

Teenagers' Interest In Property Ownership In Digital Age

Wiwin Riski Windarsari^{1*}, Rostina²

^{1,2}Management, Faculty of Economic and Business, Makassar State University

e-mail: wiwin.riski.windarsari@unm.ac.id^{1*}, rostina@unm.ac.id²

Abstract

This qualitative study explores the nature and drivers of property ownership aspirations among teenagers (aged 15-19) in Makassar, Indonesia, within the context of pervasive digital immersion. Adopting a phenomenological approach, data was gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 30 participants across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings illustrate that even with significant involvement in digital technologies, teenagers mainly perceive property as a form of tangible security and a legacy to pass down through generations, highlighting persistent cultural values related to family stability. Digital platforms open up access to property information and elevate aspirations through inspiring stories, but they also heighten anxieties with unrealistic depictions of wealth and obscure practical routes to ownership. Motivations centered on independence, stability, and social validation are tempered by perceived insurmountable financial barriers rising property prices, complex financing, and cultural aversion to debt. The study concludes that teenagers navigate a disconnect between digitally fueled dreams and tangible attainability, epitomized by the metaphor "groping in the dark while holding a bright phone". This underscores an urgent need for context-sensitive interventions leveraging digital tools for financial literacy, demystifying acquisition processes, and fostering collaborative support systems among educators, policymakers, and communities to bridge aspiration and reality.

Keywords: *Teenagers, Property Aspirations, Digital Age, Financial Literacy, Tangible Security*

INTRODUCTION

We stand at a pivotal moment in human development, characterized by the pervasive integration of digital technologies into nearly every facet of daily life. For Generation Z, born into this hyper-connected reality, the internet, social media, and digital platforms are not merely tools but fundamental elements shaping their worldview, aspirations, and understanding of value (Smith & Johnson, 2023). This digital immersion profoundly influences how they perceive success, security, and future stability. Property ownership, historically a cornerstone of financial security and social status, now intersects with a generation whose experiences and values are increasingly formed in virtual spaces and through digital interactions, creating a fascinating and complex dynamic worthy of deep exploration.

Within the vibrant, rapidly growing city of Makassar, Indonesia, this global phenomenon takes on distinct local dimensions. As an urban center experiencing significant economic development and demographic shifts, Makassar offers a unique environment where traditional aspirations for tangible assets, such as property, intersect with the fast-paced currents of the digital age (UN-Habitat, 2022). Teenagers here navigate a landscape where online influencers display lifestyles, digital platforms provide new opportunities for entrepreneurship and income generation, and investment information, including real estate, is readily accessible. However, the basic desire for security and a place to call home persists potent. Understanding how Makassar's youth reconcile these traditional goals with their digital-native perspectives is crucial for grasping future economic and social trajectories region.

Despite the significance of property ownership for long-term financial well-being and societal structure, a notable gap exists in understanding how teenagers, particularly in specific urban Indonesian contexts like Makassar, conceptualize and aspire to it amidst today's digital saturation. Key questions arise: How do digital experiences shape their perceptions of property as an asset or a life goal? What new motivations or barriers emerge from their online lives? While research has examined adult property investment behavior online (Chen et al. 2021) and general youth financial

literacy (Wahyuni, 2020), the nuanced, qualitative exploration of teenage perspectives on property ownership, deeply embedded in their digital realities, remains underexplored, especially in secondary cities of the Global South.

Emerging studies underscore the critical link between digital engagement and evolving value systems relevant to this inquiry. Smith and Johnson (2023) argue that digital natives develop distinct conceptions of asset value, often prioritizing accessibility, experiential returns, and digital footprint alongside traditional metrics like physical appreciation. Furthermore, research into youth financial behaviour in Indonesia highlights a growing interest in investment but often notes a gap in practical knowledge and access to traditional avenues like property (Wahyuni, 2020). Chen et al. (2021) observed that digital platforms significantly lower information barriers for real estate, particularly among younger demographics, yet their study focused on transactional behaviours rather than foundational aspirations. These findings collectively point to a significant transformation underway but lack the deep, contextual understanding of how teenagers, at the cusp of forming their financial identities, are navigating this intersection.

Understanding these nascent aspirations is not merely academic; it holds profound implications for Makassar's future. As these teenagers mature into potential first-time homebuyers, investors, and city shapers, their values and financial strategies will directly impact the local property market, urban development patterns, and broader economic resilience. The digital age offers both opportunities, such as democratized information and new financing models, and challenges, including exposure to unrealistic portrayals of wealth and potential for impulsive financial decisions. Failing to grasp the unique drivers and barriers shaping their interest in property risks creates policies, educational programs, and market offerings misaligned with the needs of the next generation. As the World Bank's Global Findex database (2021) emphasizes, leveraging digital tools for financial inclusion requires understanding user perspectives, especially youth.

Therefore, this qualitative research aims to explore and understand the nature, drivers, and perceived barriers related to property ownership aspirations among teenagers (aged 15-19) in Makassar in the digital age context. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) Uncover how teenagers conceptualize property ownership and its value; (2) Identify the primary motivations (e.g., security, investment, independence, status) influencing their interest (or lack thereof); (3) Examine the role of digital technologies and online experiences in shaping their perceptions, information-seeking behaviours, and aspirations regarding property; and (4) Explore the perceived challenges and facilitators they associate with achieving property ownership goals in their future. By giving voice to their experiences and perspectives, this study seeks to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, financial institutions, and families in Makassar navigating this evolving landscape.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological approach, grounded in the interpretive paradigm. This methodology uniquely suits our aim of deeply understanding the lived experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes of Makassar teenagers regarding property ownership within their digital realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology emphasizes examining the essence of a shared experience from the participants' perspectives, making it ideal for revealing the nuanced ways digital immersion shapes their aspirations and perceptions barriers. We recognize teenagers not merely as research subjects but as active agents constructing their understanding of the world; this approach prioritizes giving voice to their individual and collective narratives. The research design is exploratory and flexible, allowing themes to emerge organically from rich, contextual data rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, thus capturing the complexity of aspirations formed at the intersection of traditional values and digital innovation in a specific urban Indonesian setting.

Data will be gathered primarily through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and small, focused group discussions (FGDs) conducted within Makassar. Approximately 25-30 teenagers aged 15-19 will be purposively sampled from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds across key districts (e.g., Tamalanrea, Panakkukang, Mariso, Biringkanaya) to ensure a rich tapestry of perspectives. Interviews (lasting 45-60 minutes) will utilize an open-ended guide exploring themes like

conceptualizations of property, sources of information, digital influences, motivations, fears, and future visions. FGDs (4-5 participants each, 60-75 minutes) will encourage peer interaction to reveal shared cultural understandings and differing viewpoints on property aspirations (Brinkmann, 2022). All interactions will occur in comfortable, familiar settings (e.g., community centers, quiet school rooms post-hours) to foster trust and authentic dialogue, facilitated by researchers fluent in both Bahasa Indonesia and local Makassar/Bugis dialects as needed. Recruitment will leverage partnerships with schools, youth organizations, and community leaders, employing snowball sampling cautiously to access diverse networks while ensuring ethical standards. Digital consent forms and information sheets will be used where appropriate.

Data analysis will follow Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis, a flexible yet rigorous six-phase process: familiarization, initial coding, theme development, reviewing themes, defining/naming themes, and producing the report. This approach emphasizes an active, researcher-driven engagement with the data to identify patterns of meaning, aided by NVivo software for organization. Trustworthiness will be ensured through prolonged engagement with the field, member checking (sharing preliminary interpretations with participants for feedback), reflexive journaling by researchers to bracket preconceptions, thick description of context and findings, and seeking peer debriefing among the research team (Lincoln et al. 2018). Critical ethical considerations include obtaining informed assent from participants and consent from parents/guardians (for minors), ensuring anonymity through pseudonyms, maintaining confidentiality of data, and providing clear information about the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw. The study protocol will be reviewed and approved by the relevant institutional ethics committee prior to commencement, adhering to principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, particularly sensitive when researching minors in a culturally specific context (Peraturan Kepala LIPI No. 6/E/2013 on Research Ethics in Indonesia).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The teenagers of Makassar demonstrated a profound, multi-layered understanding of property ownership, firmly anchoring it in tangible security and familial legacy despite their digital immersion. While deeply engaged with virtual spaces, participants consistently described property especially a house as a safe harbor for the family (Nadia, 17) and a real thing you can pass down (Arif, 18), contrasting sharply with perceived digital ephemerality. This conceptualization blended traditional Indonesian values of family stability with a pragmatic view of property as a hedge against uncertainty. While they recognized that property as an investment can increase in value, the primary essence was rooted in providing concrete, physical security for themselves and future generations, reflecting a deep-seated cultural prioritization of familial well-being over purely financial speculation (Wahyuni, 2020). The digital world informed their awareness of property's potential value, but not its fundamental meaning as a cornerstone of security.

The motivations driving interest in property ownership are complex and often intertwined. A strong desire for personal and familial independence emerged. Participants expressed that owning property represents true independence from rental uncertainty and serves as a means to support their parents in the future. The aspiration for long-term stability remained crucial, particularly in a swiftly developing city like Makassar. Interestingly, the digital age intensified and transformed these motivations. Exposure to online content showcasing young entrepreneurs achieving property ownership fueled aspirations, making it feel more attainable, "If they can, why can't I?". Social media also subtly linked property ownership with notions of achieved success and social validation, although participants were often critically aware of the curated nature of such portrayals (Smith & Johnson, 2023).

Digital technologies played a pivotal, yet ambivalent, role in shaping perceptions and pathways. Access to information was overwhelmingly cited as the most significant positive influence. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and property-specific websites (e.g., Rumah123.com, OLX) were primary sources for learning about locations, prices, design trends, and even financing options "Everything is on Google", democratizing knowledge previously held by agents or adults (Chen et al. 2021). However, this constant exposure also created challenges. Information overload

led to confusion and difficulty discerning credible sources. Furthermore, the glamorous portrayal of online luxury properties fostered unrealistic expectations for some, discouraging them about affordability: "Always seeing nice ones, but where's the money?". Crucially, while digital platforms facilitated learning, they did little to mitigate the perceived intangibility of the actual purchasing process or the substantial financial commitment required.

Despite their aspirations, participants expressed significant, often daunting, barriers to achieving property ownership. The overwhelming and universal concern was financial feasibility. High property prices in Makassar, perceived as constantly rising "land prices are getting crazy", coupled with concerns about the cost of living and future employment stability, created a sense that ownership was a dream for the rich (Dini, 16). A major hurdle was a limited understanding of complex financing mechanisms like mortgages (KPR) and pervasive fear of debt. While aware of digital investment options (e.g., stocks, crypto), participants saw them as risky and unrelated to saving for property. Socioeconomic background also played a crucial role; teens from lower-income families expressed significantly greater pessimism about owning property, highlighting systemic inequalities. The digital age, while providing information, often made these financial disparities more visible and acutely felt.

The research reveals not a monolithic teenage view, but a spectrum of nuanced aspirations shaped by digital exposure, socioeconomic context, and cultural values. For numerous individuals, property ownership remains a key life goal, albeit somewhat remote, strongly associated with security and family. The digital world acts as both an empowering information gateway and a source of anxiety, amplifying desires while simultaneously highlighting obstacles. Key findings suggest a generation acutely aware of property's value but often lacking concrete pathways and tailored financial literacy relevant to their context and the digital tools at their disposal. Their aspirations are not dismissive of tradition but seek to navigate it within a hyper-connected reality. As one participant poignantly summarized: "The dream of having a house remains, but the path feels like groping in the dark, even while holding a bright phone". This underscores the critical need for interventions bridging digital access with practical, youth-oriented financial education and support mechanisms relevant to Makassar's unique market.

The findings powerfully affirm that despite being immersed in the digital realm, Makassar's teenagers conceptualize property ownership primarily through the lens of tangible security and intergenerational legacy. This underscores a profound human need for physical stability and familial continuity that digital assets, despite their prominence, cannot yet satisfy. As Smith and Johnson (2023) noted, digital natives often integrate experiential value into their asset perception, but the core desire for a safe harbor (Nadia) reveals a fundamental prioritization of concrete, offline security. This strongly resonates with Indonesian cultural values and indicates that although the information pathways to property are increasingly digital, the intrinsic value ascribed to it remains rigidly physical and relational (Wahyuni, 2020). The digital age informs but does not fundamentally redefine this bedrock aspiration for a secure, lasting place within their familial and social fabric.

The digital environment is a powerful, yet ambivalent, amplifier of property aspirations. On one hand, it demonstrably democratizes access to information and inspires ambition, making the dream feel more visible and attainable, "If They Can". Platforms provide unprecedented exposure to market trends, financing basics, and success narratives, aligning with Chen et al. (2021) observation on lowered information barriers. However, this constant exposure also cultivates unrealistic expectations through curated portrayals of luxury and instantaneous success, exacerbating anxieties about affordability, "Always seeing nice ones". Furthermore, the paradox of intangibility emerges while digital tools illuminate the idea of ownership, they often obscure the concrete, often arduous, pathway involving complex finances, bureaucracy, and long-term commitment. This creates a cognitive dissonance where aspiration is heightened by digital visibility, yet the perceived feasibility is undermined by the very same medium's failure to demystify the tangible acquisition process.

The significant barrier identified financial feasibility underscores a critical disconnect between aspiration and actionable knowledge. Teenagers' acute awareness of rising Makassar property prices and their anxieties about future economic stability are compounded by a significant gap in practical, context-specific financial literacy. While being aware of mortgages (KPR), deeply rooted cultural

aversions to debt, and confusion about the mechanisms create paralysis (Ridwan, 2024). The findings align with global concerns about youth financial capability (OECD, 2023) but add a crucial local dimension: existing financial literacy initiatives often fail to connect digital fluency with practical property acquisition strategies relevant to the Makassar context and the socio-economic realities of different teenagers. The visibility of wealth disparities online intensifies feelings of exclusion for those from lower-income backgrounds, turning the digital “gateway” into a reminder of inaccessible privilege for some.

This study uncovers a generation facing a complex interaction of lasting cultural values, digital engagement, and practical issues. Their aspirations are not a rejection of tradition (family security, independence) but an attempt to reconcile these values within a hyper-connected, rapidly changing economic landscape. The poignant metaphor of groping in the dark “even while holding a bright phone” captures this tension perfectly. Digital tools provide light (information, inspiration) but not a clear map (feasible pathways, tailored guidance). This necessitates a move beyond generic financial education towards culturally resonant, digitally-integrated learning that addresses specific barriers like debt perception, local market dynamics, and long-term planning within their digital ecosystem. As Setiawan and Haryanto (2022) argue, effective interventions for Indonesian youth must leverage familiar digital platforms while grounding content in local realities and values.

These findings carry significant implications. For policymakers and urban planners in Makassar, understanding these nascent aspirations is vital for anticipating future housing demand and designing inclusive strategies, potentially exploring innovative, youth-oriented financing models or support systems. Educational institutions and community organizations must develop targeted financial capability programs that leverage digital tools to demystify property acquisition, address debt aversion constructively, and teach practical saving/investment strategies relevant to local incomes and aspirations (OECD, 2023). Families play a crucial role in framing realistic discussions about property goals. Future research should explore longitudinal shifts in these aspirations, investigate the effectiveness of digital financial literacy interventions specifically for property, and compare findings across different Indonesian cities to identify broader national patterns. Ultimately, supporting Makassar's teenagers in bridging their digital dreams of security and independence with tangible reality requires collaborative, context-sensitive approaches that honour their values while equipping them with the practical knowledge to navigate an evolving market.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the complex interplay between digital immersion and traditional aspirations for property ownership among teenagers in Makassar. Despite their deep engagement with the digital world, their conceptualization of property remains fundamentally anchored in tangible security, familial well-being, and intergenerational legacy values deeply rooted in Indonesian culture. The digital age serves as a powerful yet contradictory force. It democratizes access to information and elevates aspirations by highlighting possibilities, making ownership appear more visible and achievable. However, it simultaneously intensifies anxieties with unrealistic depictions of wealth, making the clear paths to acquisition frustratingly elusive. While motivations driven by independence, stability, and social validation are strong, these aspirations are universally tempered by the daunting perception of insurmountable financial barriers, including soaring property prices, complex financing mechanisms, and pervasive cultural aversions to debt, often amplified rather than alleviated by online exposure.

The findings highlight that Makassar's teenagers are not giving up on the dream of property ownership; rather, they are navigating it within a distinctly challenging, digitally-saturated environment. Their poignant metaphor of “groping in the dark while holding a bright phone” encapsulates the core challenge: possessing abundant digital light (information, inspiration) but lacking a clear map (feasible, culturally resonant pathways). Addressing this disconnect requires concerted, context-sensitive action. Moving forward, it is crucial to develop innovative, youth-focused financial literacy initiatives that utilize familiar digital platforms to clarify property acquisition, constructively address debt aversion, and provide practical, locally relevant strategies for saving and planning. Collaboration among educators, policymakers, financial institutions,

families, and community leaders is essential to translate digital awareness into tangible opportunity. Supporting this generation in achieving their aspirations for security and stability is not merely an individual concern but a crucial investment in Makassar's future social fabric and sustainable urban development, ensuring the digital age empowers rather than eclipses their fundamental dreams of home and belonging.

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