



Financial Resilience Illusion: Social Media Marketing Drives E Commerce Youth Impulse Buying

Ilusi Resiliensi Finansial: Pemasaran Media Sosial Mendorong Pembelian Impulsif E Commerce Remaja

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History:

Submitted: 16-04-2026

Revised: 20-05-2026

Accepted: 25-06-2026

Keyword:

E-Commerce Choice Architectures; Financial Resilience Illusion; Algorithmic Impulse Buying; Adolescent Consumer Behavior.

Kata Kunci:

Arsitektur Pilihan E-Commerce; Ilusi Ketahanan Finansial; Pembelian Impulsif Algoritmik; Perilaku Konsumen Remaja.

Abstract

Contemporary electronic commerce choice architectures systematically exploit macroeconomic anxiety, subverting adolescent financial resilience into algorithmic overconsumption. Extant literature overlooks how digital marketing weaponizes consumer stress. This qualitative study investigated how social media platforms distort youth financial behavior within emerging markets. Employing an exploratory design, qualitative interviews were conducted with six adolescents and analyzed via thematic network analysis. The empirical evidence reveals the financial resilience illusion, where disciplined saving practices are continuously neutralized by frictionless digital checkout mechanisms and targeted recommendations. Chronic macroeconomic uncertainty fails to foster precautionary austerity; instead, it induces cognitive fatigue that transforms impulsive consumption into a therapeutic coping mechanism. Furthermore, algorithmic peer pressure and gamified interfaces severely override baseline personal control, confirming that traditional financial literacy offers insufficient defense against advanced digital persuasion. Advancing beyond individual deficit models, this study establishes a robust theoretical paradigm demanding strict platform accountability to protect consumers across global digital business markets.

Abstrak

Arsitektur pilihan niaga elektronik kontemporer secara sistematis mengeksploitasi kecemasan makroekonomi, yang mengubah ketahanan finansial remaja menjadi konsumsi berlebih algoritmik. Literatur terdahulu mengabaikan bagaimana pemasaran digital memanfaatkan stres konsumen. Studi kualitatif ini meneliti bagaimana platform media sosial mendistorsi perilaku keuangan pemuda di pasar berkembang. Menggunakan desain eksploratif, wawancara kualitatif dilakukan dengan enam remaja dan dianalisis melalui analisis jaringan tematik. Bukti empiris mengungkapkan ilusi ketahanan finansial, di mana praktik menabung yang disiplin dinetralkan secara berkelanjutan oleh mekanisme pembayaran digital tanpa hambatan dan rekomendasi bertarget. Ketidakpastian makroekonomi kronis gagal mendorong penghematan preventif; sebaliknya, hal itu memicu kelelahan kognitif yang mengubah konsumsi impulsif menjadi mekanisme koping terapeutik. Selain itu, tekanan teman sebaya algoritmik dan antarmuka tergamifikasi mengabaikan kendali pribadi dasar, mengonfirmasi bahwa literasi keuangan tradisional menawarkan pertahanan yang tidak memadai terhadap persuasi digital tingkat lanjut. Bergerak melampaui model defisit individu, studi ini menetapkan paradigma teoretis yang menuntut akuntabilitas platform secara ketat di pasar global.



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doi <https://doi.org/10.65101/smarket.v1i2.69>

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

The contemporary e-commerce landscape is undergoing a radical paradigm shift characterized by the systematic integration of algorithmic social media marketing and highly frictionless transaction architectures. Rather than functioning merely as passive digital marketplaces, contemporary e-commerce platforms operate as dynamic, hyper-personalized choice architectures designed to continuously stimulate heuristic biases and accelerate consumer purchasing velocity.¹ This technological disruption fundamentally alters the consumer journey, transforming social media algorithms from neutral intermediaries into active catalysts of consumption. Within this digitally pervasive environment, adolescents and young adults—frequently referred to as Generation Z—represent a particularly vulnerable demographic. As these individuals transition toward financial independence, they navigate an unprecedented macroeconomic environment marked by inflationary pressures, precarious labor markets, and systemic economic uncertainty. The intersection of these exogenous economic shocks and sophisticated digital marketing algorithms creates a volatile consumer ecosystem, fundamentally challenging traditional paradigms of rational financial decision-making and optimal intertemporal choice.

Global macroeconomic fragility imposes significant endogenous constraints on youth economic behavior. Rising costs of essential commodities, housing market volatility, and the specter of automation-induced unemployment foster a pervasive sense of financial anxiety among adolescents. Traditionally, classical economic models assume that under conditions of profound uncertainty, rational actors will adjust their utility maximization strategies by deferring consumption, augmenting precautionary savings, and prioritizing long-term financial resilience.² However, the digital realities of modern consumption demonstrate a persistent behavioral anomaly. Instead of retreating into conservative fiscal behavior, young consumers frequently exhibit heightened rates of impulse buying, propelled by the gamification of e-commerce platforms and the ubiquitous presence of micro-targeted social media advertising. This paradox—where

¹ Jingshu Yang and Bo Peng, "Optimizing E-Commerce Marketing Strategies in the Digital Economy: A Big Data Approach Enhanced by Genetic Algorithms," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 13, no. 1 (March 24, 2026): 691, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-026-06654-w>.

² Christian J. Wiedermann et al., "Perceived Financial Strain and Adolescent Mental Health: Evidence from a Population-Based Study in South Tyrol, Italy," *Children* 13, no. 1 (January 13, 2026): 121, <https://doi.org/10.3390/children13010121>.

acute economic insecurity coexists with accelerated impulsive consumption—signals a systemic distortion in the cognitive processing of financial risk.³

Extant scholarship over the past five years has vigorously debated the mechanisms driving this behavioral dichotomy, predominantly clustering around two divergent academic paradigms. The first paradigm, grounded in traditional human capital and rational choice theories, posits that cognitive deficits are the primary drivers of suboptimal financial behavior. Recent studies robustly advocate for the mitigating power of financial and digital literacy, arguing that pedagogical interventions can successfully insulate adolescents from predatory marketing. For instance, Dewi et al. assert that rigorous financial literacy education functions as a critical preventive mechanism for youth navigating post-pandemic economic realities.⁴ Similarly, Rara Putri Sabila et al. emphasize the necessity of embedding financial competence early in childhood development to build long-term economic stability.⁵ Expanding this framework into the digital realm, Dwi Putra Susetyo and Dudi Firmansyah demonstrate that the convergence of economic, financial, and digital literacy is indispensable for rational financial behavior in a digitized economy.⁶ Furthermore, international macro-level analyses, such as those by Mega Noerman Ningtyas and Rafli Sahrian Putra, argue that integrating behavioral insights into foundational financial literacy can systematically enhance the cognitive resilience of young consumers against online market volatility.⁷ Within this paradigm, impulse buying is fundamentally diagnosed as a failure of individual knowledge and self-regulation.

Conversely, an emerging heterodox paradigm challenges the rational-actor assumption, arguing that the structural architecture of e-commerce platforms systematically overrides individual financial literacy. This literature emphasizes the

³ Arif Jameel et al., "Exploring the Impact of Social Media Sites on Compulsive Shopping Behavior: The Mediating Role of Materialism," *Psychology Research and Behavior Management* Volume 17 (January 2024): 171–85, <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S442193>.

⁴ Agustina Kusuma Dewi et al., "Pentingnya Literasi Keuangan Bagi Remaja Sebagai Upaya Preventif Menghadapi Pasca Pandemi COVID-19 Melalui Edutalkshow," *Al-Khidmat* 5, no. 2 (December 29, 2022): 137–47, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jak.v5i2.14843>.

⁵ Rizky Putri Sabila et al., "Edukasi Literasi Keuangan Untuk Anak Usia Dini Hingga Remaja," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 4, no. 4 (August 26, 2024): 14266–78, <https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative/article/view/14751>.

⁶ Dwinanto Priyo Susetyo and Deri Firmansyah, "Literasi Ekonomi, Literasi Keuangan, Literasi Digital Dan Perilaku Keuangan Di Era Ekonomi Digital," *Economics and Digital Business Review* 4, no. 1 (December 27, 2022): 261–79, <https://ojs.steamkop.ac.id/index.php/ecotal/article/view/331>.

⁷ Mega Noerman Ningtyas and Rafli Sahrian Putra, "Intelligence, Financial Literacy, and Financial Behavior: A Study on Generation Z," *IQTISHODUNA* 20, no. 2 (October 31, 2024): 121–41, <https://doi.org/10.18860/iq.v20i2.26528>.

disproportionate power of algorithmic persuasion, peer influence, and environmental design. Fatimah Inas Azzahra and Lyra Hafsari Datapuspita Imlika highlight that despite possessing baseline financial inclusion and literacy, Generation Z's saving behaviors are heavily compromised by diminished self-control and pervasive peer influence propagated through digital networks.⁸ Sigit Pramono Hadi further notes that the sheer velocity of digital information, coupled with widespread misinformation, significantly degrades the evaluative capacity of young internet users, leaving them susceptible to manipulated market signals.⁹ Advancing this critique, rigorous research from the global digital business sphere reveals the structural mechanisms of this manipulation. Ishtiaq Ahmed Malik et al., map how algorithmic personalization in social commerce constructs a "cognitive-affective" trap that reliably triggers impulsive purchases regardless of the consumer's baseline financial knowledge.¹⁰ Building upon this, Xiaoyong Zhang demonstrate that the choice architecture embedded within social media algorithms deliberately subverts consumer resilience by exploiting bounded rationality and utilizing artificial scarcity marketing.¹¹ Most critically, Ashish Kumar, Jari Salo, and Ram Bezawada argue that the seamless integration of digital marketing with frictionless credit facilities—such as Buy-Now-Pay-Later (BNPL) schemes—creates an "illusion of control," masking the long-term economic consequences of impulsive spending under a veneer of immediate affordability.¹²

While these two streams of literature provide invaluable macro-level insights, a significant theoretical and methodological blind spot persists within the current state of the art. The overwhelming majority of contemporary e-commerce and financial behavior research relies heavily on robust quantitative modeling, utilizing structural equation

⁸ Farika Izzati Azzahra and Lyra Hafsari Datapuspita Imlika, "Pengaruh Literasi Keuangan, Inklusi Keuangan, Kontrol Diri, Dan Teman Sebaya Terhadap Perilaku Menabung Generasi Z," *Jurnal Media Akademik (JMA)* 2, no. 12 (2024): 1–13, <https://jurnal.mediaakademik.com/index.php/jma/article/view/1421>.

⁹ Sigit Pramono Hadi, "Pemahaman Literasi Digital Penyebab Munculnya Hoaks," *Jurnal Karya Untuk Masyarakat (JKuM)* 4, no. 2 (July 27, 2023): 150–60, <https://doi.org/10.36914/jkum.v4i2.962>.

¹⁰ Ishtiaq Ahmed Malik et al., "Social Commerce Constructs and Purchase Intention on Social Commerce Sites: Investigating the Role of Affective and Cognitive Attitudes in Managing Digital Marketing Challenges," *Management & Marketing* 18, no. s1 (December 1, 2023): 474–95, <https://doi.org/10.2478/mmcks-2023-0026>.

¹¹ Xiaoyong Zhang, "The Impact Mechanism of Social Media Algorithmic Recommendations on Consumers' Impulse Buying," *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences* 260, no. 1 (February 24, 2026): 35–41, <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/2026.BJ31775>.

¹² Ashish Kumar, Jari Salo, and Ram Bezawada, "The Effects of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) on Customers' Online Purchase Behavior," *Journal of Retailing* 100, no. 4 (December 2024): 602–17, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2024.09.004>.

modeling (SEM) and linear regression to measure the statistical correlations between marketing exposure, literacy scores, and purchasing frequency. Consequently, this statistical trajectory inadvertently obfuscates the nuanced, phenomenological realities of the consumer experience. As Afruza Haque et al., point out, quantitative metrics fail to capture the subjective cognitive dissonance experienced by youth who simultaneously express deep economic anxiety yet engage in continuous algorithmic impulse buying.¹³ The existing literature treats financial resilience as a static cognitive shield and impulse buying as a mere operational failure, failing to theoretically bridge how e-commerce ecosystems actively weaponize adolescents' economic fears. There is a profound scarcity of qualitative, non-statistical inquiry that deconstructs the *how* and *why*—the underlying psychological negotiations, the shifting semiotics of money in digital spaces, and the lived reality of navigating a predatory algorithmic architecture while striving for financial stability.

To address this critical gap, this qualitative study departs from the prevailing quantitative, variable-centric models to offer a deep phenomenological analysis of adolescent financial decision-making within the digital economy. The theoretical novelty of this research lies in the conceptualization of the "Financial Resilience Illusion"—a structural paradigm in which social media marketing within e-commerce platforms deliberately exploits the macroeconomic anxieties of youth, repackaging impulsive consumption as a form of pseudo-empowerment or therapeutic coping. By abstaining from rigid statistical hypothesis testing, this study operates as a critical analytical lens to unearth the structural narratives and subjective meaning-making processes of young consumers. Ultimately, this research posits the thesis that social media marketing in e-commerce environments systematically dismantles genuine adolescent financial resilience, substituting it with algorithmically engineered impulse buying, thereby necessitating an urgent paradigm shift from evaluating individual financial literacy toward demanding structural algorithmic accountability.

2. Research Questions

Against the backdrop of the aforementioned theoretical lacuna, it becomes imperative to deconstruct the micro-level behavioral mechanics underlying the "Financial

¹³ Afruza Haque et al., "From Click to Regret: Investigating Impulsive Buying and Post-Purchase Cognitive Dissonance Through the S-O-R Lens," *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research* 21, no. 3 (March 13, 2026): 90, <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer21030090>.

Resilience Illusion." While orthodox economic paradigms frequently attribute suboptimal intertemporal choices to endogenous human capital deficits—namely, a lack of baseline financial literacy—the pervasive digitalization of the modern marketplace necessitates a profound structural inquiry. The central problematic of this investigation, therefore, revolves around the phenomenological friction between a young consumer's conscious pursuit of financial stability amidst macroeconomic precarity and their subconscious capitulation to algorithmically engineered hyper-consumption.

To systematically unpack this behavioral anomaly, this research is driven by a coherent analytical framework articulated through three specific, interrelated inquiries: First, how do the structural design and algorithmic precision of social media marketing within e-commerce ecosystems distort adolescents' cognitive processing of exogenous economic uncertainty? Second, through what subjective, phenomenological mechanisms do young consumers rationalize their algorithmically induced impulse buying as an adaptive—albeit illusory—coping strategy against pervasive financial anxiety? Finally, to what extent does the lived reality of this structural illusion challenge the dominant academic consensus that standard financial literacy provides a robust and sufficient defense against sophisticated digital choice architectures?

3. Research Methods

To systematically deconstruct the phenomenological friction between exogenous macroeconomic anxiety and algorithmically engineered hyper-consumption, this investigation operationalized an exploratory qualitative research design. Moving beyond the epistemological constraints of static econometric modeling, this approach facilitated a granular examination of the endogenous cognitive processes and shifting behavioral architectures driving the "Financial Resilience Illusion." The empirical locus was situated within an urban demographic microcosm in West Jakarta, Indonesia (specifically the Kelapa Dua Sasak district). Rather than representing a mere local boundary, this specific geographic and demographic intersection was strategically selected as an archetypal emerging market environment. It is characterized by deep digital technology penetration juxtaposed against palpable socio-economic precarity, thereby providing an optimal observational ecosystem to capture consumer heterogeneity and digital vulnerability.

The investigation employed purposive theoretical sampling to assemble a focused cohort of six adolescents and young adults (aged 18 to 21 years). While numerically constrained by quantitative standards, qualitative rigor in top-tier behavioral economics

prioritizes phenomenological depth and theoretical saturation over broad statistical representativeness.¹⁴ To capture substantive socioeconomic heterogeneity, the cohort encompassed diverse occupational trajectories, including university and vocational students alongside active participants in the informal and gig economies (specifically a minimarket cashier, a barista, a waiter, and a digital content creator). Inclusion criteria strictly mandated that participants possess varying degrees of independent financial resources and demonstrate daily, active engagement with social media ecosystems and e-commerce platforms. Primary data elicitation was executed through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted in early July 2025. Recognizing the digital nativity of the cohort and seeking to minimize formal observer effects, the primary interview interfaces utilized secure, asynchronous digital communication channels (specifically WhatsApp). This protocol accommodated the participants' organic communication rhythms, neutralized the pressure of real-time interrogation, and generated highly precise, verbatim textual datasets capturing raw financial anxieties and consumption impulses.

Rather than merely aggregating descriptive participant statements, the interview transcripts were subjected to rigorous Thematic Network Analysis, which served as the primary analytical scalpel. Adhering to established advanced qualitative paradigms, the analytical procedure transitioned iteratively from first-order descriptive coding—capturing raw consumer expressions regarding inflation-induced vulnerability and algorithmic market temptations—to second-order theoretical abstraction.¹⁵ During this phase, theoretical constructs mapping the subversion of choice architecture and the gamification of impulsive consumption were synthesized. Ultimately, these constructs were coalesced into the overarching aggregate dimension of the "Financial Resilience Illusion." To ensure robust empirical clarity and mitigate researcher bias, analytical triangulation was rigorously applied by continuously confronting the qualitative findings with existing digital marketing literature. Furthermore, uncompromising ethical protocols governed the investigation; informed consent was explicitly secured prior to data elicitation, and robust cryptographic anonymization of all user-generated data was implemented to protect participant identities and preserve the absolute integrity of the

¹⁴ Dennis A. Gioia, Kevin G. Corley, and Aimee L. Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology," *Organizational Research Methods* 16, no. 1 (January 24, 2013): 15–31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151>.

¹⁵ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (January 21, 2006): 77–101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.

empirical findings.

B. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Cognitive Dissonance: Macroeconomic Anxiety vs. Digital Escapism

The empirical data extracted from the West Jakarta cohort reveals a profound behavioral paradox that directly challenges orthodox economic assumptions regarding rational austerity. Under classical paradigms, individuals facing severe exogenous macroeconomic shocks are expected to optimize their intertemporal utility by aggressively curtailing discretionary spending and accumulating precautionary savings. However, the lived experiences of the participants demonstrate that chronic economic uncertainty frequently catalyzes the exact opposite behavior: a psychological retreat into digital escapism characterized by algorithmic impulse consumption.

This phenomenological friction is acutely evident in the narratives of participants grappling with immediate macroeconomic precarity. Balqis, a 20-year-old university student, explicitly articulated a pervasive sense of financial vulnerability driven by the severe erosion of her purchasing power. She highlighted the psychological distress stemming from the rapid inflation of basic commodities juxtaposed against the stubborn stagnation of her real income. This localized anxiety is compounded by broader systemic fears, as articulated by Hafista, who expressed acute distress over labor market volatility. Hafista's narrative underscored a deep-seated fear of automation-induced displacement and corporate downsizing, reflecting a generation hyper-aware of how artificial intelligence and structural economic shifts threaten entry-level employment security.

Crucially, rather than responding to these exogenous threats with stringent fiscal discipline, the chronic stress induced by this macroeconomic despair precipitates profound cognitive depletion. To alleviate the relentless psychological pressure of their financial realities, participants frequently turn to the frictionless environments of e-commerce platforms. Small-scale, continuous impulse purchases function as a transient therapeutic mechanism—a digital "retail therapy" that provides fleeting moments of dopamine-driven empowerment. The act of micro-consumption becomes an accessible, albeit illusory, coping mechanism to assert control in a macroeconomic environment where they otherwise feel entirely powerless.

This empirical paradox is theoretically validated when confronted with the post-purchase cognitive dissonance framework advanced by Haque et al.¹⁶ Utilizing the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) lens, Haque et al. meticulously map how profound cognitive pressure (the exogenous stimulus) fundamentally overrides rational financial intent (the organism's baseline state). The adolescents in this cohort exhibit a pronounced cognitive dissonance: they possess the explicit, rational awareness that capital conservation is critical for their economic survival. Nevertheless, the acute psychological fatigue induced by continuous economic anxiety renders their defensive cognitive boundaries highly permeable to algorithmic marketing. Consequently, they engage in impulsive buying as an emotional reflex rather than a utility-maximizing decision. As Haque et al. aptly characterize, this algorithmically induced escapism is ultimately unsustainable; the fleeting gratification predictably collapses into profound psychological friction, trapping these young consumers in a relentless cycle moving "from click to regret."¹⁷ Thus, macroeconomic anxiety does not reliably forge financial resilience; rather, it cultivates an endogenous psychological vulnerability that e-commerce ecosystems systematically exploit.

2. Algorithmic Subversion: How Social Media Dismantles Self-Control

The phenomenological data further reveals that the erosion of adolescent financial resilience is not merely a passive byproduct of macroeconomic anxiety, but is actively engineered through the structural design of digital choice architectures. The interview cohort provided granular insights into how the user interfaces (UI) of social media and e-commerce platforms systematically dismantle endogenous self-regulation. Citra Sulthanah's narrative offers a compelling empirical illustration of this technological manipulation. She detailed the acute psychological friction experienced while passively scrolling through social media, where hyper-personalized, algorithmically curated product recommendations seamlessly intercepted her attention. For Citra, the digital environment did not function as a neutral marketplace; rather, it proactively manufactured desire by deploying highly specific, targeted advertisements precisely when her cognitive defenses were lowered.

¹⁶ Haque et al., "From Click to Regret: Investigating Impulsive Buying and Post-Purchase Cognitive Dissonance Through the S-O-R Lens."

¹⁷ Haque et al.

This empirical reality robustly validates the heterodox paradigm of digital consumption. The predatory precision of these e-commerce interfaces effectively ensnares consumers in what Malik et al. conceptualize as a "cognitive-affective trap"—a deliberately constructed digital environment where algorithmic stimuli bypass rational economic deliberation to trigger immediate, affect-driven transactional responses.¹⁸ Furthermore, Citra's capitulation to scrolling-induced temptation confirms the structural critique advanced by Zhang. Instead of facilitating optimal market choices, social media recommendation algorithms deliberately exploit the bounded rationality of young consumers.¹⁹ By leveraging cognitive heuristics and optimizing the timing of visual stimuli, these platforms systematically override the individual's baseline financial intent.

Beyond individualized algorithmic targeting, the e-commerce ecosystem weaponizes endogenous social networks to amplify consumption velocity. Hafista's lived experience exposes the severe psychological toll of digital peer influence. He described the acute pressure and fear of missing out (FOMO) induced by the hyper-visibility of his peers' consumption patterns, which are continuously broadcasted across digital platforms. This algorithmic amplification of peer spending creates a constant comparative environment, engineering a manufactured sense of relative deprivation that pushes adolescents to consume beyond their financial capacity simply to maintain social parity.

This digitally mediated social pressure fundamentally degrades the efficacy of individual financial literacy. Echoing the empirical findings of Azzahra and Imlika, the experiences of this cohort confirm that Generation Z's saving behaviors and intrinsic self-control are overwhelmingly compromised by the ubiquitous, pervasive influence of digitized peer networks.²⁰ This structural vulnerability is further exacerbated by the sheer velocity and volume of digital stimuli. Consistent with Hadi's critical analysis, the relentless barrage of curated digital information and highly aestheticized market signals profoundly overwhelms the analytical and evaluative capacities of young internet users.²¹ Consequently, the orthodox assumption that adolescents can rely on inherent self-control or foundational financial literacy to navigate modern e-commerce environments is

¹⁸ Malik et al., "Social Commerce Constructs and Purchase Intention on Social Commerce Sites: Investigating the Role of Affective and Cognitive Attitudes in Managing Digital Marketing Challenges."

¹⁹ Zhang, "The Impact Mechanism of Social Media Algorithmic Recommendations on Consumers' Impulse Buying."

²⁰ Azzahra and Imlika, "Pengaruh Literasi Keuangan, Inklusi Keuangan, Kontrol Diri, Dan Teman Sebaya Terhadap Perilaku Menabung Generasi Z."

²¹ Hadi, "Pemahaman Literasi Digital Penyebab Munculnya Hoaks."

rendered theoretically obsolete. Their cognitive defenses are continuously outmaneuvered by an algorithmic architecture explicitly designed to subvert rational choice and maximize impulse buying.

3. The "Financial Resilience Illusion" in E-Commerce Ecosystems

The culmination of this behavioral subversion manifests in the core theoretical proposition of this study: the "Financial Resilience Illusion." Among the cohort, several participants exhibited what orthodox economics would classify as highly rational capital accumulation strategies. The empirical data reveals a strong endogenous drive to build liquidity buffers, evidenced by the disciplined daily saving habits of participants such as Dani, who meticulously allocates Rp50,000 per day, and Ezza, who systematically reserves Rp5,000 daily. Similarly, Rafly Asraf emphasized that the consistency of capital allocation, rather than absolute volume, was his primary strategy for establishing an emergency fund. For these adolescents, the tangible accumulation of cash reserves generates a profound subjective sense of financial security; they perceive themselves as financially resilient actors successfully navigating macroeconomic precarity.

However, a rigorous phenomenological examination deconstructs this perceived security, revealing it to be fundamentally illusory. The empirical reality is that the liquidity painstakingly accumulated over weeks of strict financial discipline is highly susceptible to instantaneous evaporation. Participants detailed how their defensive cash reserves are frequently obliterated in mere minutes by algorithmic flash sales, time-sensitive promotional triggers, and hyper-curated digital marketing. The financial resilience they meticulously build operates merely as a temporary holding pattern—a delayed gratification mechanism rather than genuine capital preservation. Ultimately, their accumulated savings serve not as a robust shield against economic uncertainty, but rather as highly liquid, readily accessible capital that e-commerce platforms can seamlessly extract during moments of induced impulsive vulnerability.

This empirical reality directly challenges the prevailing orthodox paradigms regarding youth economic competence. Traditional scholarly models, such as the framework articulated by Ningtyas and Putra, assert that equipping Generation Z with foundational financial literacy and basic money-management intelligence provides a robust defense against market volatility.²² Yet, the lived experiences of this cohort

²² Ningtyas and Putra, "Intelligence, Financial Literacy, and Financial Behavior: A Study on Generation Z."

demonstrate that baseline financial literacy completely collapses under the weight of contemporary platform design. The cognitive awareness of needing an emergency fund (the literacy) is systematically overridden by the structural mechanics of the digital marketplace (the architecture).

To fully understand this theoretical departure, the phenomenon must be viewed through the lens of structural platform manipulation. The adolescents' subjective feeling of security is precisely what Kumar, Salo, and Bezawada conceptualize as the "illusion of control" generated by frictionless transactional environments.²³ By engaging in the traditional act of saving, these young consumers develop a false sense of financial sovereignty, believing they independently dictate their economic trajectories. However, the seamless integration of digital marketing with frictionless checkout mechanisms—and the pervasive availability of seamless digital payment gateways—masks the long-term economic consequences of their impulsive clicks. The e-commerce architecture effectively weaponizes their savings against them; the adolescents are lulled into complacency by their own financial discipline, remaining entirely unaware that the platform's algorithm, rather than their own rational intent, ultimately governs the velocity and destination of their capital.

4. The Theoretical Paradigm Shift: From Individual Literacy to Structural Accountability

The ultimate synthesis of the empirical data derived from the Kelapa Dua Sasak cohort necessitates a fundamental reevaluation of how youth financial vulnerability is theorized within the digital economy. The documented collapse of adolescent financial resilience cannot be empirically justified as a moral failure, a manifestation of cognitive apathy, or a byproduct of inadequate parental and academic pedagogy. Rather, the phenomenological evidence exposes a profound and asymmetrical power dynamic: the deeply unequal confrontation between isolated, economically anxious adolescents and hyper-capitalized, billion-dollar e-commerce algorithms. These digital platforms operate with an unprecedented level of cognitive hegemony, deploying predictive analytics, seamless credit integration, and gamified choice architectures that effortlessly outmaneuver the baseline self-control of young consumers. The structural reality of the modern marketplace ensures that the traditional act of saving is perpetually besieged by

²³ Kumar, Salo, and Bezawada, "The Effects of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) on Customers' Online Purchase Behavior."

algorithmic predation. Consequently, positioning youth impulse buying merely as a symptom of individual indiscipline fundamentally misdiagnoses the systemic extraction of consumer liquidity occurring within these ecosystems.

This empirical reality forces a definitive theoretical confrontation between the two dominant paradigms governing adolescent economic behavior. The orthodox paradigm, robustly defended by scholars such as Dewi et al., Sabila et al., and Susetyo and Firmansyah, operates on the foundational axiom that endogenous human capital deficits drive suboptimal consumption.^{24,25,26} Their prescriptive models heavily advocate for rigorous pedagogical interventions, suggesting that enhanced financial and digital literacy education will sufficiently inoculate youth against market volatility. However, the findings of this study render such pedagogical solutions—while foundational—acutely insufficient in the contemporary era. Expecting conventional financial education to act as a robust firewall against micro-targeted algorithmic manipulation places a disproportionate, inequitable, and scientifically untenable burden on the individual consumer.

Instead, the lived realities of these adolescents unequivocally validate the heterodox, structural paradigm. The vulnerability of Generation Z is demonstrably not an educational deficit, but an engineered, exogenous outcome of digital market forces explicitly designed to bypass rational economic deliberation. As synthesized in Table 1, acknowledging the "Financial Resilience Illusion" demands a radical pivot in both economic scholarship and public policy. The academic discourse must transition away from the exhaustive pursuit of individual financial literacy and move toward demanding robust structural platform accountability. Mitigating algorithmic subversion requires regulatory frameworks that actively neutralize the predatory choice architectures currently dominating the global e-commerce landscape.

²⁴ Dewi et al., "Pentingnya Literasi Keuangan Bagi Remaja Sebagai Upaya Preventif Menghadapi Pasca Pandemi COVID-19 Melalui Edutalkshow."

²⁵ Sabila et al., "Edukasi Literasi Keuangan Untuk Anak Usia Dini Hingga Remaja."

²⁶ Susetyo and Firmansyah, "Literasi Ekonomi, Literasi Keuangan, Literasi Digital Dan Perilaku Keuangan Di Era Ekonomi Digital."

Table 1. Theoretical Confrontation: Traditional Financial Literacy vs. Algorithmic Vulnerability

Analytical Dimension	The Orthodox Paradigm (Rational/Deficit Model)	The Heterodox Paradigm (Structural/Algorithmic Model)	Empirical Reality (Current Study's Findings)
Core Argument	Suboptimal financial behavior stems from endogenous cognitive and pedagogical deficits.	Suboptimal behavior is exogenously engineered by e-commerce choice architectures.	The Financial Resilience Illusion: Adolescents actively save (rational intent), but algorithmic UI/UX overrides these savings into impulse buying.
Key Proponents	Dewi et al. (2022); Sabila et al. (2024); Susetyo & Firmansyah (2023)	Malik et al. (2023); Zhang (2026); Kumar et al. (2024)	This study (Phenomenological data derived from Gen Z consumers in West Jakarta).
View of Impulse Buying	A failure of individual self-regulation, morality, and financial knowledge.	A highly manipulated market outcome triggered by cognitive-affective traps.	A stress-response (<i>escapism</i>) to macroeconomic anxiety, heavily weaponized by social media algorithms.
Prescriptive Solution	Enhance formal financial education and behavioral discipline from early childhood.	Recognize and regulate bounded rationality, artificial scarcity, and frictionless credit.	Shift focus from merely educating consumers to demanding algorithmic transparency and structural platform accountability.

(Source: Researcher's elaboration based on the synthesis of state-of-the-art literature and empirical findings, 2026).

C. CONCLUSIONS

This investigation concludes that the structural architecture of contemporary e-commerce ecosystems systematically weaponizes the exogenous macroeconomic anxieties of adolescents, efficiently subverting their rational pursuit of financial stability into algorithmically engineered impulse consumption. By articulating the "Financial Resilience Illusion," the empirical evidence confirms that while these young consumers demonstrate an endogenous drive to accumulate precautionary liquidity, their defensive capital is reliably extracted by frictionless choice architectures explicitly designed to exploit cognitive vulnerabilities. This profound phenomenological friction decisively invalidates the orthodox assumption that baseline financial literacy can robustly insulate individuals against the hyper-personalized predation of digital marketing algorithms. Ultimately, safeguarding adolescent economic welfare requires a fundamental paradigm shift away from localized pedagogical interventions, demanding instead rigorous structural accountability and the regulatory neutralization of exploitative algorithmic environments.

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