it's exclusion from any other category as the emerging concepts in grounded theory analysis are considered inter-related and overlapping. (Table 2)

**Table 1: Sample statistics for demographic variables for study of perception of hoarding behavior among general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan (n=46)**

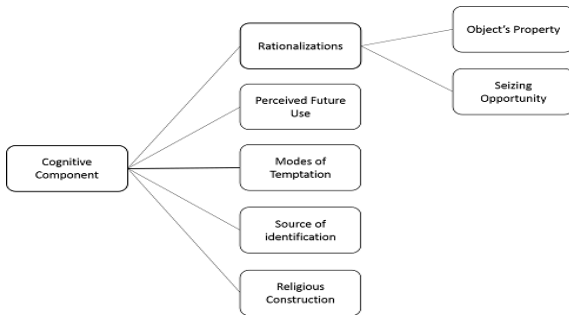
S. No.	Variables	Attributes	Count	Percentage
1	Sex	Men	21	45.6
		Women	25	54.3
2	Age groups	20-30 years	09	19.5
		31-40 years	12	26.1
		41- 50 years	16	34.7
		51- 60 years	09	19.5
3	Education	Up to Matric	13	28.2
		Masters	24	52.1
		M. Phil/ Ph.D.	09	19.5
4	Marital Status	Single	17	36.9
		Married	25	54.3
		Widow/ Widower	03	6.5
		Divorced	01	2.1
5	Socio-Economic Status	Low	09	19.5
		Middle	24	52.1
		High	13	28.2
6	Family System	Nuclear	27	58.6
		Joint	19	41.3

**Table 2: Qualitative analysis of perception of hoarding behavior among general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan (n=46)**

Theoretical Codes	Focused Codes	Exemplary Initial Codes
Cognitive Component	Rationalization	a) Object's Property
		Utility value
		Charming/ Beautiful
		Liking/ Interest
		b) Seizing Opportunity
		Availability/Unavailability
		Uncertainty of future unavailability
	Perceived Future Use	Economical (low cost)
		Recycling
		Alternative use
	Modes of Temptation	Making inheritance
		Advertisement
		Awareness
	Source of identification	Exposure to buyables
		Self-reflection
		Social competence
Religious Construction	Distinctiveness	
	Not following simplicity	
	Undermining Islamic Values	
Affective Component	Establishing Connection	Diminishing brotherhood
		Memories
		Affiliation/ Emotional attachments
	Positive Emotions	Time spent
		Sense of satisfaction
		Sense of pleasure
	Avoiding Negative Emotions	Sense of pride
		Grief
		Avoiding wastage
Personality Dynamics	Characteristic feature	Fear of losing something important
		Miserliness
		Isolated/ Ill-social
	Social Learning (Learned behavior)	Jealousy
		Rearing Practices
		Experiences
		Environmental influences
Socio-Cultural Aspect	Socio-economic status	Pocket size
		Compensating deprivation
		Status symbol/status indicators
	Materialistic Culture	Modernization
		Competition
		Status transition/transformation
	Gender Role	Female
		Economic dependency
		Domestic control
		Nurturing
Male		
Earners/self-sufficiency		
Dominant/Authority figures		

### 3.1 Cognitive Component

The theme basically refers to thoughts, beliefs and values that give meanings to an individual's act or object of hoarding and signify the mental representations of hoarded objects constructed and interpreted in view of informants. While elaborating on cognitive component, five major categories were noticed. (Figure 3.1)



**Figure 3.1: Qualitative analysis of cognitive component of perception of hoarding behavior among general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan (n=46)**

**3.1.1 Rationalizations:** Narratives show that people have got different justifications pertaining to acquiring and hoarding of different objects based either on objects property like its usefulness, durability, charm etc. or they take it as an opportunity in form of its availability, low cost or uncertainty of its being not available in future. All such reasons compel them to acquire things at every possible opportunity regardless of being needed or not.

**3.1.2 Perceived future use:** It appeared to be most significant aspect as almost every participant in each group mentioned the possible future use of objects as an important factor that instilled hope and motivated them to keep even the most poorly used item. As described by one of the participants "People save old things since they might be used in the new thing that they may create. Like a clip of a sofa (couch) will reside as it can be used in some other sofa". Objects could be retained for their alternative use as it is believed that no object is ever useless. Such items have got their importance in the mind of hoarder which refrain them to get rid of it. This results in items being accumulated in stores staying there for even years, completing their life in vain but providing a source of satisfaction to keeper by their mere presence.

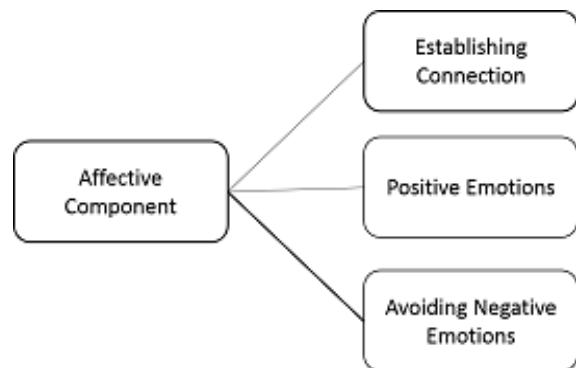
**3.1.3 Modes of temptation:** The reports of informants show that a number of items are acquired just because of exposure and awareness. Equally important factor was considered the temptation brought about by advertisement and glamour attached. Going outside and coming in contact with

objects increased the probability of acquiring to occur. People at times acquire things just because they are approved by others. Information rendered via word of mouth or electronic media were found tempting and compelling enough to acquire things.

**3.1.4 Source of identification:** Another related belief was found to be attaching identity with material possessions. As said "these are not stuff, not possessions, these are basically part of my identity... If you throw it away, it's like throwing away a chunk of your identity. You see yourself in those things". People hoard objects for their uniqueness and in turn to show personal distinctiveness. Their possessions help them maintain their sense of individuality and hence bring them a particular identity that distinguishes them from others.

**3.1.5 Religious construction:** Participant's narratives illustrate that people acquire and hoard more things because they do not follow Islamic teachings of simplicity and brotherhood. As mentioned; "the kind of life we need to live we are not living of that type. The life we are living is like an Englishman, like a Hindu, we are not living life according to Islam. Earlier we use to have just needed items. Now we don't bother to give things. Brotherhood has abolished. All problems are because of getting detached from religion". This stance was put forth in almost every group discussion asserting that people have lost faith in religion and try to get sense of security and power from their material possessions. As they value material objects more, therefore, they accumulate more.

**3.2 Affective Component:** The concept entails emotional reaction one has towards hoarded object. It brings to surface the feelings and emotions associated with object which make them more than a material. Responses under this theme included establishing connection, positive emotions and avoiding negative emotions. (Figure 3.2)



**Figure 3.2: Qualitative analysis of affective component of perception of hoarding behavior among general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan (n=46)**

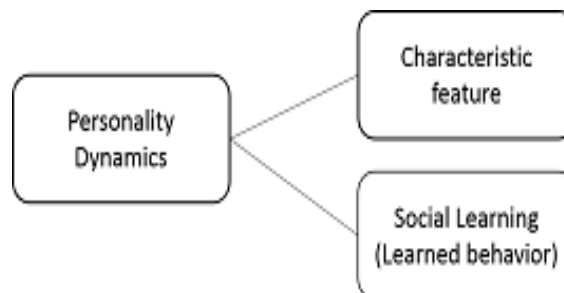
**3.2.1 Establishing connection:** Data revealed that a number of objects are hoarded because of associated memories and affiliations one keeps with them. Hoarded objects serve as a mode or medium of connection between the keeper and the event, keeper and the giver, and the keeper and certain mental states, etc. They serve as link between the past and instigate same emotions once felt. They mean a lived moment, reminder to an important event or a person and a felt emotion that becomes such an integral part of one's existence which one never wants to deny. As illustrated *"the first toy that my daughter break, it is kept still today. I still remember that moment...so it's my feeling of that time that I am keeping. I don't think I can waste it. It's my property. I don't allow my kids to touch it so how can I throw it in dustbin"*.

Similarly, objects not only jogs ones memories but people also develop direct relationship and feelings with objects. The time invested leads to relationship strength and magnitude of feelings attached and makes discarding an impossible endeavor. As expressed in following excerpt; *"its (used soap bar) of no use but it's important to me. For me it's a source of connection with him (deceased husband)"*.

**3.2.2 Positive emotions:** In same vein are set of emotions like satisfaction, pleasure and pride that tend to increase the desire for acquiring and hoarding of objects. As expressed *"I had papers with very good remarks of my teacher. I tore and kept them with me"* indicates that hoarded objects provide the owner with a sense of achievement and competence. Likewise large quantities of valuables bring pride and prestige to ones sense of self and make the owner feel worthy and capable.

**3.2.3 Avoiding negative feelings:** Narratives show that there are a lot of negative feelings attached with thought of discarding any object which keep people from letting go of things. As objects serve as a source of connection and keep a lot of associated memories and emotions, throwing them away result in feelings of loss and grief. For them throwing those objects away means discarding associated memory/emotion/ time or part of self. As represented, *"my son died...but I couldn't throw away the diaper till this day that he was wearing. I know it's of no use to me or anyone else. But it touched his body so I have kept it with care. Though I have three kids now. I rarely remember him but that diaper I can't throw it away"*. The same way is fear of losing something important. People find it difficult to give away as they feel uncertain and afraid of not having them when required or getting it again if the time comes. They think that they need to ensure everything to avoid embarrassment of asking others and in fear of suspecting refusal of help from others if they ever needed.

**3.3 Personality Dynamics:** Responses under this theme relate to underlying causes of individual behavior with in a person and as an adaptation to one's environment. It involved the categories of characteristic features and learned patterns of behaviors. (Figure 3.3)

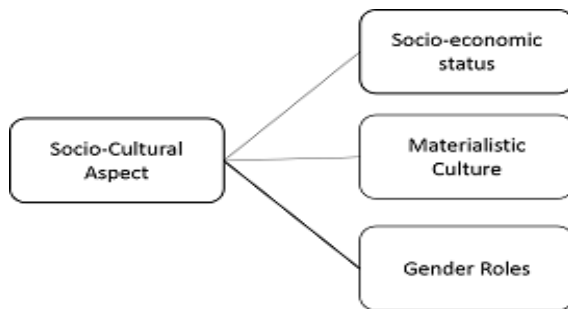


**Figure 3.3: Qualitative analysis of personality dynamics of perception of hoarding behavior among general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan (n=46)**

**3.3.1 Characteristic features:** Descriptions show that some people have got certain traits that lay the ground for hoarding behavior to occur. Characteristics like miserliness, jealousy, lack of sociability etc. are considered associated to increase hoarding of items. People with such tendencies find it difficult to discard things. Similarly, people who spend more time in isolation feel more attached to material objects they keep and find it difficult to give away resulting in hoarding of objects. For them objects are their world, with and through which they communicate their presence.

**3.3.2 Social learning:** Trends in data show that certain rearing practices and experiences can bring about hoarding of objects. Environmental influences like, *"In my childhood we bring sachets of shampoo in our home. We have to use half of it. Can't use the whole though we had the resources. I once asked my father that why can't we use the complete one? He said, I don't want to spoil your habits. So, now have got habitual that my room is filled with clothes, shoes, tie, books..."* are seen as a strong factor resulting in development of certain personality attributes. Narratives assert that as children, individuals are taught to be caring and dutiful towards objects of use which inculcates a sense of responsibility towards objects and results in retentive personality leading to increased hoarding attitude.

**3.4 Socio-Cultural Aspect:** The theme referred to influences derived from customs, perceptions and beliefs that can be possible contributing factor towards hoarding behavior. The constituent categories are socio-economic status, materialistic culture and gender roles. (Figure 3.4)



**Figure 3.4: Qualitative analysis of socio-cultural component of perception of hoarding behavior among general population of Rawalpindi and Islamabad cities of Pakistan (n=46)**

**3.4.1 Socio-economic status:** Accounts of informants revealed that factors like pocket size, urge for luxury and objects being indicators of status etc. contribute towards development and maintenance of hoarding behaviors. Keeping the right type and amount of objects marks one's social class. In that sense, objects are vehicles to import one's value in society and demarcate one class from the other. As people strive hard to make these possessions, they feel difficult to discard their earnings. To them, it's like discarding the invested time and energy to get that object. Similarly, people also hoard things as a compensatory behavior to the deprivation and associated feelings. In order to satisfy earlier unmet needs, they use to acquire a lot and find it difficult to discard due to fear and threat that deprivation has brought into them.

**3.4.2 Materialistic culture:** It refers to changing life styles and growing competition as a result of modernization. People acquire and keep things as a show of to a particular standing in society. Material possessions are the means to show their superiority and power. As reported, "*fx also satisfies the need for going to university then why Prado?*"

Moreover, there is a lot of stuff available and continuous introduction of newer, more sophisticated materials. This tempts people to acquire new things, at the same time maintaining older items which results in adding to stuff. They just can't resist being updated to maintain their identity attached with material possessions though they recognize that older items serve the purpose well. And as older items are still valid, they feel it difficult to discard them which results in form of hoard. Also, their experiences of struggling for materials make the smooth transformation difficult for them and objects in that situation become a medium to keep their struggle alive and valuable.

**3.4.3 Gender role:** Data suggests that as females in Pakistani culture are mostly house wives they depend on male counter parts for their finances which pushes them to avail every opportunity to acquire. Moreover, they spend most of their time

in home making, so objects become the primary focus through which they can depict their abilities and skills. They start practicing same caring role for material objects as for their family and relationships which makes discarding difficult. In case of men, as they are earning members, their self-sufficiency in terms of money makes it possible to acquire. Alternatively, their dominant position in house makes it easier for them to keep the hoard. Data also indicates that males when involved in hoarding are more rigid in attitude as compared to females. Thus are difficult to convince discarding the hoarded objects.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The study was designed to discern the phenomenon of hoarding in indigenous context of Rawalpindi/Islamabad. Findings suggest that construct of hoarding behavior can be made implicit against the background of cognitive, affective, personality and socio-cultural aspects. Results of the investigation in reference to similarities and differences with extant literature are discussed below.

First, the study supports the current literature concerning role of emotional attachments, associated positive and negative affect, certain personality characteristics and early experiences<sup>16</sup> in development and maintenance of hoarding behavior. Second, the study confirms that material possessions are a source of security,<sup>18</sup> provides a sense of identity to the owner,<sup>19</sup> and are considered symbols of status in society.<sup>5</sup> Finally, it involves the account of socio-cultural aspects like status transformation with resulting sense of competition, gender role, impact of material deprivation, and religious construction for explanation of phenomenon as more of context specific elements in indigenous settings of Pakistan.

It has been well recognized that people form emotional associations and develop attachment with the material objects. They ascribe greater level of instrumental and sentimental value with them and cherish a sense of security and comfort from their possessions. They have a sense of responsibility and concern for their potential utility value that keeps them from discarding most of items.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, state of uncertainty for future motivates them to acquire more and not to miss any possible opportunity.<sup>21</sup> Present research also indicates that people develop emotional affiliations with their possessions which make it difficult for them to let go of things. These mental bonds serve as an invisible string that ties them with the past in terms of associated memories, emotions, and interests simultaneously linking them with the aspirations they hold for the future. So, these objects become a medium of connection between their past, present and future which together provides them with a sense of self and identity.

Research indicates perceived future use is a significant belief that makes people to hoard objects includ-

ing items which are considered junk or garbage by most of people. They tend to be responsible towards objects and take them as potential opportunity not to be wasted.<sup>22</sup> The present study maintains the belief of potential utility value as most occurring rationalization for most of objects people hoard. They strictly believe that everything could serve some purpose hence be kept and cared for. Narratives show that in case they render their personal possession to someone, it is important for them to make sure that it will be used with care by the recipient and will not go wasted.

One's interaction with objects is viewed as an indication of inner traits and helps understand one's personality.<sup>23</sup> Controlling and withholding nature could bring about possessiveness<sup>24</sup> leading to hoarding of objects. According to Fromm,<sup>23</sup> hoarders keep miserly nature and attach significance to both tangible and intangible. They see the external world with fear and distrust and feel secure with hoarded objects. The present research supports the above theoretical assumptions suggesting certain personality traits like miserliness, selfishness, jealousy, procrastination, rigidity etc. as associated with hoarding behavior. It appears that these personality dimensions could be a learned behavior as rearing practices encourage ethics of being caring, responsible and dutiful towards objects of use right from childhood that could result in retentive personalities leading to hoarding of objects.

Literature suggests that material objects have long in history been valued beyond their use. They serve as substantial representations of sense of self and help present one's opportunities, and abilities in outer world.<sup>6</sup> Objects enhance one's self worth and are means to express one's social status in the society. Rapid industrialization and the production of increased number and diverse qualities of goods with low prices and advent of different brands are leaving its enormous effect on the society.<sup>25</sup> Results of this study also suggest that material influx and status quo is resulting in changing values by introducing an overall materialistic orientation. As products come in different qualities, it makes it possible for almost every class to afford accordingly. Consequently creating modern appearance is now easily accessible causing much competition between different segments of society. People feel compelled to acquire more to mark their social standard which in turn generates envy in others pushing them too to strive hard and achieve more. Thus, the culture of increased buying and display of objects is getting approved. Furthermore, as people strive hard to attain these standards in society, invested time and energy fosters them to hold on to their possessions strictly. These objects serve as depictions of their accomplishment, cues to their identity, images of their struggle through life and symbols of their existence. Together with experiences of struggling

hard with objects and status quo generates a pre-occupation with material possessions that as a consequence could bring the phenomenon of hoarding.

One of essential finding of this study is impact of material deprivation on development of hoarding behavior. Analysis suggest that material deprivation and related experiences harbors a general sense of insecurity invoking a sense of increased worth of objects. Threat faced in paucity of material commodity makes people feel vulnerable and over sensitizes them towards the value of objects making discarding a difficult endeavor. However, association between material deprivation and hoarding<sup>26</sup> is not obvious in extant literature. Landau and colleagues found no relationship of material deprivation with hoarding in their study.<sup>27</sup> Frost and Gross also maintained that results are not consistent regarding role of material deprivation in hoarding behavior.<sup>2</sup>

Deviance and psychopathology is not an abstract concept and is defined in context of societal expectations and cultural norms.<sup>28</sup> Every religion with their belief system has implications on mental health and illness. Stresses and strains and uncertainties of life can be tolerated more easily by the believers. However, the idea that religion and psychiatry have always been in conflict is still very prevalent.<sup>29</sup> In related vein are findings of present study suggesting religious discourse of phenomenon as a culture specific aspect of the investigation. Accounts of informants, attaching a negative connotation with accumulation of material possessions, disapproved the phenomenon as consequence of undermining Islamic values in society. It is considered an outcome of modernization and followership of western culture and consequence of decline of the greater virtue of simplicity.

Research suggests that hoarding correlates differently for men and women on different variables and determines dependent personality as one of the indicators.<sup>15</sup> Present study also highlights culture specific influences of gender role with respect to hoarding. Financial dependency and their role as a care taker make females vulnerable to acquiring and hoarding of objects. Uncertainty in terms of money and house hold as their career appears to make women more material oriented as they spend most of their time making and maintaining those objects. Besides it also makes them caring and responsible towards objects making discarding a difficult decision for them. Men however being independent and dominant counterparts generally don't feel bound spending money and hoarding the stuff. Study also pinpoints that females tend to hoard more than men while intensity of attitude is considered high in men when involved in hoarding behavior whereas research indicates contrary findings with men showing significantly higher rates of prevalence than women.<sup>10</sup>



Given the absence of research on phenomenology of hoarding in cultural context of Pakistan, current investigation is a first effort towards understanding the nature and possible reasons of hoarding behavior. However, findings of the study need to be interpreted within certain limits. Primarily, because of its reliance on self-report data only. Also the sample consisted of general public and not specifically of hoarders which could have proven to be more reliable source in discerning intricacies of the construct. This study approved a number of aspects of hoarding behavior that previous researches have suggested as discussed above. Yet, in this sample few differences were noticed. With regard to phenomenology of behavior, memory related concerns were not explicit in narratives. This might be due to the fact that sample consisted of general public and an investigation based specifically on sample of hoarders may yield different results. Similarly, clutter aspect of hoarding appears to be quite different because of collectivist culture however the organizational efforts and throw away attitude shown by family could prove to be a source of increased stress and relationship difficulty. Therefore, additional research needs to be done on more typical sample of hoarders to clarify these findings and to better explain this under-recognized mental health concern.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This study addresses factors that underpin major themes in relation to form and prevalence of hoarding behavior in cultural context of Pakistan. Four main themes (cognitive, affective, personality dynamics, and socio-cultural aspect) emerged while delineating the phenomenon of hoarding with considerable similarities with existing literature. However, many unique aspects of the cultural influence on understanding and expression of hoarding behavior also became evident during this qualitative exploration adding to the current knowledge and opening doors for further research on the topic.

## REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. 5th ed. Washington, DC: APA, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>
- Frost RO, Gross RC. The hoarding of possessions. *Behav Res Ther* 1993 May 1; 31(4):367-81. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967\(93\)90094-B](https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967(93)90094-B)
- Steketee G, Frost RO, Kyrios M. Cognitive aspects of compulsive hoarding. *Cognitive Ther Res* 2003 Aug; 27(4):463-79. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025428631552>
- Penzel F. Hoarding in history. In: Frost R, Steketee G, editors. *The Oxford handbook of hoarding and acquiring*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2014; p. 6-16. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199937783.013.001>
- Shaeffer MK. The social context of hoarding behavior: Building a foundation for sociological study. *Sociol Compass* 2017 April; 11(4):1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12472>
- James W. *The principles of psychology*. New York: Henry Holt; 1890. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10538-000>
- Freud S. Character and anal erotism. In: Strachey J, editor. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IX (1906-1908): Jensen's 'Gradiva' and Other Works*. London: Hogarth Press, 1959; p. 167-76.
- Frost RO, Hartl TL. A cognitive-behavioral model of compulsive hoarding. *Behav Res Ther* 1996 Apr 1; 34(4):341-50. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967\(95\)00071-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967(95)00071-2)
- Timpano KR, Buckner JD, Richey JA, Murphy DL, Schmidt NB. Exploration of anxiety sensitivity and distress tolerance as vulnerability factors for hoarding behaviors. *Depress Anxiety* 2009 Apr; 26(4):343-53. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.20469>
- Iervolino AC, Perroud N, Fullana MA, Guipponi M, Cherkas L, Collier DA, et al. Prevalence and heritability of compulsive hoarding: a twin study. *Am J Psychiat* 2009 Oct; 166(10):1156-61. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2009.08121789>
- Ayers CR, Saxena S, Golshan S, Wetherell JL. Age at onset and clinical features of late life compulsive hoarding. *Int J Geriatr Psychiat* 2010 Feb; 25(2):142-9. <https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.2310>
- Tolin DF, Frost RO, Steketee G, Fitch KE. Family burden of compulsive hoarding: results of an internet survey. *Behav Res Ther* 2008 Mar 1; 46(3):334-44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2007.12.008>
- Tolin DF. Challenges and advances in treating hoarding. *J Clin Psychol* 2011 May; 67(5):451-5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20796>
- Frost RO, Steketee G, Tolin DF. Comorbidity in hoarding disorder. *Focus* 2015 Apr; 13(2):244-51. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.focus.130218>
- Samuels JF, Bienvenu OJ, Pinto A, Murphy DL, Piacentini J, Rauch SL, et al. Sex-specific clinical correlates of hoarding in obsessive-compulsive disorder. *Behav Res Ther* 2008 Sep 1; 46(9):1040-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2008.06.005>
- Steketee G, Frost RO. Phenomenology of hoarding. In: Frost RO, Steketee G, editors. *The Oxford handbook of hoarding and acquiring*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2014; p. 19-32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199937783.013.008>
- Charmaz K. *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage; 2006.
- Keefer LA, Landau MJ, Rothschild ZK, Sullivan D. Attachment to objects as compensation for close others' perceived unreliability. *J Exp Soc Psychol* 2012 Jul 1; 48(4):912-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.02.007>

19. Hartl TL, Duffany SR, Allen GJ, Steketee G, Frost RO. Relationships among compulsive hoarding, trauma, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Behav Res Ther* 2005 Feb 1; 43(2):269-76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2004.02.002>
20. Kyrios M, Steketee G, Frost RO, Oh S. Cognitions in compulsive hoarding. In: Frost R, Steketee G, editors. *Cognitive approaches to obsessions and compulsions*. UK: Pergamon; 2002. p. 269-89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-008043410-0/50018-0>
21. Oglesby ME, Medley AN, Norr AM, Capron DW, Korte KJ, Schmidt NB. Intolerance of uncertainty as a vulnerability factor for hoarding behaviors. *J Affect Disorders* 2013 Feb 20; 145(2):227-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2012.08.003>
22. Steketee G, Frost, RO. *Compulsive hoarding and acquiring: Therapist guide*. New York: Oxford University Press; 2007.
23. Fromm E. *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*. Oxfordshire: Routledge; 1999.
24. Millon T, Meagher SE, Grossman SD. *Theoretical perspectives*. New York: Guilford Press; 2001.
25. Simmel G. *The Philosophy of Fashion*. In: David BC, Marcus AD, Kate MLH, editors. *The Consumption Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003; p. 238-45.
26. Tompkins MA. Working with families of people who hoard: a harm reduction approach. *J Clin Psychol* 2011 May; 67(5):497-506. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20797>
27. Landau D, Iervolino AC, A, Santo S, Singh S, Mataix-Cols D. Stressful life events and material deprivation Pertusa in hoarding disorder. *J Anxiety Disord* 2011 Mar 1; 25(2):192-202. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2010.09.002>
28. Widom CS. Sex roles and psychopathology. In: Widom CS, editor. *Sex roles and psychopathology*. Boston: Springer; 1984. p. 3-17. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-4562-6\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-4562-6_1)
29. Behere PB, Das A, Yadav R, Behere AP. Religion and mental health. *Indian J Psychiat* 2013 Jan; 55 (Suppl 2):S187. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.105526>

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

**GRANT SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE**

None declared.

**AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

The following authors have made substantial contributions to the manuscript as under:

Conception or Design: FM, AK

Acquisition, Analysis or Interpretation of Data: FM, AK

Manuscript Writing & Approval: FM, AK

All the authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.



Copyright © 2020. Fauzia Malik, et al. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution & reproduction in any medium provided that original work is cited properly.