### Chapter 2

**MATERIALISM AND SELF-ESTEEM**

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Section I

MATERIALISM

2.1 Concept of Materialism

Even though materialism as a subject has caught the attention of Kapila (700 BC), Chanakya (283-350 BC) and Marx (middle of nineteenth century), it is only in the recent past that serious empirical research has been initiated to understand the causative factors of materialism [Pannekoek (1942)]. In the recent past materialism has caught the attention and interest of philosophers, religious leaders, historians and more recently of psychologists, economists, anthropologists and marketers [Kasser and Ryan (1993), Inglehart (1981), Belk (1985), Richins and Dawson (1992), Mowen (2000)].

Larsen et al. (1999) developed a four quadrant model of materialistic conceptualizations. First quadrant is the ‘epicurean perspective’ which is of hedonistic orientation (material goods result in pleasure and hence they should be enjoyed). The second quadrant is the ‘bourgeois perspective’ (material comforts contribute to personal fulfillment and economic prosperity). Third is the ‘religious perspective’ (encourage resistance to material impulses). Lastly there is the ‘critical perspective’ which says that people acquire the desire for consumer goods and this does not lead to need fulfillment as is widely believed. They state that most conceptualizations in the psychological literature fit into the critical perspective.

Oxford English Dictionary (2007) defines materialism as “a devotion to material needs and desires, leading to the neglect of spiritual matters. It is a way of life, opinion or tendency based entirely upon material interests”. Belk’s (1984) definition of materialism: “The consumer orientation known as
Materialism reflects the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism such possessions assume a central place in a person’s life and are believed to provide the greatest source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in life.” embodies the persistent belief that for consumers the acquisition of things will lead to greater happiness and satisfaction in life [Rassuli and Hollander (1986)]. Richins and Dawson (1992) definition – “Materialism is the importance a person gives to his possession and their acquisition as a necessary or desirable form of behavior to reach end states such as happiness or an admired position in the society” tallied with those by Belk (1984) and others.

Based on these modern viewpoints about materialism, the following two major conceptualizations of materialism find general acceptance [Fournier and Richins (1991), Meek (2007)]. They are Belk’s (1985) view of materialism as a set of personality traits and Richins and Dawson’s (1992) view of materialism as a value or value system.

Belk (1985) was of the opinion that people of high materialism attach their happiness to their possessions. He described materialism using the following three personality traits – possessiveness, non-generosity and envy. Ger and Belk (1996) added the new dimension of preservation, which is described as the tendency to conserve experiences and events in material form, such as collecting things or saving souvenirs. Richins and Dawson (1990) considered traits as something formed at an early age and remained relatively unchanged over a lifespan. Moreover Belk’s theory of materialism as a trait, has not found the acceptance of others, based on the argument of changing goals and life satisfaction [Inglehart (1981), Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), Henkoff (1989), Yankelovich (1981)].
Richins and Dawson (1992) tried to explain the concept based on the following three constructs: ‘acquisition centrality’ (acquiring material possessions the main focus of their lives), ‘acquisition as the pursuit of happiness’ (acquiring things will fetch them happiness and satisfaction in life) and ‘possession defined success’, (monitoring of achievements and successes by regularly comparing the quality of their possessions with what others have).

Diverging from the earlier view points on materialism, Inglehart (1981), came out with the ‘scarcity hypothesis’ and ‘socialization’ hypothesis. He believed that materialism stems directly from environmental factors as an internalization of economic instability or insecurity. This view point was supported by Kasser (2002) who, conceptualized materialism not as a value or trait, but as a mechanism adopted to compensate for unmet social needs. Failure to meet any of these needs leads to the development of materialism and ultimately to a poor overall life satisfaction. Seneca (2009) sees materialistic values [Richins and Dawson (1992)] as a result of the need deprivation as mentioned by Kasser (2002).

2.2 Instrumental materialism versus Terminal Materialism (The Dark Side of materialism)

There existed a consistent view, right from the early days, that materialism is inherently negative [Fromm (1976)]. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1978) propagated against such feelings of negativity that was getting attached to possessions and were of the view that all materialism need not be treated as negative. They classified materialism as, ‘terminal materialism’ and ‘instrumental materialism’. Terminal materialism consists in desiring objects for the sake of possessing them. In contrast instrumental materialism consists in desiring and valuing an object because of the things it can do. Csikszentmihalyi (2000) is of the opinion that an artisan might value
his tools as a possession, looking at the utility that he derives from them. This is instrumental materialism.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) further argued the evil side of materialism actually stems from the time and energy one spends in pursuit of these things. Belk and Pollay (1985) pointed at the evidences of both terminal and instrumental materialism in advertising themes, but mentioned that there was a clear trend by mid 1980’s of terminal materialism based themes clearly eclipsing instrumental materialism based ones.

A number of researchers have looked at materialism from a value perspective and invariably almost all of them have noticed negative relationship between materialism and life satisfaction [Meek (2007), Burroughs and Reindfleisch (2002)]. Lower well being is resulted because they keep financial success as central to their lives, even over self-actualization needs and human relationships [Kasser and Ahuvia (2002), Kasser and Ryan (1993), Carver and Baird (1998) and Diener and Seligman (2004)]. In fact materialistic desires increase with increased income or purchasing power and thus neutralize the benefit of increased wealth [Easterlin (2001), Ah-Keng et al. (2000)]. There exists enough empirical evidences to show that materialism is inversely related to self-esteem [Richins and Dawson (1992)] and positively related to compulsive buying psychologically deviant behaviors and compulsive consumption habits [Faber and O’Guinn (1992), O’Guinn and Faber (1989)].

Most of the religious teachers and philosophers have affirmed that the joys of the intellect and spirit far exceed those of material possessions [Belk (1983)]. A large number of studies has examined the relationship between materialism and happiness or life satisfaction and all have shown a negative correlation between those constructs [Belk (1984, 1985), Dawson and Bamossy

Diener and Seligman (2004) explored the relationship between wealth and income in life satisfaction and came out with the evidence to show that there is only minimal increase in one’s happiness, once an individual’s basic needs are met. Kasser and Ahuvia (2002), Ryan and Dziurawiec (2001) and Solberg et al. (2004) have confirmed the inverse relationship between materialism and life satisfaction. Wachtell and Blatt (1990) and Cole et al. (1992) used social comparison theory to explain the negative relationship between materialism and life satisfaction. The theory states that people compare themselves with reference groups and if the comparison is favorable they feel satisfied, if not they feel dissatisfied.

Nickerson et al. (2003) examined the negative effects of putting too high emphasis on financial goals. They used a longitudinal design to see if placing too high emphasis on financial success has any adverse effect on life satisfaction after a span of 30 years. These arguments matched with the findings of Prince and Manolis (2003), Cummins (2000) Meek (2007) Stutzer (2004) and Sirgy (1998). Easterlin (2001) argues contrary to the findings of Cummins (2000), that happiness generally remains constant over the life span as the income increases. Normally, as income increases, life satisfaction and happiness should also improve. But in reality this can be different, as with the increase in income, material expectations also increase, offsetting any benefits of the higher financial status. This model could well explain why happiness keep evading materialistic individuals, since their focus on materialistic goals always remain unmet.
2.3 What Causes Materialism?

Substantial amount of empirical work has taken place in the west and also in the developed countries which tried to identify the factors that are inherent in developing materialism. Based on these, two main theories or two pathways to materialism do exist [Kasser et al. (2004)]. The first pathway is about materialism developing out of the lack of need satisfaction especially during childhood, leading to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. The second pathway is considered an outcome of exposure through socialization or media.

i) Insecurity and Inadequacy Pathway

This pathway of materialism is unquestionably linked to low self-esteem and there exists enough evidence to show that people with low self-esteem may turn towards materialistic goals [Rosenberg (1989), Kasser et al. (2004)]. It is also established by the work of Coopersmith (1981) that development of high or low self-esteem in a person is connected to an individual’s childhood.

Inglehart (1977, 1981) argued that people who had financially unstable childhood would develop materialistic values as such individuals tend to crave for things which he had missed out during his early years. This argument found support in later works by Kasser et al. (1995), Ahuvia and Wong (2002). Ingelhart’s (1977) findings are well supported by Belk’s (1985) conceptualization and not by the conceptualization of Richin’s and Dawson (1992). But Chang and Arkins (2002) found that ‘acquisition centrality subscales’ of Richins and Dawsons (1992) as well as materialism value scale (MVS) was significantly predicted by the participants who were deprived of socio-economic status while growing up.

Rindfleisch et al. (1997) had hypothesized that family factors specifically parental influence, family environment and family structure
contribute to the child’s material values. Meek (2009) and Roberts et al. (2003) have noted similar observations in their works. Other studies also have come to similar conclusions regarding the role of family environment and parenting as important factors in the development of materialism [Williams et al. (2000), Flouri (1999, 2001), Goldberg et al. (2003), Moore and Moschis (1981), Kasser et al. (1995)].

ii) Socialization Pathway

Socialization is considered to be an alternate pathway in creating strong desire for material goods. Kasser et al. (2004) believed that the inadequacy and insecurity pathway and the socialization pathway interact and the combined effect is supposed to lead individuals to materialistic tendencies. The concept of ‘socialization’ is considered to have evolved from consumer socialization. According to the conventional thinking, the socializing agents that affect this process are television, media, family, peers and social environment [Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), Meek (2009)].

Moschis and Churchill (1978) found that interaction with peers and television advertising, are significant contributors of materialism. Both these components teach people the expressive function related to consumption. John (1999) pointed out the role of social comparisons acting as a motivator for acquisition right from the time children can make out such inferences. Blumenfeld (1973) studied the development of materialistic values in children and found that children right from kindergarten days showed a desire for material goods for status. As they grow older, they desire for material goods to increase social contact. Goldberg et al. (2003) studied materialistic tendencies among teenagers and came out with the findings that children become materialistic and show drive for acquisition as they go through the evolutionary, self-centered stage of individual development. As they grow
older, they start to attach more meaning to possessions and desire to increase their means of acquiring these goods by aspiring for high paying jobs.

2.4 Television Viewing and Materialism

Television viewing and exposure to television advertising are the areas where considerable amount of work has been carried out to enumerate the causal role played by them in the development of materialistic values. It was Lippmann (1922) who first discovered the role played by media in defining our world, and discriminated between an individual’s real environment and pseudo environment. He pointed out on how media effect makes people to vicariously try to reach that world the individual cannot personally reach. Studies by Gerbner and Gross (1976), Gerbner et al. (1982), Gerbner et al. (2002) analyzed television’s accumulated long-term effects on its viewers and proved that commercial television cultivates those values and perspectives projected through mainstream television programs and advertisements.

Signorielli and Morgan (1996), Potter (1986) and Shrumm (2002) were of the view that heavy viewers of television internalize the central messages and perspectives of the reality projected through television. They were of the opinion that the ‘cultivation’ implied here is not just the stimulus-response model relationship typical to advertising messages, but a long-term, cumulative effect that exposure to television brings in. Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003a) based on a review of the literature of similar studies found significant evidences to conclude that advertising plays a significant role in the development of materialism. Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003b) later carried out an empirical exercise which confirmed their earlier findings that high exposure television advertising does induce materialism.
Moschis and Moore (1982) utilized a longitudinal design to study the effects of television advertising and came out with the findings that continued exposure to advertisements leads to increased materialism. Yoon (1995), Williams (1991) and Harmon (2001) all found supporting evidences to substantiate the notion that generally materialists hold positive attitude towards advertising. Schor (1998) added that heavy television viewing was correlated with spending more and saving less.

Richins (1996) pointed out that advertising where messages idealizing images of wealth and consumption are shown. Such communication will lead people to make social comparisons with the ideal images projected and in which the individual fall short of. This can create feelings of inadequacy which motivates the person to strive toward the ideal [Richins (1991)]. Secondly the idealization can force people to raise their reference points for living standards. Essentially the ideal images in advertising stimulate upward-social comparisons. Consumers normally buy products which matches with their self image [Clairborne and Sirgy (1990), Dolich (1969)], except when they have low self-esteem. Here they are more likely to be swayed by appeals to fantasy that portrays an ideal self [Sirgy et al. (1998)].

Faber and O’Guinn (1988) write in their work, “since time is very limited for television programs or for commercials, information about a character’s background or personality is often conveyed visually through the opulence of the setting they are placed in or by the style of their clothes or the products and brands used by them. While decoding this, automatically the association between possession and status is getting registered or reinforced. Therefore another outcome of mass mediated consumer socialization may be learning to assess and evaluate people on the basis of their possessions. This may eventually lead to a greater desire to have things in order to be positively evaluated by others”.

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School of Management Studies, CUSAT
Studies taken up by Chan (2003), Chan et al. (2006) and Chan and Prendergast (2008) in Hong Kong and China showed positive correlation between exposure to television and materialism. Mishra and Mishra (2011) conducted a study in 2011 in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, India with a sample of 252 youths and found that materialistic Indian consumers display more consumption innovation and a positive attitude towards television advertising.

All this shows that, there exists enough evidence to prove the link between television viewing or exposure to television advertising and the development of materialism.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review on Materialism

Based on this literature review activity, it can be stated that materialism is the importance a person gives to material possessions and the importance he or she attaches to the acquisition of such possessions as a major activity or major focus of his life. Most materialists get into high consumption habits, especially of status products, thinking that it would make them happy and provide them satisfaction. Research actually disproves this myth and points out that the materialistic individuals are more dissatisfied with their life in general and are less happy than their non-materialistic counterparts. This study is more aligned with Richins and Dawson’s (1992) conceptualization of materialism, where it is seen more as a set of social values and it is the measurement of such values inherent in the individual that is undertaken using the scale developed by Richins and Dawson (1992).

The next primary focus through this secondary data search was to understand the factors that cause materialism. The generally accepted notion regarding the development of materialism among people attributes it to the feelings of inadequacy and insecurity which in turn causes low self-esteem in
people. Feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, primarily get developed in children brought up under economic instability or deprivation where their needs are not well taken care of [Inglehart (1981)]. Other factors are disrupted family structure [Rindfleisch et al. (1997)] and lack of childhood nurturing [Williams et al. (2000)].

Kasser et al. (2004) suggested an alternate pathway for the development of materialism, which they termed as the socialization pathway. Their conceptualization of the new pathway was based on the research by many contemporary researchers. Socialization pathway shows that the combined effect of peer pressure and television advertising can lead people to high consumption habits and to create materialistic values in them [Moschis and Churchil (1978)]. John (1999) observed that social comparisons especially upward comparisons create desires to consume more and can cause materialism. Thus socialization pathway considered media especially television, family interactions and communications, peer pressure and social comparisons as factors that play a crucial role in the development of materialism in people.

As low self-esteem is considered one of the primary factors that lead to development of materialistic values in individuals, the next section will focus on the studies in this domain.
2.6 Concept of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is another widely studied construct in Psychology and has caught the attention of researchers for more than one century [Leary (1999)]. Rosenberg (1989), one of the most cited researchers in the self-esteem domain is of the opinion that “self-esteem is an individual’s attitude toward the self”. “Kaiser (1985) defined it as “our feelings of self worth” and Bukato and Daehler (1998) defined it as “ones feelings of worth; the extent to which one senses that one’s attributes and actions are good, desired and valued”.

American Psychologist, James (1890, 1906) revolutionized the way we think and speak about self. Avoiding the term ‘pride’, used in most works prior to 1890, he brought in the term self-esteem. James (1890) formulated self-esteem as a precise mathematical equation: “Self-esteem = Success / Pretension”. The theory of self-esteem got established through the works taken up in the early 1900’s. Katz (1998) considered self-esteem as a judgmental rating of the self. The individual has high self-worth when self-esteem is high and self-degrading or self-hate, when one has low self-esteem. Cooley (1902), Angell (1968), Coopersmith (1981) and, Mruk (1995) contributed greatly in extending James’s philosophy, that self is determined by the successful attributes of an individual and were of the opinion that self develops from the reflected views of others. Coopersmith (1981) believed that people who were successful and had effective defensive mechanism against anxiety would be prone to have high self-esteem. According to the author, a person’s value system and level of aspirations were important in defining what success is to him and concluded
that parental behavior was highly influential in the self-esteem development of children.

Rosenberg is accredited with the development of a measurement scale [Rosenberg (1965)], which is still the most used instrument to measure self-esteem. According to Rosenberg (1989), a person with high self-esteem is someone who has self respect and values his or her capabilities. Feelings of superiority and arrogance are not a part of high self-esteem characterized by him. Similarly, low self-esteem person is an individual who lacks self-respect and self-worth and holds a view about himself as an inadequate person. Rosenberg’s proposition did recognize the impact of interpersonal and group acceptance factors on self-esteem, which is the central idea behind the socio-meter theory of self-esteem [Leary and Downs (1995), Leary (2004)].

‘Socio-meter theory’ used an evolutionary psychological framework to understand self-esteem where self-esteem is conceptualized as a complex system which is based on social or interpersonal acceptance or rejection [Leary (1999, 2004), Leary and Downs (1995), Leary and MacDonald (2003), Baumeister (1993)]. A more recent conceptualization of self-esteem comes from ‘Terror Management Theory’ where the drive to enhance, attain and maintain self-esteem is a critical part of the cultural anxiety buffer [Greenberg et al. (1995), Solomon et al. (1991), Pyszcznski et al. (2004)].

Another distinction prevalent in self-esteem research are the concepts of ‘state self-esteem’ and ‘trait self-esteem’ [Crocker and Wolfe (2001)]. Trait self-esteem is seen as a person’s overall level of self-esteem that typically remains stable over a time period. State self-esteem is a person’s self-esteem at any given moment and is affected by an individual’s current mood and the environmental context. Deci and Ryan (1995) propagated the conceptualization
of ‘true self-esteem’ and ‘contingent self-esteem’. True self-esteem comes from the meeting of the core psychological needs autonomy, competence and relatedness. Beyond this, individuals try to attain external standards of success, achievement or acceptance by social groups, which lead them to develop contingent self-esteem.

Further we have the categorization of ‘global self-esteem’ and ‘domain-specific self-esteem’. Beliefs about oneself and the meaning a person attaches to those beliefs are critical to global self-esteem [Pelham and Swan (1989)]. Global self-esteem is what Rosenberg (1965) has typically identified with and it is about the overall or general picture of a person’s self-esteem. Domain-specific self-esteem refers to the feelings of self worth, which is more guided by group inclusions and values perceived by one’s peers [Kirkpatrick et al. (2002), Dutton and Brown (1997)].

2.7 Childhood Factors and Self-Esteem

Cohen and Cohen (1996) studied the effect that poor nurturing by parents can have on children as they grow up. Poor nurturing parenting style, adoption of too strict or harsh punishments as part of parenting and lack of structure and consistency in parenting lead to low self-esteem and materialism in the children as they grow up as these parental styles or practices do not meet children’s need for security and safety. Baumrind’s (1966, 1967, 1971) studies pioneered the role of parenting and its effects on later behavior of children, specifically related to parameters such as psycho-social adjustment, personality, school performance and self-esteem (Chancellor 2003). Based on her research, Baumrind (1965) had proposed the existence of three types of parenting styles – authoritarian, authoritative and permissive styles.
According to Baumrind (1965) authoritarian parents adopt a dictatorial style and often resort to harsh and strict disciplinarian standards in child rearing. Authoritative style chooses a more democratic mode, encourage verbal give-and-take and promote self expression and self assertion by children. Permissive parents do not provide any structure in their child upbringing and hence tend to be neglectful about the child’s mental development [Hickman et al. (2000)].

Comparative studies carried out by Baumrind (1966, 1967, 1968 and 1971) and Baumrind and Black (1967)] showed that well adjusted, independent and assertive children came from parents who adopted authoritative style. Children who were less satisfied with themselves, more apprehensive and less sociable were found to have parents who adopted authoritarian style. There were children who lacked self control and self reliance to a much greater extent and they were from families who adapted permissive parenting styles. Recent research has shown that a clear positive relationship exists between parental nurturing and self worth which supports the assumption that authoritative parenting style leads to development of self-esteem [Furnham and Cheng (2000), Lamborn et al. (1991), Cheng and Furnham (2004), Ruiz et al. (2002), Demo et al. (1987), Hopkins and Klein (1995), Klein et al. (1996)].

Achenreiner (1997) also talks about the curvilinear relationship between self-esteem and materialism among children from 7 to 16 years and attributes this to the lack of self-esteem in them during this period. Self-esteem drops dramatically during early teens and builds back later. Findings of Robins et al. (2002) matched with the above observations. Similarly studies have established that child socialization and family related factors such as family integration [Yabiku et al. (1997)], family cohesion [Cooper et al. (1983)] and relationship
quality [Kashubeck and Christensen (1995)] were closely related to the development of self-esteem.

Lower self-esteem was noticed among children belonging to broken homes or divorced parents [(Bynum and Durm (1996), McCormick and Kennedy (2000)] and many such young adults were found to be more materialistic by Rindfleisch et al. (1997). Experts were of the opinion that it is the reduction in interpersonal factors, such as love and affection and not the availability of financial resources that contributed to the low self-esteem and materialistic tendencies. The children brought up in families that promote togetherness and share commonalities, experience strong interpersonal bonds which help them to compensate for any feeling of perceived insecurity, without the help of external reinforcements [DeGeode et al. (1979), Amato (2001), Amato and Keith (1991), Ganong and Coleman (1993) Burroughs and Reindfleisch (2002) Flouri (2001), Leary (2004) and Flouri (2004)].

Being raised in a disadvantaged socio-economic environment predicts high materialism for the youth [Abramson and Inglehart (1995), Cohen and Cohen (1996), Kasser and Ryan (1996), Kasser (2002)]. Children who remained deprived of many of the basic comforts, develop feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem tend to develop a craving for wealth and possessions, which they had missed during their childhood [Kasser (2002), Inglehart (1971)]. Socio-economic conditions that undermine the feelings of security in the early stage of one’s life can cause insecure feelings during childhood and can lead to the development of low self-esteem. Kasser (2002) reviewed a number of studies effectively and concluded that individuals get oriented to materialistic values when they have experienced childhood family circumstances that do not help them feel secure.
2.8 Self-Esteem and Materialism: Exploring the Linkages

One belief that has gained wide acceptance among most contemporary researchers is the fact that individuals will start striving for material goods to counter the feelings of inadequacy and insecurity [Flouri (1999), Kasser (2002), Kasser et al. (2004) and Arndt et al. (2004)]. The literature shows that materialism and self-esteem are negatively related and people with low self-esteem would be more likely to be materialistic [Kasser (2002), Chang and Arkin (2002), Shroeder and Dugal (1995), Christopher and Schlenker (2004), Mick (1996)].

In marketing theory, self-esteem is seen as a factor closely associated with self concept [Sirgy (1992), Clairborne and Sirgy (1990)] and low self-esteem is said to be generated when there exists a gap between actual self and the ideal self [Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), Hawkins et al. (1998), Sirgy (1992)]. According to ‘self awareness theory’ put forward by Duval and Wicklund (1972), awareness of self is considered as an aversive state wherein actual self is often compared unfavorably to certain standards which are considered like ideal self. Social and cultural values deeply imbibed in such individuals will help them to reduce such discrepancies and regain their self-esteem [Duval and Wicklund (1972)]. The dissatisfaction born of the discrepancies between one’s actual self and ideal self can lead one to the purchase of status products that will enhance self-esteem [Richins (1996), Duval and Wicklund (1972)].

Individuals with the low self-esteem developed in them through childhood factors etcetera find it difficult to meet with the discrepancies created by high ideal self levels. They would cultivate escapist attitudes such as alcoholism, drug abuse and overeating [Baumeister (1990), Heatherton and
Baumeister (1993)]. An alternative theory suggests that many individuals with low self-esteem get into less self-destructive habits such as uncontrolled shopping, compulsive buying, excessive television viewing or high consumption of sweets [Moskalento et al. (2003), Faber and O’Guinn (1989)]. Earlier works in this area have conclusively linked low self-esteem to depression, anxiety and substance abuse [Mruk (1999)].

Review of recent empirical works did not give such conclusive evidences to show self esteem as the root cause of materialism. In a study by Mick (1996) where measurements were taken from two different samples saw the existence of practically very low, but significant negative correlations \(r = -0.19, p < 0.01\) and \(r = -0.14, p < 0.05\). Studies by Chancellor (2003), found no-significant association \(r = -0.12, p > 0.05\) between materialism and self-esteem. Recent studies by Meek (2007), showed the lack of existence of any significant relationship \(r = -0.09, p > 0.05\) and Benmoyal-Bouzaglo and Moschis’s (2010) study in France showed no significant correlation \(r = 0.039, p > 0.05\). The findings from the exploratory study \(r = 0.004, p < 0.05\) and the results from a pilot study \(r = -0.104, p >0.05\) taken up by this researcher matches with the findings from similar studies mentioned in the earlier paragraph.

2.9 Summary of Literature Review on Self-Esteem

Self-esteem deals with the feelings of self worth [Kaiser (1985)] or it is an attitude to one’s own self [Rosenberg (1989)]. Based on the review of a number of studies [James (1892), Cooley (1902), Coopersmith (1981), Rosenberg (1989), Harter (1990), Mruk (1995), DuBois et al. (1996), DuBois et al. (2000)] it can be concluded that high self-esteem gets developed by successful utilization of one’s competencies and abilities while attaining one’s goals. In contrast low self-esteem builds when people are neglected, belittled
and when they find it difficult to achieve what they targeted [Baumeister (1993)]. Cooley (1902) also introduced the thinking that one’s perception of self, comes from the reflected view of what others have about him.

Some of the later works such as socio-meter theory [Leary (1999, 2004), Leary and Down (1995), Leary and MacDonald (2003)], global and domain-specific self-esteem theories [Dutton and Brown (1997)] and Self and Contingent self-esteem theories did support the success or achievement oriented theories prevalent earlier. They pointed at the role played by the acceptance or rejection by social groups and environmental factors [Crocker and Wolfe (2001), Kirkpatrick et al. (2002)] in the development of self-esteem.

Existing literature makes us believe that it is the child hood factors, related to unmet safety and sustenance needs that lead to low self-esteem and materialistic tendencies in any individual. Studies by Baumrind (1967, 1971) showed that authoritative and permissive styles of parenting create feeling of inadequacy and insecurity in children. Family environment and interactions [Cooper et al. (1983)], family structure [McCormick and Kennedy 2000), Abramson and Inglehart (1995), Cohen and Cohen (1996) and Kasser and Ryan (1996)] disadvantaged socio-economic environment which develop feelings of insecurity can all play a major role in the development of low self-esteem. Though most experts were of the opinion that low self-esteem led to materialism, review of some recent literature could not provide us with empirical evidences which could conclusively prove such linkages.