

# Transforming Student Lifestyles through Digital Payment: A Socio-Economic Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

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This study explores the transformative effects of digital payment adoption on student lifestyles through a socio-economic lens. In an increasingly cashless society, students have emerged as early adopters of fintech platforms such as e-wallets, QR-based payments, and mobile banking. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected via in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with university students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The findings reveal that digital payments contribute to enhanced financial autonomy, redefine consumption priorities, and reshape patterns of social interaction. Students reported greater awareness of personal spending, increased engagement with digital marketplaces, and a sense of inclusion in modern financial systems. However, the convenience of these platforms also led to impulsive buying behaviors, highlighting the dual nature of digital finance. Overall, the research concludes that digital payment systems do not merely facilitate transactions they foster new lifestyle dynamics, social belonging, and economic agency among students. These shifts suggest that digital financial tools are pivotal in shaping youth identity and participation in a digitally integrated economy.

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## Introduction

In recent years, digital payment systems have revolutionized the way individuals engage in financial transactions, with profound implications for consumer behavior, economic participation, and lifestyle adaptation. Among the most responsive demographic groups to this transformation are university students digital natives whose daily activities, consumption patterns, and financial habits are increasingly shaped by the convenience and accessibility of electronic payment technologies such as mobile wallets, QR code transactions, and peer-to-peer transfers.

The integration of digital payment into student life not only reflects technological adoption but also signals deeper shifts in social norms, financial literacy, and economic agency. From buying meals and transportation services to managing tuition fees and

savings, students now navigate financial environments that are faster, more decentralized, and often less tangible than traditional cash-based systems. These changes raise compelling questions about how digital payment tools are influencing student decision-making, spending behavior, and perceptions of value and control.

This study seeks to examine the transformation of student lifestyles through digital payment platforms, drawing upon both social and economic perspectives. By analyzing patterns of usage, attitudes toward financial technology, and its impact on consumption and budgeting practices, the research aims to uncover how digital payment systems are not merely tools of transaction, but agents of behavioral and cultural change among university students.

### **Method**

In exploring how digital payments shape student lifestyles from a socio-economic angle, this research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach—centered on capturing authentic experiences rather than quantifying behavior. With the surge of fintech adoption in everyday life, university students in particular have become important agents of digital transformation, and understanding their adaptation offers a glimpse into broader economic and social trends.

To frame this study, several scholars have examined digital payment behavior. *Salem et al. (2021)* identified that ease of use and perceived convenience strongly correlate with digital payment uptake among youth. Similarly, *Zhang & Chen (2020)* found that financial literacy plays a vital role in how students manage e-money tools, influencing their budgeting, consumption, and saving patterns. These findings support the rationale for targeting students not just as consumers but as socio-economic actors navigating digital transitions.

Drawing from these insights, the study focuses on students from various universities who are active users of e-wallets, QRIS apps, and online banking. The selection is made using purposive sampling, ensuring participants reflect diverse financial habits, family backgrounds, and spending behaviors. A sample size of approximately 20–25 individuals was determined sufficient to reach thematic saturation while capturing varied perspectives.

Data collection involves in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, crafted to uncover lifestyle changes such as:

- a. Shifts in spending priorities

- b. Habits around saving and investing
- c. Social interaction through digital financial platforms
- d. Psychological comfort with cashless systems

These qualitative data are analyzed using thematic analysis, enabling the researcher to identify patterns such as increased consumption flexibility or altered perceptions of financial independence. Ethical considerations include informed consent, confidentiality assurances, and withdrawal rights, ensuring transparency throughout the research process. Ultimately, this methodology seeks not only to understand digital payment usage, but to uncover its impact on students' social roles, financial autonomy, and lifestyle trajectories which are subtly reshaped in this evolving digital ecosystem.

## **Result and Discussion**

The findings from interviews and focus group discussions revealed several noteworthy shifts in student behavior and mindset due to digital payment adoption. The data are organized into key thematic areas that reflect both lifestyle transformations and socio-economic adaptations.

### **1. Financial Autonomy and Awareness**

Students expressed heightened awareness of their spending patterns after adopting digital wallets and e-banking services. Many shared that seeing immediate transaction logs helped them track finances better. One respondent noted, *"I used to spend cash without knowing where it went. With QRIS, I see everything. It makes me think twice."*

This aligns with Salem et al. (2021), who emphasized how digital tools promote financial consciousness. Digital payments act not only as facilitators of convenience but as inadvertent financial educators.

### **2. Social and Behavioral Shifts**

Spending has become more spontaneous yet less physically social. While students appreciated the speed and ease of transactions—such as splitting bills via apps—they also reported decreased face-to-face interactions during purchases. This paradox reflects Zhang & Chen's (2020) observation that digital systems may alter not just financial behavior but interpersonal dynamics.

Interestingly, some respondents claimed they felt more socially included thanks to fintech: *"My parents don't give me cash anymore, just send via app. I feel part of something modern."*

### 3. Consumption Habits and Priorities

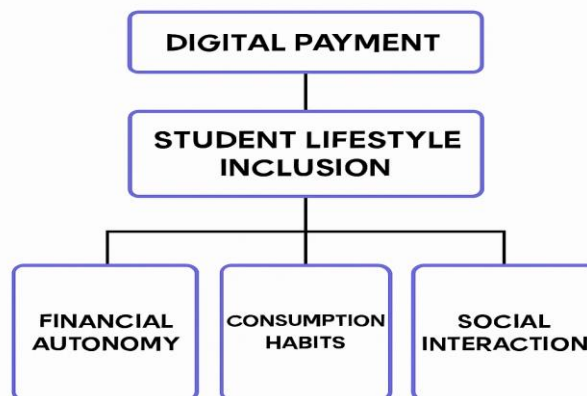
Several participants described a shift in spending priorities. Items once seen as “luxuries” online subscriptions, digital courses, freelance tools are now considered valuable investments. This redefinition suggests that digital payment platforms don't just facilitate buying; they reshape what students deem worthy of purchase.

Yet, not all changes were positive. A few students admitted to impulsive buying due to the frictionless nature of transactions. One noted: *“It’s so easy, you forget it’s still money.”*

### 4. Perceived Socio-Economic Mobility

Students from lower-income households particularly highlighted how e-wallets gave them a sense of financial independence. Some even used these tools for small-scale online selling, turning passive users into digital micro-entrepreneurs. This is consistent with literature identifying digital platforms as pathways for economic participation.

The adoption of digital payment platforms significantly influences student lifestyles both visibly and subtly. It fosters financial literacy and independence while also reshaping consumption, communication, and social identity. However, ease of access also opens doors to impulsive behavior, calling for digital financial education as a complementary strategy.



**Figure 1**  
The Relationship Between Digital Payment Adoption And Student Lifestyle Inclusion

Overall, the findings validate the socio-economic lens of the research: students aren't just consumers they're evolving agents of digital transformation. Their engagement with fintech reflects broader shifts in societal interaction, financial autonomy, and technological integration into everyday life.

## Conclusion

This study reveals that the integration of digital payment platforms has significantly reshaped the socio-economic fabric of student lifestyles. Through interviews and group discussions, it became evident that digital tools do more than streamline transactions they redefine financial autonomy, reshape consumption priorities, and introduce new forms of social interaction.

Students increasingly perceive digital payment systems not just as a convenience, but as an enabler of independence and modern identity. As they navigate their spending in real time and interact with cashless communities, their financial habits evolve—sometimes responsibly, sometimes impulsively. Yet overall, the shift encourages greater financial consciousness and access to micro-economic opportunities.

From a socio-economic perspective, digital payments serve as both mirror and motor: reflecting students' values while simultaneously driving transformation. The technology invites students into a digital economy where inclusion means participation, ownership, and adaptability. In short, the digital payment revolution is not just technical—it's deeply personal, quietly redefining how students live, spend, and relate in an interconnected world.

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