

Identification of Factors Causing Online Impulsive Shopping Behavior in College Students: A Systematic Literature Review

Dentissa Putri., Suhadianto., IGAA Noviekayati

Department of Psychology, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Online impulsive shopping behavior among college students is a concern due to its relationship to financial well-being. This study aims to identify and categorize empirical research findings on the factors causing online impulsive shopping behavior among college students during the period 2015–2024, as well as to provide conceptual and practical recommendations for the development of relevant research and interventions. The method used was a systematic literature review following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The search was conducted in several databases. Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Science Direct and national portals such as Garuda and SINTA with inclusion criteria, namely peer-reviewed empirical articles (2015–2024), student samples, discussing the determinants of online impulsive shopping behavior and exclusion criteria, namely non-empirical articles, non - student population studies, and studies before 2015. 24 studies were found from a total of 242 study articles that met the inclusion criteria, which showed that there were three main categories of causal factors, namely internal factors (consumer characteristics: impulsivity traits, self-control, self-esteem, personality traits - Big Five), psychological factors (hedonic motivation, emotional state, academic/financial stress), and external/technological factors (site/web characteristics, application design, discount promotions, live - stream commerce, social influence, recommendation/celebrity endorsement).

Keywords: online impulsive shopping, students, e-commerce, systematic review.

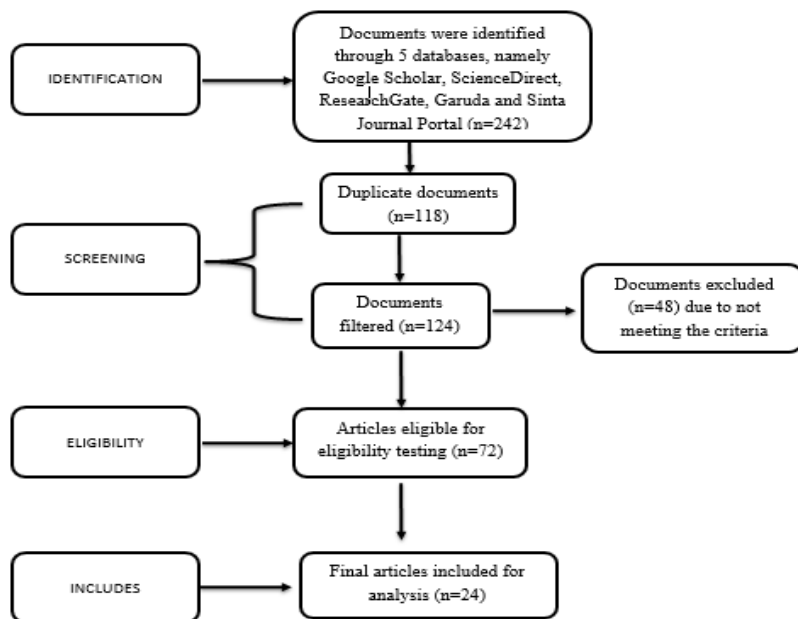
INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has changed people's consumption patterns, including among students as active users of e-commerce platforms. The development of e - commerce and online platforms provides easy access and exposure to promotions that trigger spontaneous purchasing decisions. The phenomenon of online impulsive buying emerges as a behavior of purchasing goods without prior planning, driven by emotional stimuli, promotions, or easy access to shopping applications. Students as active users of digital platforms are highly susceptible to impulsive purchasing decisions and can impact financial problems, stress, and decreased psychological well-being (Guo, 2024; Fitrah, 2024). Previous studies have shown that impulsive shopping behavior is influenced by various factors. Internal factors such as impulsivity traits, self-control, and self-esteem have been shown to be significantly related to impulsive tendencies (Nyrhinen, 2024). In addition, psychological factors such as hedonic motivation, positive/negative emotions, and academic and financial stress also strengthen the urge to buy spontaneously (Fitrah, 2024). On the other hand, external and technological factors such as promotions, discounts, app displays, and online social influences are also strong triggers (Qu, 2023; Ngo, 2024). However, these research results are still scattered and have not been systematically integrated to understand the factors causing online impulsive shopping behavior specifically among college students. There are not many systematic studies that explicitly focus on identifying the factors causing online impulsive shopping behavior among college students, especially within the most recent research period (2015–2024). In fact, college students are the group most vulnerable to consumer behavior because they are in a transition period towards economic independence and are widely exposed to digital technology. Therefore, this systematic review aims to identify, categorize, and synthesize empirical evidence regarding the factors causing online impulsive shopping behavior among college students based on empirical evidence published during the period 2015–2024. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of this behavior, identify research

gaps, and offer practical recommendations for educational institutions, counselors, and digital platform providers in designing strategies to prevent excessive consumer behavior among students.

Study Method

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach which follows the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). This approach was chosen to systematically and comprehensively review various empirical research results related to the factors causing online impulsive shopping behavior in college students. in the period 2015–2024. The article search was conducted on national and international scientific databases, namely Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, Garuda (Indonesian Digital Reference Portal) and Sinta Journal Portal using the keywords "impulsive buying" or "impulsive online buying" or "online shopping behavior", "students" or "college students" or "students" and "Indonesia" to make it easier for researchers to find the journal publications they need.



In the screening stage, researchers systematically sort the literature and at this stage will determine the summary and conclusions of which documents will be reviewed. This study uses inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria used are empirical research articles (quantitative/qualitative); focus on online impulsive shopping behavior; research subjects are students or equivalent students; published in 2015–2024; available in Indonesian or English; can be accessed in full-text. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria are as follows: non-empirical articles such as opinion pieces, editorials, or narrative reviews; non-student research; not relevant to online shopping behavior; no full-text available. The following is the PRISMA Flowchart table that guides this study:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results obtained from 24 articles used confirm that impulsive online shopping behavior among college students is not solely the result of promotions or platforms, but is more complex—involving psychological, social, and technological interactions. Psychologically, college students are in the early adult development phase, still searching for identity and often facing socioeconomic pressures, so impulsive buying functions as an emotion regulation strategy. From a social and digital perspective, a consumer culture reinforced by social media and the ease of technology exacerbates impulsive tendencies. Several factors in the analysis of the findings synthesis are:

1. Internal Factors

Most studies show that psychological variables have the strongest role in explaining online impulsive shopping behavior such as:

- Self-control has consistently been found to be negatively related to impulsive buying (Indrayani & Rahma, 2024; Santoso, 2018).
- Self-esteem and financial stress act as positive predictors: individuals with low self-esteem and high economic stress are more prone to making spontaneous purchases as a form of coping mechanism (Fitrah, 2024; Chen, 2020).
- FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) creates an urgency to buy immediately so as not to be “left behind” by peers (Sari, 2021).
- Hedonistic motivation and a consumerist lifestyle reinforce the urge to buy for momentary pleasure (Rini, 2020; Nuraini, 2022).

These findings strengthen the Impulse Buying Tendency theory (Rook, 1987) and Self-Regulation Theory (Baumeister, 2002), which emphasize the importance of self-control and emotional regulation in impulsive consumption behavior.

2. External Factors

The external aspects that most frequently arise are the influence of social media and digital marketing strategies.

- Exposure to promotional content and endorsements on social media (TikTok, Shopee Live, Instagram) increases unplanned purchase intentions (Ngo, 2023; Prameswari, 2022).
- Digital advertising such as flash sales and big discounts creates a spontaneous effect that accelerates purchasing decisions (Wulandari, 2021; Kim, 2018).
- Website design and positive reviews also influence impulsive behavior through cognitive ease and social validation (Qu, 2022; Zhang, 2019).

These results support the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, where elements of the digital environment serve as stimuli that trigger affective and cognitive responses, which then drive impulsive actions.

3. Situational & Technological Factors

The ease of online transactions and technological features (e.g. e-wallet, one-click purchase and even paylater) are also significant drivers.

- Han (2022) showed that perceived platform convenience increases instant gratification and lowers cognitive barriers to purchase.
- Lestari (2017) and Wang (2016) emphasized that features such as auto-fill address , free shipping , and personalized ads strengthen impulsive drives through fast and efficient shopping experiences.

Some of the research articles and journals included in the study (2015-2024) include:

No	Author and Year	Research Title	Method	Subject	Main Factors Studied	Key Findings
1	Chen, Y. (2020)	The Effect of Stress and Emotional Regulation on Impulsive Online Buying. Journal of Behavioral	Quantitative	Student	Financial Stress	Financial stress has a significant positive effect on impulsive buying

		Finance and Marketing				
2	Dewi, P., & Rachman, R. (2021)	Psychological Factors Influencing Online Impulsive Buying.	Qualitative	Student	Psychological Factors	Momentary emotions and stress reinforce impulsive buying.
3	Fitrah, N. (2024)	The Influence of Financial Stress on College Students' Online Impulsive Shopping Behavior.	Quantitative	Student	Financial Stress	Financial stress has a significant positive effect on impulsive buying.
4	Guo, L. (2023)	The Role of Emotional States in Online Impulse Purchasing	Experiment	Student	Emotion	Positive emotions increase impulsive buying intentions.
5	Han, J. (2022)	Online Shopping Convenience and Impulse Purchase Tendency	Quantitative	Student	Platform Ease	Ease of transactions encourages impulsive buying
6	Kim, S. (2018)	The Impact of Online Reviews on Impulse Purchase Intention	Quantitative	Student	Online Reviews	Positive reviews encourage impulsive decisions.
7	Indrayani, S., & Rahma, D. (2024)	Self-Control and Impulsive Buying in Shopee Student Users	Quantitative	Student	Self-control	The lower the self-control, the higher the impulsive behavior.
8	Lee, J. (2020)	Self-esteem and Online Shopping Impulsivity	Quantitative	Student	Self-esteem	Low self-esteem increases impulsive shopping behavior.
9	Lestari, R. (2017)	Factors Influencing Impulse Buying in E-commerce	Quantitative	Student	Technology factors	Easy navigation increases impulse purchases.
10	Ngo, T. (2023)	Impact of Social Media Marketing on Impulsive Online Buying among Students	Quantitative	Student	Social influence, social media	Exposure to promotional content increases impulse purchases.
11	Nuraini, A. (2022)	Hedonic Motivation and Impulsive Buying	Quantitative	Student	Hedonic Motivation	Hedonic motivation plays a

		Behavior in Marketplace Users				significant role in impulsive buying.
12	Nyrhinen, M. (2023)	Personality Traits and Online Impulsive Buying Behavior among Young Consumers	Quantitative	Student	Personality (Big Five)	Neuroticism and extraversion increase impulsive tendencies.
13	Park, H. (2021)	Mobile Shopping Addiction and Impulsive Purchase Behavior among Students	Quantitative	Student	Mobile shopping addiction	App addiction is positively related to impulsive buying.
14	Prameswari, I. (2022)	The Impact of Digital Advertising on Impulsive Shopping Behavior in College Students.	Quantitative	Student	Digital advertising	Flash sale promotions increase impulsive tendencies.
15	Putri, D. (2019)	The Influence of Online Advertising on Impulsive Buying Among College Students .	Quantitative	Student	Online advertising	Attractive visual ads trigger impulsive buying.
16	Qu, Y. (2022)	Influence of Website Design on Online Impulsive Buying	Quantitative	Student	Website design	Attractive visual design increases impulse purchases.
17	Rahmawati, Y. (2023)	The Relationship between Financial Literacy and Impulsive Buying of Students	Quantitative	Student	Financial literacy	Low financial literacy increases impulsive buying
18	Rini, K. (2020)	The Role of Hedonic Lifestyle in College Students' Impulsive Buying	Quantitative	Student	Hedonistic lifestyle	Hedonistic lifestyle is a strong predictor of impulsive buying
19	Santoso, A. (2018)	The Relationship between Self-Control and Impulsive Buying in College Students	Quantitative	Student	Self-control	Low self-control is associated with impulsive buying.
20	Sari, M. (2021)	The Relationship between Fear of Missing Out (Fomo) and	Quantitative	Student	FoMO	FoMO contributes to unplanned purchases.

		Impulsive Shopping Behavior.				
21	Wang, H. (2016)	Online Purchase Environment and Impulse Buying Behavior	Quantitative	Student	Online shopping environment	Product appearance and ease of checkout have a significant impact.
22	Wulandari, F. (2021)	The Relationship between Discount Prices and Students' Impulse Buying	Quantitative	Student	Price discount/promotion	Big discounts encourage unplanned purchases.
23	Yuliani, D. (2015)	Internal and External Factors Influencing Students' Impulsive Buying	Qualitative	Student	Internal- external	Emotions, promotions, and the digital environment are the main triggers.
24	Zhang, X. (2019)	Social Influence and Online Impulsive Buying: A Student Perspective	Quantitative	Student	Social influence	Social support increases impulse buying.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A systematic review of 24 empirical research articles published between 2015 and 2024 concluded that impulsive online shopping behavior among college students is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the interaction of internal and psychological factors, as well as external and technological factors. College students, as early adults, are in a developmental phase that is vulnerable to emotional, social, and financial pressures, making them more susceptible to impulsive purchases without careful planning.

The most dominant internal factors influencing impulsive online shopping behavior are low self-control, low self-esteem, high impulsivity traits, a hedonistic lifestyle, and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Students with low self-control tend to have more difficulty resisting momentary urges when faced with visual stimuli and promotions on online shopping platforms. Furthermore, financial stress and academic pressure also play a significant role in driving impulsive buying as a form of emotional coping.

From an external perspective, digital marketing strategies such as large discounts, flash sales, celebrity endorsements, live-stream commerce, and social media influencers have been shown to reinforce impulse buying tendencies. Digital environments designed with attractive visuals, positive reviews, and social validation accelerate decision-making without sufficient rational consideration. Situational and technological factors, such as ease of transactions, the use of e-wallets, one-click purchase features, and pay-later services, further reduce students' cognitive barriers to shopping. This convenience creates a fast, instant, and effortless shopping experience, significantly encouraging impulsive shopping behavior.

Theoretically, the findings of this study strengthen the relevance of the Impulse Buying Tendency (Rook) theory, Self-Regulation Theory (Baumeister), and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model in explaining online impulsive shopping behavior in college students. Thus, it can be concluded that online impulsive shopping

behavior is not solely caused by promotional factors, but rather the result of a complex interaction between an individual's psychological state, emotional stress, and aggressive digital environmental stimuli.

Several suggestions can be formulated for educational institutions or universities to integrate financial literacy and self-control strengthening programs into student development activities, whether through courses, seminars, or personal financial management training. Education about the risks of online impulsive shopping, emotional management, and sound financial decision-making is important to equip students to be wiser in using e-commerce platforms. Furthermore, suggestions can be given to psychology practitioners and counselors, who are expected to develop interventions based on self-regulation, stress management, and self-esteem enhancement for students with high impulsive shopping tendencies. A cognitive-behavioral counseling (CBT) approach can be used to help students recognize irrational thought patterns that drive excessive consumer behavior.

Students are also expected to be more aware of the psychological and social factors that influence impulsive shopping behavior. Students need to get used to budgeting, delaying purchases, and improving their financial literacy to avoid falling into consumer behavior that could potentially lead to financial and psychological problems in the future. Recommendations can also be given to e-commerce platform providers to implement more ethical consumer protection features, such as shopping reminders, daily transaction limits, and transparency regarding the use of paylater services. Platforms are also expected to contribute to user education regarding responsible shopping. Suggestions for future researchers include expanding research subjects beyond students to other age groups to examine differences in the characteristics of online impulsive behavior.

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