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SELF-CONTROL AND IMPULSIVE BUYING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract. *Impulsive buying is a relevant issue among university students because purchasing decisions are increasingly shaped by emotional urges, social influence, and easy access to digital shopping platforms. This study examined the relationship between self-control and impulsive buying and assessed the predictive contribution of self-control to impulsive buying among university students in Bekasi. A quantitative correlational design was employed with 90 active students selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected through preliminary interviews and two psychological scales. The self-control scale showed item-total correlations ranging from 0.331 to 0.618 and Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.809, whereas the impulsive buying scale showed item-total correlations ranging from 0.302 to 0.589 and reliability of 0.864. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression. The results indicated a strong negative relationship between self-control and impulsive buying ($r = -0.673$, $p < 0.001$). The regression model was significant ($F = 72.921$, $p < 0.001$), with self-control accounting for 45.3% of the variance in impulsive buying. These findings suggest that stronger self-regulation is associated with a lower tendency to make spontaneous, unplanned purchases. Strengthening financial awareness, purchase planning, and delay-of-gratification strategies may therefore help students manage impulsive buying tendencies.*

Keywords: *College Students; Impulsive Buying; Self-Control*

1. INTRODUCTION

University students are at a developmental stage that requires increasing independence in decision-making, including decisions related to financial management. At this stage, individuals begin to have greater discretion in determining spending priorities, selecting products, and responding to various consumer stimuli. At the same time, lifestyle changes, the need for social acceptance, and easy access to product information may encourage less planned consumption patterns. When purchasing decisions are made spontaneously, are predominantly driven by momentary urges, and are not based on an assessment of need, the behavior may be categorized as impulsive buying. Impulsive buying among university students is important to examine because limited sources of income may make the financial consequences of purchasing decisions more pronounced.

The development of digital commerce has shortened the distance between the desire to purchase and the act of purchasing. Products can be accessed within a short period, promotional messages are displayed repeatedly, and payment methods have become increasingly convenient. This situation creates an environment in which consumers may make rapid decisions before adequately evaluating benefits, needs, and financial capacity. Elnina (2022) explained that impulsive buying among university students is associated with decisions that arise suddenly and without careful planning. Salamba and Ambarwati (2023) similarly found that the use of online shopping applications may increase the likelihood of impulsive fashion purchases, particularly when individuals are exposed to promotional stimuli and emotional urges.

Impulsive buying is not merely characterized by a high frequency of shopping. This behavior is marked by a strong urge to purchase, limited evaluation before a transaction, and a tendency to disregard potential post-purchase consequences. In the short term, a transaction may provide pleasure or a sense of relief. However, when it occurs repeatedly, individuals may be at risk of experiencing regret, a mismatch between expenditures and actual needs, and difficulty maintaining financial priorities. Yahmini (2019) argued that impulsive buying tendencies among university students should be understood by considering their developmental context and family environment. Meanwhile, Pramudyasari et al. (2023) demonstrated that such tendencies may also arise in the context of purchasing beauty products through e-commerce user communities.

One internal factor relevant to explaining impulsive buying is self-control. Self-control reflects an individual's capacity to direct attention, inhibit responses that are inconsistent with personal goals, consider the consequences of an action, and maintain behavior aligned with long-term priorities. Individuals with adequate self-control are more likely to postpone purchases, compare alternatives, distinguish needs from wants, and assess their financial capacity before completing a transaction. Conversely, limited self-control may make individuals more susceptible to momentary urges and more likely to disregard previously established plans. Arifin and Milla (2020) emphasized that self-control is a psychological construct associated with the ability to regulate responses and maintain goal-directed behavior.

Preliminary interviews with five students at Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi indicated variations in their ability to regulate purchasing behavior. Three students acknowledged that they had purchased items spontaneously because they were attracted to the appearance of a product or influenced by others, without first considering whether the item was needed. The other two students reported that they were more accustomed to purchasing planned items and rarely made unnecessary transactions. With regard to self-control, some students reported difficulty resisting the desire to purchase products they considered attractive, whereas others were able to postpone the decision and consider the price. These preliminary findings indicate that the ability to regulate urges may be associated with impulsive buying tendencies.

A number of previous studies have identified a negative relationship between self-control and impulsive buying. Arisandy and Hurriyati (2017) reported that better self-control among university students was associated with a lower tendency to make unplanned purchases. Similar findings were reported by Yiska et al. (2022) among women in early adulthood and by Salamba and Ambarwati (2023) among university students who used online shopping applications. Nevertheless, the strength of the relationship may vary according to participant characteristics, product type, social context, and the purchasing environment. Therefore, research involving university students in Bekasi is needed to provide a more contextually relevant empirical account.

This study aimed to analyze the relationship between self-control and impulsive buying and to examine the predictive contribution of self-control to impulsive buying among university students. The first hypothesis stated that there would be a significant negative relationship between self-control and impulsive buying. The second hypothesis stated that self-control would significantly predict impulsive buying. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on consumer psychology and provide a basis for developing financial management education and strengthening self-regulation among university students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Self-Control

Self-control is an individual's ability to direct behavior so that it remains consistent with personal goals, values, and long-term consequences. This capacity involves inhibiting automatic responses, managing urges, regulating emotions, and maintaining planned actions. Arifin and Milla (2020) explained that self-control is not limited to the ability to say “no” to temptation, but also involves the ability to organize behavior consistently. In the context of university students, self-control may be reflected in adherence to a budget, the ability to delay gratification, the habit of evaluating needs, and a willingness to follow a financial plan.

Self-control is influenced by both personal and environmental factors. Age-related development and psychological maturity contribute to an improved capacity to consider consequences. In addition, parenting practices, family norms, experience in managing money, social pressure, and the intensity of exposure to consumer stimuli may strengthen or weaken self-regulation. Individuals with clear financial goals tend to find it easier to apply control strategies, such as preparing shopping lists, setting spending limits, or postponing transactions. Conversely, fatigue, negative emotions, and situations that require rapid decisions may reduce the effectiveness of self-control.

In this study, self-control was understood as a general capacity to manage thoughts, emotions, urges, and behavior, enabling individuals to avoid harmful responses and maintain more adaptive actions. The construct comprises self-discipline, non-impulsive action, healthy habits, work ethic, and reliability. These five dimensions are relevant to consumer behavior because purchasing decisions require the ability to resist urges, consider alternatives, and remain consistent with established priorities.

2.2 Impulsive Buying

Impulsive buying is a purchasing decision that arises spontaneously, occurs rapidly, and is not preceded by adequate planning. Elnina (2022) described it as purchasing behavior that is influenced more strongly by momentary urges than by a rational evaluation of need. Consumers may experience a strong attraction to a product, feel an urgency to possess it immediately, and consider the consequences only after the transaction has been completed. Thus, impulsive buying differs from planned purchasing, which is based on a list of needs, a budget, and an assessment of benefits.

Impulsive buying comprises cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component is associated with limited planning, insufficient evaluation, and a tendency to make decisions without comparing alternatives. The affective component includes emotional urges, pleasure, tension, or enthusiasm that arise when viewing a product. Salamba and Ambarwati (2023) showed that the combination of shopping-application stimuli and emotional responses may increase the tendency to purchase fashion products spontaneously. In the context of beauty products, Pramudyasari et al. (2023) also demonstrated that social interactions within promotional communities may be associated with unplanned purchasing decisions.

Impulsive buying behavior may be influenced by mood, promotions, product presentation, social groups, individual characteristics, and ease of transaction. Achmad and Batubara (2023) showed that certain emotional experiences may be associated with impulsive buying behavior among university students. Anggriani and Indasari (2018) also highlighted possible differences in tendencies according to gender, although gender-based interpretations should be made cautiously because consumer behavior is influenced by numerous other factors. Therefore, impulsive buying should be understood as the result of an interaction between personal characteristics and consumption situations.

2.3 Self-Control and Impulsive Buying

Theoretically, self-control functions as an inhibitory mechanism between the emergence of an urge and the execution of an action. When individuals encounter an attractive product, self-control helps create a pause in which they can assess need, price, benefits, and financial consequences. When this process functions effectively, the urge to purchase is not immediately followed by a transaction. Conversely, when the ability to inhibit a response is weak, decisions are more likely to be dominated by momentary desires. This relationship explains why self-control is expected to be negatively correlated with impulsive buying.

Previous research findings support this relationship. Arisandy and Hurriyati (2017) identified a negative relationship between self-control and impulsive buying among female university students who shopped online. Yiska et al. (2022) reported a similar pattern among women in early adulthood, whereas Salamba and Ambarwati (2023) found a negative relationship among university students who used online shopping applications. The consistency of these findings indicates that self-control may serve as a protective factor, although it is not the sole explanation for impulsive buying. Emotional and social factors, promotional exposure, and financial circumstances must also be considered.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. This design was selected because the study focused on examining the relationship between self-control and impulsive buying and estimating the predictive contribution of self-control to impulsive buying. The study was conducted among active students at Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi. The participants comprised 90 university students, including 55 women (61%) and 35 men (39%). Probability sampling with a cluster random sampling technique was used so that each group within the population had an opportunity to be selected.

Data were collected through preliminary interviews and two psychological scales. The preliminary interviews were used to obtain a contextual description of purchasing habits, considerations before completing a transaction, and students' ability to resist shopping urges. The primary measurements consisted of an impulsive buying scale and a self-control scale. The impulsive buying scale measured the tendency to make spontaneous purchasing decisions based on cognitive and affective dimensions. Item-total correlations for this scale ranged from 0.302 to 0.589, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.864. The self-control scale measured self-discipline, non-impulsive behavior, healthy habits, work ethic, and reliability. Item-total correlations ranged from 0.331 to 0.618, and the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.809. These coefficients indicate adequate internal consistency for research purposes (Azwar, 2016).

Data analysis was conducted in three stages. First, descriptive analysis was used to classify self-control and impulsive buying scores into low, moderate, and high categories. Second, assumption testing was conducted before hypothesis testing. Third, the relationship between the constructs was analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation. Simple linear regression was subsequently used to assess the extent to which variation in impulsive buying could be statistically explained by self-control. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. Because the study employed a correlational design, the regression results were interpreted as a predictive contribution and were not used to infer a cause-and-effect relationship.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Results

The categorization results showed that impulsive buying tendencies were most frequently found in the high category. A total of 37 students (41%) were classified in the high category, 28 students (31%) in the moderate category, and 25 students (28%) in the low category. For self-control, the most dominant category was low, comprising 39 students (43%). A total of 33 students (37%) were classified in the moderate category, and 18 students (20%) in the high category. This pattern indicates that a substantial proportion of respondents experienced difficulty resisting purchasing urges, whereas the proportion of students with high self-control was relatively smaller.

Table 1. Descriptive Categorization of Research Variables

Variable	Low		Moderate		High	
Variable	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Impulsive Buying	25	28	28	31	37	41
Self-Control	39	43	33	37	18	20

Source: Primary data, processed by the authors

The predominance of high-category impulsive buying should be understood within the context of university life, in which students are exposed to promotions, self-actualization needs, and convenient transactions. This finding is consistent with Elnina (2022), who showed that university students may experience difficulty regulating decisions to purchase fashion products when exposed to attractive stimuli. The result is also consistent with Salamba and Ambarwati (2023), who identified online shopping applications as an important context for the emergence of impulsive buying. However, classification in the high category does not mean that every student in this group consistently engages in excessive transactions. The category reflects a relative tendency based on instrument scores and should still be interpreted in conjunction with individual circumstances and purchasing situations.

4.2 Relationship Between Self-Control and Impulsive Buying

Pearson correlation testing produced a coefficient of $r = -0.673$ with $p < 0.001$. This value indicates a strong negative relationship between self-control and impulsive buying. In other words, higher self-control is associated with a lower tendency toward impulsive buying. Conversely, students with lower self-control tend to demonstrate higher levels of impulsive buying. Based on these results, the first hypothesis was supported.

Table 2. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Result

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
Self-Control and Impulsive Buying	-0.673	< 0.001	Significant negative correlation

Source: Primary data, processed by the authors

The correlation finding supports the argument that self-control functions as a regulatory mechanism when individuals experience an urge to purchase. Students who are able to create a pause between desire and action have a greater opportunity to evaluate the purpose of a purchase. This process may include reviewing the budget, assessing needs, comparing products, and considering long-term benefits. Conversely, limited self-control may cause decisions to be more strongly dominated by product appeal or momentary emotions. The present findings are consistent with those of Arisandy and Hurriyati (2017), Yiska et al. (2022), and Salamba and Ambarwati (2023), all of whom reported a negative relationship between self-control and impulsive buying.

4.3 Predictive Contribution of Self-Control

Simple linear regression analysis produced $F = 72.921$ with $p < 0.001$. The regression coefficient for self-control was $B = -0.798$, with $t = -8.539$ and $p < 0.001$. The negative direction of the coefficient indicates that an increase in self-control scores was followed by a decrease in impulsive buying scores. The coefficient of determination, $R^2 = 0.453$, indicates that self-control explained 45.3% of the variation in impulsive buying within the study sample. Thus, the second hypothesis was supported. Although this contribution was substantial, 54.7% of the variation was associated with factors outside the model.

Table 3. Simple Linear Regression Result

Statistic/Model Component	Value	p-value	Interpretation
Constant (B)	49.624	< 0.001	Model intercept
Self-Control (B)	-0.798	< 0.001	Negative predictor

Statistic/Model Component	Value	p-value	Interpretation
Self-Control (t)	-8.539	< 0.001	Significant coefficient
R	0.673	—	Multiple correlation
R^2	0.453	—	45.3% explained variance
F	72.921	< 0.001	Significant regression model

Source: Primary data, processed by the authors

The proportion of explained variance indicates that self-control is an important variable in understanding impulsive buying among university students. Nevertheless, the correlational design does not allow the researchers to conclude that low self-control directly causes impulsive buying. The relationship may be influenced by other factors, including mood, peer pressure, lifestyle, promotional intensity, product type, ease of payment, and financial experience. Achmad and Batubara (2023) showed that emotional conditions may be associated with impulsive buying, whereas Pramudyasari et al. (2023) highlighted the role of community context and beauty products. Therefore, self-control should be positioned as one component of a broader explanatory model.

The composition of participants also showed that women represented 61% of the sample. Anggriani and Indasari (2018) discussed the possibility of gender differences in impulsive buying. However, the present study was not designed to examine such differences; therefore, the gender composition cannot be used as a basis for generalizing that one group is consistently more impulsive than another. Future research may conduct comparative analyses with a more balanced number of participants and control for product type, income level, and frequency of e-commerce use.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate the importance of interventions that strengthen students' ability to manage purchasing urges. Potential strategies include preparing a budget, using a shopping list, setting transaction limits, introducing a waiting period before purchasing, and evaluating needs after exposure to promotional content. Financial literacy education is likely to be more effective when accompanied by self-regulation exercises because financial knowledge does not necessarily lead automatically to behavioral change. Universities may incorporate personal financial management, the risks of impulsive buying, and strategies for responding to digital promotions into student development programs.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was drawn from a single university; therefore, generalization to all university students in Bekasi should be made cautiously. Second, the use of self-report scales may have been influenced by respondents' tendency to present answers that were perceived as more socially desirable. Third, the study did not examine situational variables, such as the intensity of shopping-application use, payment methods, product types, and emotional states at the time of the transaction. Future studies may use more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, or behavioral experiments to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated a strong negative relationship between self-control and impulsive buying among university students. Most respondents were classified in the high impulsive buying category and the low self-control category, while the regression analysis showed that self-control explained 45.3% of the variation in impulsive buying. These findings confirm that the ability to resist urges, consider consequences, and maintain financial plans is an important factor in reducing the tendency to make spontaneous purchases. However, the findings cannot be interpreted as evidence of a cause-and-effect relationship because the study employed a correlational design and other factors remain outside the model. Student education programs should integrate financial literacy with self-regulation exercises, such as budgeting, postponing purchasing decisions, and evaluating needs before completing a transaction.

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