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## Shopaholic Lifestyle: A Phenomenological Study of Overseas Student in Yogyakarta

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## Abstract

Yogyakarta, known as the “City of Students,” has seen a growing trend of shopaholic behavior among migrant students, driven by social, psychological, and economic factors. This study aims to explore the phenomenon of shopaholic lifestyle among migrant students in Yogyakarta by using qualitative approaches and phenomenological methods. The main focus of this study is to understand the triggers, subjective meanings, and emotional, social, and financial impacts of excessive consumptive behavior. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews with five migrant students aged 23–24 years old who had experience with impulsive shopping behavior. The results of the study revealed four main themes, namely: difficulties in financial management, momentary emotional satisfaction from shopping behavior, strong influence of the social environment and media, and negative impacts on financial and psychological conditions. College students tend to view shopping as an escape from stress, boredom, or academic pressure, with motivation influenced by digital promotion and consumerist culture. This study confirms that the shopaholic lifestyle is the result of a complex interaction between internal and external factors that reinforce irrational consumption patterns. These findings are expected to be the foundation for designing financial literacy strategies and psychosocial interventions for migrant students.

## Keywords

Consumerist Lifestyle, Overseas Students, Phenomenology, Shopaholic.

## 1. Introduction

Yogyakarta is one of the leading education destination cities in Indonesia, known as the “City of Students”. Thousands of students from various regions come to this city every year to pursue higher education. Life as a migrant student requires individuals to adapt to a new environment, live a more independent life, and take responsibility for decision-making in daily life. In the adaptation process, students often experience various challenges, both socially, economically, and psychologically (Rahman, 2022). One of the problems that is starting to be identified is the tendency of students to adopt a consumptive lifestyle, even to the point of exhibiting excessive shopping behavior, also known as a shopaholic.

The term “shopaholic” refers to individuals who have a strong and uncontrollable urge to buy things, even if the item is not needed or exceeds their financial ability (Tyagi & Shyam, 2019). This behavior can be rooted in various factors, ranging from emotional pressure to the influence of the social environment and the search for self-identity (Harahap, 2024). In the context of migrant students, this phenomenon has become increasingly interesting because it is related to the process of adaptation and the search for identity in a new environment.

The results of interviews conducted with eight migrant students in Yogyakarta revealed that most of them had engaged in or frequently carried out impulsive shopping activities. Another factor that reinforces shopaholic behavior is the ease of access to online shopping (e-commerce) applications, which offer various promotions, discounts, and payment features that facilitate transactions, such as pay later or installment plans without a credit card. In interviews, some informants mentioned that they felt “tempted” to buy items that were not needed because of discount notifications or free shipping programs. In addition, the influence of social media and the friendship environment also plays an important role. Students feel encouraged to follow trends or purchase the same items their friends use in order to maintain their social association and self-image (Ziyadin et al., 2019).

One of the informants reported feeling guilty after making an impulse purchase, despite the behavior being repeated on multiple occasions. This indicates that excessive consumptive behavior (shopaholic) can cause psychological impacts, such as guilt, regret, and financial pressure. This phenomenon reflects the tendency of mild addictive behavior that deserves further study, especially from the psychological and social perspectives of students (Siregar, 2010).

Students, as part of the younger generation, tend to follow trends in order to form their image and identity, both offline and online (Wahyudi et al., 2022). The consumptive lifestyle of students is influenced by the desire to exist and appear to follow trends in their social sphere. The social environment plays a significant role in shaping students’ consumerist lifestyles, particularly through the desire to demonstrate social status or emulate the lifestyles of social media celebrities.

Conceptually, consumptive behavior and shopaholic tendencies not only have an impact on students’ financial condition but also have the potential to affect psychological aspects, such as increased anxiety levels, decreased self-esteem, and impaired decision-making abilities (Wang et al., 2021). Students who have a habit of making impulsive purchases tend to experience emotional instability and difficulty with self-control, especially in situations that require rational consideration (Roberts & Manolis, 2012). If left unchecked, this condition risks causing more complex problems, especially in personal financial management, and the tendency to use consumption as an escape mechanism from emotional pressure.

Based on this description, it is evident that the phenomenon of shopaholics among migrant students in Yogyakarta is a complex issue. This phenomenon cannot be explained only from an economic point of view, but is also closely related to psychological, social, and cultural aspects. Although previous studies have explored

consumptive behavior and shopaholic tendencies, little attention has been given to migrant students in Yogyakarta. Existing research tends to focus primarily on economic aspects, often neglecting the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions that influence compulsive shopping behavior in this group. Addressing this gap, this study aims to explore the lived experiences of migrant students who exhibit shopaholic tendencies, focusing on the primary behavioral triggers, the emotional and psychological meanings behind compulsive shopping, and its impacts on daily life, including social interactions, emotional well-being, and personal financial management.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Lifestyle**

According to Kotler and Keller (2018), lifestyle refers to a person's overall way of life, expressed through activities, interests, and opinions, and reflects the way an individual interacts with their environment. The history of thought about lifestyle refers to Max Weber, who posited that social status is determined more by consumption patterns than by the way individuals produce. Heo and Jang (2023) revealed that the development of technology and social media plays a significant role in shaping modern lifestyles, especially among the younger generation. Lifestyles are no longer fixed, but somewhat flexible and rapidly changing in response to social trends and dynamics. Lifestyle is a pattern of behavior that reflects how a person lives their life, manages finances, and utilizes time and other resources. Lifestyle encompasses the selection of products purchased, how they are used, and the perceptions and feelings evoked after their use. This is reinforced by Putri and Huda (2018), who explain that lifestyle includes activities, likes, and opinions related to self-image and social status.

Manalu and Nurhamlin (2017) categorize lifestyles into three main types: consumptive, hedonistic, and lifestyle in the use of free time. A consumptive lifestyle describes an individual's tendency to overpurchased goods or services, often without rational consideration or urgent need, and is driven by symbolic motivations such as social imagery (Belk, 1985). Hedonism is often manifested through the consumption of luxury goods, expensive entertainment, or a glamorous lifestyle, which aims to obtain a pleasurable emotional experience (Hirschman, 1992). The lifestyle of utilizing free time refers to the selection of activities that occur outside of one's primary obligations.

Paridy (2024) identifies nine types of lifestyles based on consumption patterns and demographic characteristics, namely functionalists, nurturers, aspirers, experientials, succeeders, moral majority, the golden years, sustainers, and subsisters. Various internal and external factors also influence lifestyle. Internal factors include attitudes, experiences, personality, self-concept, and motives. Attitudes are related to the psychological readiness of individuals in responding to an object, while experience plays a role in shaping individual perceptions and preferences.

### **2.2. Shopaholic**

A shopaholic is an individual who is unable to control the urge to shop (Oxford Expands, 2008). This behavior tends to be triggered by emotional impulses rather than functional needs, indicating a pattern of compulsive buying that is difficult to control (Dittmar, 2005; Anggraini & Mariyanti, 2014). Faber and O'Guinn (1992) define shopaholic or shopping addiction as a form of repetitive, uncontrollable shopping behavior. Shopaholic is a form of excessive consumptive behavior that is destructive and leads to psychological disorders. Schlosser (1998) adds that this behavior is carried out impulsively and repeatedly, triggered by the psychological need to reduce feelings of discomfort. Individuals who experience this condition

often buy luxury or unneeded goods as a form of compensation for feelings of inferiority, the search for identity, or the need for social acceptance (Christensen & Smith, 2007; Karanika & Richardson, 2015).

Based on the view put forward by Youn (2022), which states that shopaholism is a condition in which a person has difficulty controlling their irrational shopping impulses, shopaholics are characterized by excessive spending patterns, where individuals spend a significant amount of time and money buying items they only want. Shopaholic behavior not only has an impact on financial aspects, but also on mental health, such as anxiety and depression. This happens because individuals feel that they have lost control of their lives, especially with the ease of access to shopping through digital platforms.

According to Anggraini and Mariyanti (2014), there are three main aspects in shopaholic behavior, namely impulse purchases, which is the tendency to make sudden purchases without considering the long-term use value of goods, waste, which refers to spending money to satisfy momentary desires, not needs and irrational purchases, i.e. purchases that are only oriented towards personal satisfaction, often to follow trends or gain social status.

Siregar (2010) classifies shopaholics into six types. First, compulsive shoppers are individuals who shop impulsively and uncontrollably due to psychological pressure. Second, symbolic shoppers, who buy goods to show social status or seek recognition. Third, bargain shoppers, who are very focused on discounts or promotions, often purchase items that are not always necessary. Fourth, there are therapeutic shoppers, who do shopping activities as an escape from stress or negative feelings. Fifth, planned shoppers, who are individuals who shop with a plan, but still tend to buy items outside of necessity. Sixth, addictive shoppers, namely individuals who are so addicted to shopping that they feel uncomfortable if they do not buy something within a specific time.

The factors that contribute to the emergence of shopaholic behavior can be categorized into three main areas: internal factors, family factors, and social factors (Siregar, 2010). The impact of shopaholic behavior is quite broad and profound. According to Ahmad (2018), the first impact is the emergence of consumptive behavior. The second impact is the extravagant nature, which is demonstrated by uncontrolled spending of money.

### **2.3. Migrant Student**

According to Putri (2021), migrant students are individuals who relocate from their original residence to a new environment in order to obtain a better education. This transfer is generally made because the destination university is located far from the area of origin, so the student must live outside the city or area that is different from their place of origin. The Ministry of Education and Culture explained that this overseas trip was undertaken for a specific period, namely during the study period (Putri, 2021).

They are required to live independently, manage their finances wisely, maintain both physical and mental health, and adapt to the new social and cultural environment. The presence of migrant students in large cities makes them more vulnerable to the influence of their surrounding environment, including the impact of peers, local culture, and the lifestyle that develops in urban society. In this context, migrant students often face social pressure to adapt, which includes following trends or lifestyles considered popular among students and the local community (Rahman, 2022).

Furthermore, Fitriani (2016) stated that migrant students often face situations that can affect their consumption patterns. New environments, full of consumptive attractions such as shopping malls and entertainment venues, as well as exposure to social media, provide a strong stimulus to students' consumption decisions. Lifestyles that are considered "contemporary" often serve as a benchmark in society,

encouraging migrant students to purchase various products, such as branded clothing, fast food, and items that enhance their self-image on social media. Pressure from the social environment and expectations of appearance are factors that reinforce the tendency of a consumptive lifestyle in migrant students.

### 3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods to explore and understand the subjective experiences of migrant students in Yogyakarta related to the phenomenon of shopaholic lifestyle. This approach was chosen because the primary focus of the research is on an individual's meaning and perception of their life experiences, which cannot be quantitatively measured. According to Sugiyono (2022), qualitative research aims to understand phenomena holistically through the participants' perspectives, with researchers serving as the primary instrument of data collection. The phenomenological approach was chosen as explained by Creswell (2012), because it can reveal the deep meaning of a phenomenon through the direct experience of participants.

The sample in this study consists of migrant students aged 23–24 years who have been residing in Yogyakarta for 3–5 years. The participant selection technique employs the non-probability sampling method, specifically snowball sampling, which relies on recommendations from initial participants to identify the next participant who meets the criteria. The location of the research was chosen in Yogyakarta because this city is an educational city with a high student population in the region, and has a social and cultural environment that allows the formation of a consumptive lifestyle.

The data collection technique involved semi-structured interviews and documentation. Interviews were conducted with five students (three women and two men) to explore the frequency of their spending, the factors that influence their shopping habits, and the impact of these habits on their lives. The interview guide is structured around four primary focuses: the description of the shopaholic's lifestyle, the frequency and motivation of shopping, the social-psychological factors that influence this behavior, and its impact. Documentation, including screenshots of purchase history in e-commerce applications and photos of shopping items, was used to strengthen the interview data.

### 4. Results

Table 1 shows the results of the research obtained through in-depth interviews, which reveal four (4) primary themes and twelve (12) related sub-themes. These findings provide a comprehensive overview of the shopaholic lifestyle of migrant students in Yogyakarta.

**Table 1.** Central Theme and Sub-Theme Category Results

<b>Main Themes</b>	<b>Sub Themes/Categories</b>
Themes related to the description of the shopaholic lifestyle among migrant students in Yogyakarta	Difficulties in managing finances, financial support dependency, transition from need to desire
Themes related to the frequency of shopping and the level of emotional satisfaction in Students in Yogyakarta	Impulsive shopping behavior, momentary emotional satisfaction, spontaneous shopping habits, and the fear of loss
Themes related to factors that affect shopaholic lifestyles in migrant students in Yogyakarta	Weak self-control, influence of promotions, ease of shopping, and social environmental pressures
Themes related to the impact of the shopaholic lifestyle on migrant students in Yogyakarta	Negative financial impact, difficulty quitting consumptive habits, regret after impulse purchases

Some descriptions of the shopaholic lifestyle of migrant students in Yogyakarta highlight difficulties in financial management, dependence on financial support, transition, and the fulfillment of desires. Difficulties in managing finances are a common challenge for migrant students, mainly due to the inability to balance expenses between basic needs and wants. Informants view financial management as a complex challenge, exacerbated by impulsive spending habits, lack of experience managing finances, and external pressures such as discounts.

The dependence on financial support from parents has become a key characteristic of the region's student lifestyles, influencing their spending decisions. Regular or additional funds often provide flexibility, but they also encourage unplanned consumptive behavior (Asih et al., 2025). Informants are free to shop with additional funds, even if it is for a priority item. This activity becomes a kind of entertainment for them, especially when they feel bored or have no other job. This dependence creates freer consumption patterns, reinforcing impulse shopping habits.

The transition from necessities to desires is common among migrant students, often triggered by the allure of trends, promotions, and the convenience of online shopping. Students often struggle to distinguish between an urgent need and a desire that only provides momentary satisfaction. This shift reflects how shopping habits, trends, and promotions shape consumption patterns that are not always based on real needs.

Shopping frequency related to emotional satisfaction levels among migrant students in Yogyakarta encompasses several factors, including impulsive shopping behavior, momentary emotional satisfaction, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Impulsive shopping behavior, which involves making purchases without careful planning, is often triggered by emotional urges, promotional offers, or environmental pressures. This results in a consumption pattern that leads to unplanned expenses. Informants often struggle to resist this behavior due to the temptation of discounts and the pursuit of temporary emotional satisfaction. This pattern provides momentary satisfaction, but is often followed by financial regret.

Momentary emotional satisfaction is the feeling of happiness that occurs after purchasing a desired or trending item, even if the effect is temporary. Informants are motivated to shop as a means of coping with boredom or stress, or as a form of self-reward. Although it provides temporary happiness, this satisfaction is often accompanied by guilt and regret, reinforcing the consumptive cycle (Putri, 2021).

Spontaneous shopping habits and FOMO are unplanned shopping patterns, driven by emotions or lucrative opportunities such as significant discounts. Migrant students often find it challenging to manage this, especially when it comes to promotions, due to the fear of missing out on rare opportunities. This pattern traps students in unplanned consumption, impacting their finances and decision-making (Rahman, 2022).

Factors that affect the shopaholic lifestyle in migrant students in Yogyakarta are weak self-control, the influence of promotions, and environmental pressure. Weak self-control is an under-optimal ability to resist the urge to spend when faced with temptation. This is the primary cause of excessive consumption behavior among migrant students. Informants often find it easier to be tempted to spend money on unnecessary items, which is exacerbated by a lack of a fixed budget and a tendency to look for justifications for spending (Khotri et al., 2022). Weak self-control and poor budget management are the primary factors contributing to uncontrolled consumption patterns.

These external factors are the main drivers of the consumptive behavior of migrant students. Easy access to online shopping, attractive promotions, and discounts are the primary triggers. Informants find it challenging to resist the prospect of promotions and the ease of shopping, which reinforces their consumptive

habits. This influence creates an emotional drive that makes students vulnerable to overconsumption (Jazilah & Azizah, 2022).

Social environmental pressure is an impulse to conform to the norms or consumptive lifestyle of one's friends or peers, or to follow trends. This often triggers unplanned purchases for image or self-adjustment. Informants often feel compelled to shop in order to keep up with social trends or expectations. This pressure creates a situation where students feel they must shop to maintain their image or social standing. Negative financial impacts are the consequences of uncontrolled spending, including difficulties in saving, overspending beyond the budget, and future financial worries (Nasution, 2024). Excessive consumption, particularly of non-essential goods, exacerbates financial conditions. Informants view unplanned spending as an obstacle to financial stability. This impact shows how consumptive habits disrupt financial stability, combined with the influence of emotions and promotions.

Difficulty in stopping consumptive habits is a challenge for migrant students in controlling their spending patterns, which is exacerbated by the temptation of promotions, discounts, and easy access (Wahyudi et al., 2022). Students often struggle to limit their expenses, despite being aware that not all goods are necessary. Informants view self-control as key, but environmental pressures, ease of access, and promotion constantly make it difficult for them. The difficulty of stopping this consumptive habit illustrates the great challenge that students face in controlling their spending patterns

## **5. Discussion**

Lifestyle shopaholic in migrant students in Yogyakarta reflects excessive, impulsive, and often uncontrollable patterns of shopping behavior. Migrant students, who are transitioning to a new environment and away from their families, are faced with a variety of emotional and social challenges that can trigger consumptive behavior. This phenomenon is exacerbated by social pressure from peer groups, as well as intense social media exposure, which collectively reinforce the desire to follow specific trends and lifestyles in order to maintain a positive self-image and gain social validation (Anggraini & Mariyanti, 2014). As an educational center, Yogyakarta offers easy access to various shopping centers, e-commerce platforms, and products with attractive promotions, thus complicating students' efforts to control their shopaholic impulses.

Factors that affect the lifestyle of online shopping shopaholics are weak self-control, adequate financial support, positive emotions, peer environment, and lifestyle (Khotri et al., 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2022; Asih et al., 2025). Emotional urges, such as stress, boredom, and the need to escape academic and emotional pressure, often encourage students to make impulsive purchases as a coping mechanism. This phenomenon aligns with Lazarus and Folkman's (1986) theory of emotional coping, which posits that individuals employ specific behaviors to mitigate stress and emotional distress. Social pressure arises from students' desire to adapt to a new environment, where they feel the need to conform to social groups through the appearance and ownership of trend-appropriate goods, which can also be explained through social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Impulsive shopping behavior is defined as the act of buying goods or services suddenly without careful planning, often influenced by emotional factors, social pressure, or flirtatious promotions (Asih et al., 2025). In migrant students, this behavior is a typical consumption pattern that has a significant impact on financial management. Momentary emotional satisfaction refers to the feeling of pleasure or satisfaction experienced after making a purchase, especially if the item purchased is considered attractive, as desired, or trending. Spontaneous shopping habits and FOMO are unplanned consumption patterns, driven by emotions or lucrative

opportunities such as big discounts or cashback. Living in Yogyakarta, with many attractive promotions and easy access to online shopping platforms, complicates students' efforts to control this spontaneous shopping impulse. Informants reveal that they are often triggered by interesting items or promotions that give the impression of a rare opportunity.

Weak self-control is one of the main challenges for migrant students in managing their finances. Self-control refers to an individual's ability to resist impulses in making decisions, including spending decisions (Tangney et al., 2004). Promotion and ease of shopping are significant external factors that affect student consumptive behavior (Ramatun et al., 2025). Technological advancements, especially in e-commerce, have provided high accessibility for students to make purchases anytime and anywhere.

Social environmental pressure is one of the primary factors that influence the consumption behavior of migrant students (Nasution, 2024). Living in a new environment creates the need to adjust to the social norms, lifestyles, and consumption habits prevalent there. This pressure often comes from interactions with friends, evolving trends, or social expectations on campus, in cafes, or in shopping malls. Negative financial impacts are the main consequences faced by migrant students due to uncontrolled spending habits. Financial freedom overseas, without adequate financial management, often leads to serious financial problems, including difficulty saving, overspending, and concerns about meeting future needs. Informants reveal that the inability to set aside money for urgent or emergency needs is the most significant impact of unplanned spending.

## 6. Conclusion

This study reveals that a complex interplay of internal and external factors drives the shopaholic lifestyle among migrant students in Yogyakarta. Internally, weak self-control, emotional triggers such as stress relief or self-reward, and poor financial management skills were identified as key drivers. Externally, the ease of access to online shopping platforms, aggressive marketing promotions, and social pressures from peers and social media significantly reinforce consumptive behaviors. The relative financial freedom gained from living away from parental supervision often lacks the necessary discipline, making migrant students more vulnerable to impulsive spending. The consequences extend beyond financial instability, such as difficulty saving and overspending, to psychological distress, including feelings of guilt, regret, and anxiety after unplanned purchases.

This research is limited by its reliance on a small sample size within Yogyakarta, which may not capture the full diversity of migrant student experiences across Indonesia. The use of qualitative self-reported data also introduces potential bias, as participants may understate or overstate certain behaviors. The findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions, such as integrating financial literacy education and emotional regulation training into university orientation programs, fostering peer support networks that do not equate social acceptance with material consumption, and encouraging parental involvement in shaping healthy financial habits before students migrate. Policymakers and social organizations should consider collaborative programs to enhance young people's financial resilience in the digital consumer era. Further studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach to combine qualitative insights with quantitative measurement of spending patterns, compare migrant and non-migrant student populations, or examine the role of cultural values in shaping shopaholic tendencies. Longitudinal research could also provide a deeper understanding of how these behaviors evolve over time and the long-term impacts on financial and psychological well-being.

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### ***Data Disclosure Statement***

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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