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The Relationship Between Psychosocial Drivers and Spending Behavior Among Young Adult Consumers in the Province of Bukidnon

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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to assess the relationship of psychosocial drivers, particularly, Instant Gratification, Fear of Missing Out, Peer Influence, and Status Signaling, and the Spending Behavior of 400 young adults in the 4th legislative district of Bukidnon. The Spending Behavior is manifested through Impulsive Spending, Non-essential Spending, Purchase Guilt, and Budget Tracking. Purposive sampling is employed as its primary sampling technique for respondent recruitment and selection. Standardized questionnaire was developed as its primary research instrument for data collection. This included the collection of the demographic profile along with the different indicators of both the Psychosocial Drivers and the manifestations of Spending Behavior. The levels of the psychosocial drivers are measured using a four-point Likert Scale with equal intervals. The Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated statistically significant, positive relationships between all four psychosocial drivers and the overall Spending Behavior composite. All correlations were significant. This study highlights that spending behavior of young adult consumers is significantly shaped by psychosocial forces, most dominantly by peer networks, followed by the motivation to communicate identity and status through consumption.

INTRODUCTION

Spending behavior is a subject that is overheard but overlooked. It consequently undermines meaningful insights that can be excerpted from it. Globally, particularly in Vietnam, this behavior can significantly affect consumer decisions, particularly among Gen Zs, which is why there is a need for financial education programs that prioritize behavioral skills and financial knowledge (Hieu, 2026). The same thing can be said in India as evolution of spending and saving is also affected by western cultural and market values (Ghorai, 2025), emphasizing a better understanding of the financial behavior of young adults (Lučić *et al.,* 2021).

To have a clearer picture as to what initiatives needs to be done, a deeper understanding of the geographic location is important to execute proper intervention efforts (Lebaron-Black *et al.,* 2022), since financial worries is also crucial for improving public health and financial stability (Ryu & Fan, 2022), and financial literacy serving as an enabling capacity in creating financial choices (Noor & Fatihat, 2025).

In the contemporary landscape of spending in the country, molded by the rise of online shopping on Filipinos after the pandemic as a mode of purchasing necessities (Mallari *et al.,* 2023), the influence of influencers to Gen Zs (Balatero, 2025), and millennials being massive segment in social media engagements (Balazon *et al.,* 2025), spending behavior of Filipinos has evolved in significant ways.

This unprecedented expansion has been driven by increasing smartphone usage, the widespread adoption of mobile payment systems such as GCash and PayMaya, and the integration of shopping features into social media platforms including Facebook, and TikTok. The introduction of "Buy Now, Pay Later" (BNPL) schemes has further revolutionized purchasing psychology by reducing friction in the acquisition process and enabling transactions that would have previously required upfront payment capacity (Fitrisam *et al.,* 2025).

The behavioral embodiments emerging within this created consumption environment extend significantly beyond traditional economic rationality, encompassing psychological, social, and emotional dimensions that fundamentally shape spending outcomes. Among Generation Z and millennial consumers, the rising adoption of e-commerce has coincided with observable increases in non-essential spending, emotional purchasing behaviors, and what contemporary researchers' term "doom spending", which is the impulsive consumption of unnecessary goods as a coping mechanism in response to anxiety and psychological distress (Husnayetti *et al.,* 2025).

Research examining financial literacy among Filipino millennials and college students has revealed concerning findings, with studies indicating that approximately 75% of variance in budgeting behavior can be explained by financial literacy levels, yet substantial portions of young adults report low financial literacy despite possessing basic financial knowledge (Templa *et al.,* 2024).

Research examining these relationships specifically among the young adult demographic in the Philippines'

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Mindanao region is virtually nonexistent. The research gap is particularly prominent regarding how these psychosocial drivers collectively predict spending behavior manifestations including impulse spending, non-essential spending, purchase guilt, and budget tracking practices, the mechanisms through which these drivers operate to influence these diverse spending outcomes. Understanding the psychosocial drivers of their spending behavior patterns carries significant implications for consumer financial well-being, for policy interventions aimed at promoting responsible financial behavior, and for marketing and retail strategies seeking to align with consumer values while promoting sustainable consumption practices.

This research addresses this contextual gap by examining the relationships between individual-level psychosocial drivers which includes instant gratification and fear of missing out, social-level psychosocial drivers that includes peer influence and status signaling, and manifestations of spending behavior such as impulse spending, non-essential spending, purchase guilt, and budget tracking among young adult consumers in the Province of Bukidnon, Philippines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on multiple theories. Theory of Consumption serves as the key overarching theory. On the other hand, the Theory of Bounded Rationality and Theory of Social Embeddedness serve as the anchored theories for psychosocial drivers. Additionally, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Cognitive Dissonance serves as the anchored theories for spending behavior.

The Consumption Theory provides the foundational premise that consumption expenditures are determined by a complex interplay of psychological, social, and economic factors beyond financial considerations. It implies that the motivation of individuals reflects deeper structures. This theory posits that consumption is not only a rational response to monetary capabilities but also reflects psychological standing, social influences, and individual preferences that mold how an individual allocation their financial resources (Keynes, 1936).

The Theory of Bounded Rationality provides a significant viewpoint into how young adult consumers make spending decisions within the limits of their cognitive capacities and information availability. Rather than assuming a perfect thinking wherein individuals conduct meticulous considerations and analysis of all available options to achieve an optimal outcome, this theory implies that decision-making is fundamentally limited by cognitive limitations, time pressures, and incomplete information. This is particularly relevant for understanding instant gratification and fear of missing out as drivers of spending behavior, as young adults operating within the fast-paced digital world rarely have the luxury of comprehensive information gathering before making purchasing decisions (Simon, 1955).

Theory of Social Embeddedness fundamentally challenges the neoclassical economic assumption that individuals make decisions in isolation based purely on self-interest and utility maximization. It is argued that economic behavior, including decisions in consumption, is deeply influenced by and embedded within networks of social relationships, trust structures, and social norms that mediate individual choices. This provides the foundation for understanding peer influence and status signaling as significant drivers of spending behavior among young adults. Societal ties reduce uncertainty about spending, provide normative guidance about appropriate spending patterns, and create social pressure to conform to group consumption norms (Granovetter, 1985).

The Theory of Planned Behavior extends the understanding of behavioral prediction by proposing that human behavior is best explained through the lens of behavioral intention, which is shaped by three core determinants. The first one is the attitudes toward the behavior. Attitudes represent an individual's overall evaluation of whether engaging in a particular consumption behavior is desirable or undesirable. The second one is the subjective norms regarding the behavior, which reflect an individual's perception of whether significant others believe the behavior should be performed. Lastly, the perceived behavioral control, which represents an individual's assessment of their ability to execute the behavior given available resources and perceived challenges. This provides a mechanism that explain how psychosocial drivers translate into actual spending behaviors and their manifestations in impulse purchasing, non-essential spending, purchase guilt, and budget tracking (Ajzen, 1991).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory explains how psychological tension arising from inconsistent thinking, attitudes, or behaviors motivates individuals to achieve internal consistency and reduce psychological discomfort. In this, it is proposed that when an individual holds two conflicting cognitions, they experience psychological discomfort that ultimately motivates them to reduce the inconsistency. This provides an understanding for purchase guilt, which can imply that guilt represents the psychological discomfort resulting from dissonant cognitions (Festinger, 1957).

Instant Gratification

The influence of instant internet gratification causes massive challenges to self-regulation, especially on the youth. Additionally, on its foundations, this tension can be seen through the lens of temporal discounting, wherein individuals are heavily favoring instant rewards, such as the satisfactions they get from the internet, more than those which can give future rewards like working for an assignment or preparing for a test (Yin & Shen, 2024). The limited capacity of self-control implies that after resisting temptations faced daily, people may do compensatory beliefs to justify their respective digital indulgences. Aside from this, the discomfort that they feel from acting against their own principles, such as wasting their time online can be explained using the cognitive dissonance theory. In the field of behavioral psychology, the operant conditioning can explain the allure of the internet. The rewards that are immediately received from internet use, such as likes and notifications, serve as positive reinforcers, which makes their behavior of frequently checking and browsing even more strengthened. Compensatory beliefs might serve as cognitive strategies to manage possible negative effects or downsides from such conditioned behaviors (Yin & Shen, 2024).

The effect of digital media, especially in short-video formats in platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, on the way young people think is currently a significant talking point. These platforms, which consume an increasing amount of an individual's free time, offer easy access to various contents that can trigger instant emotional responses and rewards. Constant use of these platforms, impulsive behavior, preference for instant gratification and mental health issues such as but limited to depression, stress, and anxiety are instances that affect the younger age groups. These short-form videos instantly provide intense rewards, that is why they are typically attractive to individuals with low self-regulation, high impulsivity, or to those who has a strong appeal for immediate rewards (Škripcová & Viteková, 2025).

In the study examining how immediate gratification affected the academic achievement of Saudi students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The data analysis implicated that the academic achievement of the students was clearly influenced by instant gratification in number of ways. Majority of the students stated that looking for instant gratification was a primary source of poor performance, as this led to postponement and inconsistent study habits, deadlines missed, and unfinished assignments. This finding is relevant to the study despite it being focused on learning as it covers the same age group and behavioral focus (Alkhirbash, 2025).

The "Buy Now, Pay Later" also plays a huge factor when we talk about instant gratification. This has become popular especially with the younger consumers. The appeal of this concept is on its capability to provide instant gratification and more versatile payment options that does not necessarily need a lot of processes and without the need for traditional checks on credit (Abdul Halim *et al.,* 2024).

Fear of Missing Out

A prominent behavioral addictive pattern that is widely recognized today is the Fear of Missing Out, more commonly known by its acronym, FoMO (Aydin *et al.,* 2019). A lot of young people dedicate a huge chunk of their day by engaging in and sharing information, keeping up with all the events and continuous updates to the situations of other people and institutions. Moreover, considering the exponential growth of social media use, modern digital marketing, particularly social media-based digital marketing strategies usually involve the utilization of creative content, implementation of viral principles of marketing, strategic collaborations with famous and well-known personalities, and a strong emphasis on techniques that are highly visual-oriented (Samsura & Rufaidah, 2025).

A multifaceted approach improves corporate communication's clarity, which then enables the message to be marketed and disseminated more quickly in particular target audiences. This quick and speed up message delivery plays a significant part in heightening consumer engagement. It can obtain a psychological response wherein consumers feel a sense of exclusion or urgency to participate when they do not engage in the promoted product or services. This instance is a perfect display of what is commonly known as FoMO and has been recognized as an important determinant of the behavior and the spending patterns of consumers. These individuals may experience a lack of satisfaction or may have anxiety when they are unable to take part in these trends (Samsura & Rufaidah, 2025). This trait has a significant impact on impulsive purchasing, obsessive spending, and behaviors that are hedonistic in nature. FoMO pertains to an individual's tendency to purchase which is highly shaped by social media interactions.

In the investigation of the relationship of FoMO with anxiety, depression, materialism, and compulsive buying behavior, the study of Hussain *et al.* (2023) administered a questionnaire that was used to obtain data from 569 participants. Their findings showed that FoMO indeed has a positive and significant impact on compulsive buying behavior. Meanwhile on the other factors such as depression, anxiety, and materialism, it was determined that they were a mediator on the relationship between FoMO and compulsive buying behavior.

It is also confirmed in the study of Febrianty *et al.* (2025) where the role of FoMO in mediating the effect of scarcity perception on impulse buying was significant and positive. It is also important to note that while it has a significant impact, the correlation between scarcity perception and impulse buying does not bear the same result. In their study, the correlation did not have a significant impact.

FoMO is a very well-known trigger of regularly occurring buying behavior in the study on non-sustainable buying behavior (Bläse *et al.,* 2023). Their findings highlight the massive adversity of the fashion industry particularly on its negative impact to the environment and society at large. For them FoMO aggravates the problem as it continues to drive frequent buying behavior especially on the young demographics. Although it is focused on making purchase decisions specifically in the context of slow and fast fashion, it is almost certain based on their study that FoMO has an impact on the congnitive processes of the consumers of this industry.

A study in Indonesia found a distinctive pattern of financial relationships among Gen Zs particularly around fashion, food, and beauty over FoMO. The survey results of "Indonesia Gen Z Report 2024" stated that the primary focus of Gen Zs when doing online shopping is to look for the prices and free shipping. This online shopping behavior is mainly attributed to the large and strong influence of advertising through social media and influencer reviews. As indicated, when the review of a certain product is positive, it is highly likely that Gen Zs will experience FoMO. This experience is mainly because of hedonism, lack of budget, financial pressure, and pessimism about the future (Mu'Awiyah & Jurana, 2024). Taking into consideration whether the goods or services are greatly needed is essential, especially in deciding whether the purchase will help obtain long-term financial goals (Dahmiri *et al.,* 2023). Additionally, various factors such as product quality, actual needs, and available budget before deciding to purchase are also deemed equally important as well. In relation to FoMO, social media plays a big role as a source of such as it consistently presents the lives of other people seem to be displayed in a way that it can be interpreted to be more enjoyable, or even better. Which is why they highly encourage to limit the usage and time spent on social media to prevent FoMO.

Peer Influence

An analysis of the spending behavior among university students in the University of Faisalabad, Pakistan, showed that the spending habits of the university students are modeled by more than just how much allowance or income they are given every month. It is also discussed that social media and emotional stress play a big part, pushing students to be more impulsive on spending. Majority of university students that took part in this study were highly dependent on parental support and have different levels of income to each other. Moreover, social media and the influence of peers ultimately played a significant role that shaped their spending behavior. Higher financial literacy is more inclined to have control over spending, while emotional stress and external pressure trigger more spending (Nafees *et al.,* 2025).

Due to financial socialization from both the media and peers, people tend to produce less responsible spending behaviors. Financial educators, if there are any, should consider incorporating in their teaching exercises that can aid both the youth and emerging adults alike to acknowledge and combat materialistic and irresistible messages from media and peer pressure (LeBaron-Black *et al.,* 2022).

Parental and peer factors are influential factors of saving behavior among the Nepalese youth. Receiving financial teaching results in an increase in the willingness to save, their total savings, and the ability to save. The Nepalese youth are also inclined to maintain being well grounded in their behavior if their parents encourage them (Dangol & Maharjan, 2018). Collaboration with peers when it comes to financial matters indicated a positive impact. Aside from peer influence, various financial teaching strategies such as guidance, discussion, habit formation, independence, socialization, and comparison of financial status are among other things that were studied as well.

Status Signaling

In general, consumers gain practical, social, and psychological benefits using certain products and brands. Apart from their practical purpose, these can also come up with social and psychological benefits, case in point, the status of the user. At present, where a lot of products and services appear to be almost the same as each other, it all boils down to their nonphysical differences about how they meet the needs of the consumer both on the social and psychological aspect and make efforts to distinguish themselves among the competition. Consumers spend much more on the practical benefits of such products and services to achieve those social and psychological benefits (Sahin & Nasir, 2021).

Conspicuous consumption is primarily buying expensive and noticeable things is an intentional engagement in symbolic and visible purchase. As such, it is a possession and usage of certain products that is imbued with scarce economic and cultural capital with the intention to communicate with others a sophisticated and unique self-image (Chaudhuri *et al.,* 2011).

A study was conducted in China about the signaling value of conspicuous consumption. The results of the investigation revealed that the purpose of individual conspicuous consumption is the aspiration of the signaling value composite, this includes reputability, social status, personal taste, and personality. When consumers divert their consciousness from the practical value to the signaling value of a certain product, then such consumption ultimately becomes an instrument of creating an own individual social value (Jin *et al.,* 2015).

Spending Behavior

Spending behavior is the conduct of a consumer to spend available money, whether it is in the form of cash or counterparts that can be accessed through debit card and credit card to purchase their needs or wants and meet their satisfaction. It is important to emphasize that no consumer has a single consistent or and fixed behavior when it comes to spending. An individual's spending can vary greatly and be heavily influenced by their race, religion, family background, ethnicity, and their place of residence (Kumar *et al.,* 2022).

Individuals who have strong self-control and those influenced by social norms are much better at resisting buying things impulsively. This is primarily due to the inhibited urge to act out impulsively being hindered by self-control and social norms (Iyer *et al.,* 2019). In recent times, Faraz and Anjum (2025) proposed a new concept termed as "spendception", which is a blend of "spend" and "perception". It effectively combines the act of spending along with the psychological perception of it. Digital payment systems such as mobile applications and credit cards aggravate this effect by reducing the psychological visibility of the spending of an individual. Compared to cash transactions, where an individual is physically aware of the money leaving their wallets or having a tangible sign that it leaves, digital payments on the other hand create a psychological detachment from spending behavior, thus making an individual less aware of the financial repercussions of their spending.

Spendception also reduce the mental friction related to spending since digital payments do not provide this immediate tactile input. Since payments through digital means are more convenient than the traditional ones, people are more inclined to undermine their overall spending, causing impulsive purchases. This psychological effect is more evident in a highly digitalized economy like Shanghai where platforms such as Taobao, JD.com, and WeChat Pay dominate the market (Faraz & Anjum, 2025).

Exposure to childhood trauma could be a plausible angle for impulsive spending come adulthood. In the study of Richardson *et al.* (2024), they mentioned that childhood trauma is associated with increased impulsive spending in adulthood. Increased general levels of impulsivity and dysregulation of emotion are the factors mentioned about the association of childhood trauma to impulsive spending. These mechanisms are likely to be a significant selection in psychological interventions to mitigate impulsive spending particularly those exposed to childhood trauma.

In the exploration of the psychological motivations and environmental triggers behind non-essential consumer spending, psychological, social, and environmental factors have a strong implication in consumer behaviors, which leads to frequent spending on items that are not necessary (Vanitha & Celestin, 2021). In their statistical analyses, it was corroborated that high emotional susceptibility has a correlation with increased impulse spending, primarily when an individual face emotional stress. Vulnerability to digital marketing heightens significantly non-essential purchases, and a powerful positive correlation exists between post purchase regret and the recurrence of such spending which underscores the emotional toll of such habits.

In hedonic consumption, things such as others' behavior, on top of the core benefit of the consumption, specifically in a situation where people are easily influenced to external aspects, the findings in the study of Baek and Choo (2015) found that their empirical results indicated that those interdependent are more likely to be encouraged to make a purchase by the presence of peers' consumptions.

A study in Pakistan on the essentiality of non-essential purchased for digitally influenced, bottom of pyramid customers, it showed that people who are considered in the bottom of pyramid which the World Bank defines as an individual that lives on less than USD 2 per day, purchase non-essential goods to keep away from poverty-related shame, to project a better self-image, manifest self-determination, and experience joy. In this manner, self-enhancement is facilitated as the purchases made can be a definition of standards for a better life which then makes them distinguishable compared to extremely poor people. Such behavior can be explained by self-determination theory and social identity theory (Reza & Amir, 2020).

The feeling of guilt, a self-conscious emotion brings a compelling impact as to how people behave, particularly in consumption (Costa e Silva & Martins, 2017). Guilt along with shame are both negative emotions that focus on the self which can arrive after an individual made a purchase. Consumers somehow benefit from the planning to compensate for the monetary lost and planning to mitigate impulse buying as a method for coping with guilt (Aydin & Ünal, 2015).

The occurrence of guilt, especially when it comes to consumption experience, is greatly shaped by both contextual factors, particularly market communications and personal traits such as an individual's inclination to feel guilty in relation to consumption (Martins *et al.,* 2023).

The concept of "general post-purchase guilt" is defined as the emotional state that is characterized by regret and blame primarily because of consumer purchases in general. Costa e Silva and Martins (2017) investigated and found that general post-purchase guilt is only inferenced by negative feelings born out of buying costly purchases that cannot be easily explained or justified.

Financial knowledge can greatly aid the younger generation in distinguishing between necessary and desired financial guidance and making sound and intelligent decisions (Singhal & Gupta, 2023). Financial planning and allocation give an individual the liberty to analyze their current standing in a financial perspective, manage to choose alternatives, and create decisions regarding their financial aspirations, taking control over their income and the provision of long-term stability and proper management of financial resources (Garcia-Santillan, 2019).

A study in Indonesia also indicate that Gen Zs also are leaning to using the Pay Later feature when they shop online, in which, this feature primarily aims to pursue promos or discounts when they are online shopping. It is also emphasized with the results of the study that financial education content is important, very helpful, and brings a positive impact for the Gen Zs in order for them to be aware of financial management and to have the ability to control their behavior that might lead to doom spending (Mu'Awiyah & Jurana, 2024).

In relation to strategies to improve the financial behavior of college students enrolled in business courses primarily to their intent and attitude toward budgeting and how psychological and life cycle factors influence such, expectations by parents or significant others toward budget and having a good feeling because of budgeting brings a positive significant influence on the intent to budget, just as how they predicted it to be (Harrington *et al.,* 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a quantitative, descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship of psychosocial drivers and spending behavior among young adult consumers in the Philippines, specifically in the Province of Bukidnon. The quantitative approach involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to statistically evaluate the relationships between psychosocial drivers as independent variables and spending behavior as the dependent variable.

The respondents of this study are 400 young adults ages 18-26 and was conducted in the southern part of Bukidnon, specifically the 4th district of the province. The 4th district is composed of 3 Local Government Units, particularly, the City of Valencia, and the Municipalities of Kalilangan and Pangantucan, Purposive sampling was employed as its primary sampling technique for respondent recruitment and selection.

Data was collected using a standardized questionnaire as its primary research instrument for data collection regarding the psychosocial drivers which consists of Instant Gratification, Fear of Missing Out, Peer Influence, and Status Signaling and Spending Behavior manifested through Impulsive Spending, Non-essential Spending, Purchase Guilt, and Budget Tracking using a four-point Likert Scale with equal intervals. The levels of the psychosocial drivers will be measured using a four-point Likert Scale with equal intervals.

Research reviewing the reliability and validity implications of Likert scale response options indicates that while five-point and seven-point scales are commonly employed, four-point even-numbered scales can effectively direct respondent responding toward genuine opinion expression by eliminating the neutral midpoint option present in odd-numbered scales, and consequently can enhance the interpretability of findings by avoiding substantial response clustering at a neutral center category (Kusmaryono *et al.,* 2022).

Descriptive statistics were primarily used intended to present data primarily for the demographic profile. On the other hand, Pearson correlation was the statistical method used in evaluating the relationship of the predictors towards Spending Behavior.

This study employed an expert evaluation to assess the validity and conducted a pilot test to evaluate its reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses data finding, its analysis and corresponding interpretation. Comprehensive explanations from the collected data were sourced out to verify whether the results align or not with the study's theoretical framework. The findings about the predictive influence of the psychosocial drivers on spending behavior among young adult consumers in the province of Bukidnon are visually represented through tables and descriptions that are categorized by the study. The respondents of this study were the 400 young adults of the 4th legislative district of the province.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Young Adults (N=400)

Demographic Profile		**Frequency**	**Percent**
Gender	Male	169	42.25%
	Female	231	57.75%
Total		**400**	**100.00%**
Age	18	35	8.75%
	19	52	13.00%
	20	72	18.00%
	21	89	22.25%
	22	46	11.50%
	23	28	7.00%
	24	38	9.50%
	25	26	6.50%
	26	14	3.50%
Total		**400**	**100.00%**
Educational Attainment	High School Student	6	1.50%
	Undergraduate College Student	322	80.50%
	College Graduate	66	16.50%
	Post-Graduate Student	6	1.50%
Total		**400**	**100.00%**

Demographic Profile

The data presents the demographic profile of the study's respondents presented across three categorical variables: gender, age, and educational attainment. A total of 400 young adult consumers participated in the study, all of whom completed the survey instrument in its entirety, yielding a valid and complete dataset with no missing cases. The profile provides the foundational information necessary for understanding the population from which the data were collected, and it situates the subsequent findings within a specific and identifiable demographic segment.

The sample is composed of 231 female respondents (57.75%) and 169 male respondents (42.25%), producing a gender distribution that favors female participation. Neither gender constitutes an overwhelming supermajority as both are meaningfully represented although the sample cannot be considered balanced in the strict sense of equal representation.

The sample spans nine age categories ranging from 18 to 26 years, encompassing the full range of the young adult demographic. A clear concentration is observed at ages 20 and 21, which together account for 161 respondents or 40.25% of the total sample. Age 21 alone constitutes the single largest age group with 89 respondents (22.25%), followed by age 20 with 72 respondents (18.00%). Collectively, the 19–22 age bracket accounts for 259 respondents, representing 64.75% of the total sample which is nearly two-thirds of all participants. The representation declines progressively toward both ends of the age range, with the youngest cohort (18 years, n = 35, 8.75%) and the oldest cohort (26 years, n = 14, 3.50%) constituting the smallest groups in the sample.

The median age of the sample falls at 21 years. The distribution follows an approximately right-skewed unimodal pattern, with the peak at age 21 and a gradual tapering toward the upper age boundary.

The educational attainment profile of the sample is dominated by a single category: undergraduate college students, who account for 322 respondents, or 80.50% of the entire population, more than four out of every five participants. The second largest group consists of college graduates, comprising 66 respondents (16.50%). High school students and post-graduate students are both minimally represented, each accounting for only 6 respondents (1.50% each). The remaining two categories which are undergraduate and graduate together constitute 97.00% of the sample, establishing this as an overwhelmingly education-engaged, institutionally affiliated population of young adults.

Table 2: Psychosocial Drivers

INDICATORS	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Instant Gratification	3.03	Agree	Moderately Evident
Fear of Missing Out	2.71	Agree	Moderately Evident
Peer Influence	2.69	Agree	Moderately Evident
Status Signaling	2.73	Agree	Moderately Evident
Overall Mean	**2.79**	**Agree**	**Moderately Evident**

Psychosocial Drivers

The overall mean of four psychosocial drivers is 2.79 which is classified as Agree and interpreted as Moderately Evident as shown in Table 2. This represents the aggregate psychosocial orientation of young adult consumers in the sample. With each among the drivers landing within the Agree range independently, the composite naturally falls in the same classification which confirms that the psychosocial influence on spending behavior is a consistent and coherent presence all throughout.

Instant Gratification registers a mean of 3.03, making it the highest rated among all four psychosocial drivers. Classified as Agree and interpreted as Moderately Evident, this result positions temporal bias toward the present moment as the most broadly and intensely felt psychosocial influence on consumer behavior within this sample. This finding agrees with Yin and Shen (2024), who frames the contemporary challenge of instant gratification through the lens of theoretical discounting where individuals disproportionately assign higher value to rewards available in the present moment over those that require patience. Additionally, Abdul Halim *et al.* (2024) specifically highlighted the "Buy Now, Pay Later" model as a mechanism that caters directly to instant gratification impulse by providing immediate access to goods without the traditional friction of upfront payment. Škripcová and Viteková (2025) added a platform-specific dimension, documenting that short-form video platforms intensify the preference for immediate rewards and are especially attractive to individuals with high impulsivity.

Fear of Missing Out yields a mean of 2.71, placing it as the second lowest among the four drivers. Despite this, the Agree classification and Moderately Evident interpretation confirm that Fear of Missing Out is a genuine and broadly present psychosocial force in this sample. Samsura and Rufaidah (2025) described how modern digital marketing deliberately engineers the conditions for Fear of Missing Out by accelerating message delivery and deploying scarcity signals specifically to produce urgency and fear of exclusion among consumers. Hussain *et al.* (2023) documented a positive and significant relationship between Fear of Missing Out and compulsive buying behavior, with anxiety, depression, and materialism identified as mediating mechanisms, and mindfulness as a moderating one. This contextualizes that Fear of Missing Out produces compulsive purchase impulses most forcefully under specific mediating and moderating conditions. On the other hand, Febrianty *et al.* (2025) found that Fear of Missing Out significantly mediates the relationship between scarcity perception and impulse buying, while the direct relationship between scarcity perception and impulse buying was not significant on its own. Bläse *et al.* (2023) reinforced this by finding that Fear of Missing Out significantly moderates relationship between brand credibility and purchase intention specifically in the fast fashion context. The moderate mean is consistent with the expectation the Fear of Missing Out's intensity diminishes somewhat outside of highly trend-sensitive categories. Mu'Awiyah and Jurana (2024) also added an important insight, it is suggested that financial constraint and hedonism may temper the degree to which Fear of Missing Out translate into spending behavior, which aligns with the ratings of this study. Dahmiri *et al.* (2023) further implies that the degree of Fear of Missing Out experience is partly a function of social media engagement levels, a proponent that would naturally produce individual differences within any given sample.

Peer Influence registers a mean of 2.69, the lowest among all four psychosocial drivers. In line with this, Nafees *et al.* (2025) provides in their study in examining university students' spending behavior, they found that even among students with higher levels of financial literacy, social media and peer influence continued to play a significant role in shaping spending habits, with external social pressure identified as a consistent trigger for increased spending. This implies that despite the low mean, the influence of this driver operates at a level that does not require the individual to explicitly recognize it for it to shape behavioral outcomes. The predominantly undergraduate sample in their study shares the same characteristics with the data of this study. In contrast, Dangol and Maharjan (2018) explained that when peer norms are oriented toward financial discipline and saving, the social influence mechanism promotes responsible financial behavior. When peer norms are oriented toward consumption and spending, the same mechanism pushes in the opposite direction.

Status Signaling yields a mean of 2.73. The Moderately Evident classification at this level reflects a population that broadly acknowledges the social and symbolic dimensions of their consumer behavior without claiming status-seeking motivation as the primary force. In the study of Sahin and Nahir (2021), they argued that consumers derive social and psychological benefits from product and brands that extend well beyond functional utility. In the results of this study, the mean confirms that this dynamic is present and acknowledged within the sample at a moderate level, affirming that at least a meaningful proportion of young adult consumers factor social and psychological distinction into their purchasing decisions. This is also echoed in the study of Chaudhauri *et al.* (2011) and Jin *et al.* (2015), in which, the behavior is intentional and conspicuously practiced within the sample, but the moderate level suggests that the specific combination of aspiration and conspicuous intent that defines forms of status signaling is distributed across the sample at moderate rather than at dominant levels.

Table 3: Spending Behavior

INDICATORS	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Impulsive Spending	2.69	Agree	Moderately Expressed
Non-essential Spending	2.92	Agree	Moderately Expressed
Purchase Guilt	3.02	Agree	Moderately Expressed
Budget Tracking	3.19	Agree	Moderately Expressed
Overall Mean	**2.95**	**Agree**	**Moderately Expressed**

Spending Behavior

The composite Spending Behavior mean of 2.95 as shown in table 3 is classified as Agree and interpreted as Moderately Expressed. This data captures the multi-layered and internally complex nature of young adult spending behavior.

Impulsive Spending yields a mean of 2.69, classified as Agree and interpreted as Moderately Expressed. It confirms that impulsive purchasing tendencies are a broadly acknowledged and meaningfully present behavioral pattern among young adult consumers in this sample although not at a dominant level. Faraz and Anjum (2025), which conceptualized the concept of "spendception", which describes the psychological detachment from spending that digital payments produce by removing the immediate awareness of money leaving an individual's possession, adheres to the same proposition as to the results of this study particularly in a sample that is young, digitally active, and operating in a consumer environment dominated by online shopping platforms. Additionally, in the study of Iyer *et al.* (2019) where they noted that individuals who possess strong self-control and sensitivity to social norms are considerable more capable of resisting impulse, the same thing can be said, that impulsive spending is present and acknowledged, but the moderate level reflects the partial effect that self-control and social awareness exert.

Non-Essential Spending yields a mean of 2.92, having the same classification and interpretation as Impulsive Spending. This implies deliberate discretionary spending as a firmly present and broadly acknowledged behavioral pattern within this population. The finding agrees with Vanitha and Celestin (2021), who documented that psychological, social, and environment factors jointly drive non-essential spending, thus insinuating based on the data that emotional triggers and digital marketing exposure produce a recognizable and consistent level of non-essential spending.

Purchase Guilt registers a mean of 3.02 which falls under the same classification and interpretation with other manifestations of Spending Behavior. In the study of Costa e Silva and Martins (2017), they defined general post-purchase guilt as an emotional state of regret and self-blame arising specifically from purchases that cannot be easily justified. Their investigation found that this form of guilt is generated primarily by the inability to defend a purchase. The result of their study agrees with the current findings which confirm that this form of guilt is broadly present in the sample, with many of the respondents agreeing that the conflict between spending on wants and the perceived obligation to prioritize needs is a felt and recurring experience. This characterization is consistent with what Martins *et al.* (2023) described as consumption guilt being shaped by personal traits that operate continuously.

Budget Tracking yields a mean of 3.19, which also falls under the same classification and interpretation. This manifestation represents the most broadly and intensely endorsed in the entire Spending Behavior section. It confirms that active financial self-monitoring and budgetary planning are widely practiced behaviors among young adult consumers in this sample. Young adult consumers who acknowledge moderate levels of impulsive and non-essential spending simultaneously demonstrate that they are actively engaged in tracking, categorizing, and managing their spending in ways that reflect the kind of financial awareness that Singhal and Gupta (2023) identified as foundational to responsible financial decision-making. This also confirms what Garcia-Santillan (2019) has established that this capacity is widely operational, reinforcing the image of a financially self-aware population that approaches money management as an active rather than a passive endeavor. The mean also aligns with the findings of Mu'Awiyah and Jurana (2024), suggesting that financial education and awareness has produced meaningful uptake of budget tracking behaviors under the same age range sample. This sample is also directly comparable to the one examined by Harrington *et al.* (2016), and the high Budget Tracking mean may also reflect precisely the combination of parental financial socialization and the positively reinforced habit of budgeting that their study identified as the most reliable antecedents of sustained budgetary engagement among college-enrolled young adults.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Psychosocial Drivers and Spending Behavior

Independent Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Instant Gratification	0.652**	< 0.001
Fear of Missing Out	0.673**	< 0.001
Peer Influence	0.759**	< 0.001
Status Signaling	0.746**	< 0.001
Composite Psychosocial Drivers	**0.803****	**< 0.001**

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

The table shows that there is positive relationship between each of the four psychosocial drivers and Spending Behavior among young adult consumers, with correlations ranging from $r = 0.652$ to $r = 0.759$ (all $p < .001$). The implication is based on the benchmark by Cohen (1988) for the effect sizes.

The correlation coefficient for Instant Gratification is 0.652. This coefficient indicates that a meaningful and systematic positive relationship exists between the tendency to prioritize immediate reward over future financial consequences and the overall level of Spending Behavior among young adult consumers. Fear of Missing Out achieved 0.673, the second lowest among the four individual drivers. This coefficient also falls within the large effect size range, indicating a strong and consistent positive relationship between anxiety and urgency associated with feared social exclusion and the level of Spending Behavior. On the other hand, Peer Influence obtained 0.759, the highest among the four individual psychosocial drivers. This coefficient falls within the large effect size range and represents the strongest individual bivariate relationship between any single psychosocial driver and Spending Behavior. Lastly, Status Signaling got 0.746, the second highest among the four individual drivers and within the large effect size range. This coefficient indicates a very strong positive relationship between the deliberate use of consumption to communicate social identity, position, and taste to relevant audiences, and the overall level of Spending Behavior.

When all four drivers are treated as a unified psychosocial composite, the relationship with Spending Behavior rises to $r = .803$ ($p < .001$). All relationships are in the positive direction, meaning higher psychosocial influence in any of the four dimensions is associated with higher spending behavior. The data establishes unambiguously that each of the four Psychosocial Drivers both individually and collectively bears a statistically significant, positive, and large to very large relationship with the Spending Behavior of young adult consumers. This is the strongest conventional level of statistical significance, indicating that these results are not attributable to chance.

Literature collectively substantiates this multidimensional portrait. Yin and Shen (2024) addressed the temporal and cognitive dimensions of present-oriented spending through the framework of temporal discounting and operant conditioning, while Samsura and Rufaidah (2025) and Hussain *et al.* (2023) illuminated the anxious and socially driven dimensions of Fear of Missing Out as a purchase motivator. LeBaron-Black *et al.* (2022) and Nafees *et al.* (2025) documented the normative and socialization-based channels through which peer influence shapes spending, while Sahin and Nasir (2021), Chaudhuri *et al.* (2011), and Jin *et al.* (2015) established the symbolic and identity-communicative dimensions of status-driven consumption.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study establish a clear and internally consistent picture of the landscape of young adult spending behavior. At the descriptive level, young adult consumers in this sample demonstrate moderate and broadly shared psychosocial orientations across all four drivers, with Instant Gratification as the most prominently evident, and a corresponding pattern of moderate and broadly shared spending behaviors, with Budget Tracking as the most prominently expressed. The coexistence of active financial self-management at the top of the spending behavior manifestations alongside acknowledged impulsive tendencies, non-essential spending, and purchase guilt at lower but still meaningful levels reflects the behavioral complexity and internal tension that characterize young adult financial life, a population that is simultaneously spending, and actively working towards managing it. At a relational level, the correlation analysis confirms that these psychosocial drivers are not incidentally associated with spending behavior but are systematically and significantly linked to it across all four dimensions and most powerfully when considered in combination. The composite correlation of $r = 0.803$ is the study's most encompassing statistical statement, affirming that the psychosocial drivers together constitute a robust and coherent set of variables whose collective presence accounts for a very large and statistically unambiguous share of the variation in spending behavior among young adult consumers. The data establishes unambiguously that each of the four psychosocial drivers bears a statistically significant, positive, and large to very large relationship with the Spending Behavior of young adult consumers that underscores the practical and theoretical importance of understanding the psychosocial dimensions of consumer behavior in any effort to interpret, address, or support the financial lives of is particular young adult population.

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