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FINANCIAL RESILIENCE OF YOUNG ADULTS IN AN UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Handika Junior Putra Pratama[1] Elok Vilantika[2]

[1]Management Department, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, East Java, Indonesia, handikajuniorpp@gmail.com

[2]Management Department, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, East Java, Indonesia, elokvilant@umg.ac.id

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore how Generation Z interprets and builds *financial resilience* in facing uncertain global and national economic pressures.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employs a phenomenological design with a qualitative approach, involving eleven informants aged 21–26 years residing in Gresik Regency, selected through *purposive sampling*. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase thematic analysis, with *Conservation of Resources Theory*, *Financial Capability Theory*, *Social Cognitive Theory*, and *Life Course Theory* as interpretive lenses.

Findings: The results identify five main themes: financial buffer capacity, financial management capability, *financial self-efficacy*, the socio-structural dimension, and adaptive learning from experiences of financial shocks. A paradox was found between low formal financial literacy and high financial self-confidence formed through direct experience, along with the central role of family as the primary safety net amid the low use of digital financial technology.

Practical implications: These findings affirm the need for a concrete and contextual financial mentoring approach for young working individuals in semi-industrial regions, rather than focusing solely on improving formal financial literacy.

Originality/value: This study provides contextual understanding that complements previous quantitative studies on *financial resilience*, while affirming the importance of a concrete financial mentoring approach for young working individuals in semi-industrial regions.

Paper type: Empirical

Keywords: financial resilience, Generation Z, economic uncertainty, phenomenology, financial self-efficacy

1. Introduction

In recent years, the global economy has faced increasingly complex and uncertain dynamics. Various events at the international level such as geopolitical conflicts, changes in trade policy between nations, disruptions to global supply chains, and fluctuations in energy and commodity prices—have placed significant pressure on world economic stability. The World Bank (2026), in its *Global Economic Prospects 2026* report, asserts that the combination of supply-chain disruptions, trade tensions, and high debt levels in many countries has slowed the momentum of global economic growth as a whole. This uncertainty has caused many countries to face challenges in maintaining economic growth, controlling inflation, and preserving labor-market stability. This situation shows that the current global economy is influenced not only by economic factors, but also by developments in politics, security, and international relations that are interconnected. These conditions have been further reinforced by the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East in early 2026. The International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2026) explains that this conflict has the potential to disrupt global commodity markets, particularly the energy sector, and to affect inflation expectations and international financial conditions. Geopolitical conflicts involving strategically important countries can trigger increases in world oil and gas prices, raise production costs, and intensify inflationary pressure across countries.

The impact of this uncertainty is reflected in the slowing outlook for global economic growth. The IMF (2026) projects that global economic growth will reach only 3.1% in 2026 and 3.2% in 2027, figures below the average global growth rate of around 3.7% for the 2000–2019 period. A similar projection is put forward by the World Bank (2026), which states that global economic growth is on a structurally weakening trend due to high global debt levels and low investment in developing countries.

Although the nominal difference may appear small, a slowdown in global economic growth can have wide-ranging effects on international trade, investment, job creation, and economic activity across countries. In addition to the slowdown in economic growth, the world also continues to face relatively high inflationary pressure. The IMF (2026) projects global inflation to reach 4.4% in 2026 before declining to 3.7% in 2027. High inflation causes the prices of basic necessities, energy, and services to rise, thereby reducing people's purchasing power. This condition poses a challenge for households, as income does not always increase in line with rising prices of goods and services, forcing many individuals to adjust their consumption patterns, spending, and financial planning in order to continue meeting their daily needs.

As part of the global economy, Indonesia has also faced various impacts arising from global economic uncertainty. Although the national economy still shows relatively good performance, various economic indicators point to challenges that warrant attention. Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2026) recorded that in the first quarter of 2026, Indonesia's year-on-year economic growth stood at 5.61%, while quarter-to-quarter growth contracted by 0.77%. This condition indicates that national economic activity continues to face pressure that could affect the stability of short-term growth. In addition, BPS (2026) also recorded an unemployment rate of 4.68% in March 2026, indicating that a portion of the population still faces limitations in obtaining stable employment and income. Meanwhile, Bank Indonesia (BI, 2026) reported that Indonesia's inflation rate reached 3.08% in May 2026, higher than the previous period's 2.42%, as part of the dynamics of monetary policy in responding to domestic and global price pressures. Consequently, individuals' ability to manage finances, adapt to changing economic conditions, and prepare for various financial risks has become increasingly important for maintaining long-term economic well-being. Ultimately, global and national economic uncertainty affects not only governments and businesses, but also directly affects people's daily lives, as emphasized in the World Bank's (2026) report that slowing economic growth, rising prices of basic necessities, and labor-market instability can increase the financial vulnerability of individuals and households.

Amid globally uncertain economic conditions, young people are among the groups most vulnerable to economic and financial pressure. Generation Z, currently aged 21–26 years, is generally in a transitional phase toward economic independence, marked by entry into the workforce, career-building, and the need to meet living needs independently. Kumar and Sandhu (2024) refer to this phase as a period of *emerging adulthood* characterized by financial instability, as individuals are only beginning to build the capability and confidence to manage their finances independently. In this phase, young people face various challenges such as rising living costs, unstable income at the start of their careers, and demands to independently meet various economic needs, so that young people need strong adaptive capacity to cope with the changes and economic uncertainty that occur.

The phenomenon of young people's financial vulnerability is reflected in the results of the *Deloitte Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey 2026* (Deloitte, 2026). The survey shows that financial conditions are among the greatest sources of concern for young people. According to Deloitte (2026), 44% of Generation Z respondents stated that their long-term financial future is a major factor causing stress and anxiety, while 38% of respondents reported that day-to-day financial conditions are also a significant source of pressure in their lives. These findings align with Deloitte's (2026) study, which shows that most young people continue to face uncertainty regarding their ability to maintain financial stability, meet their living needs, and prepare their financial condition for the future.

The *Sun Life Asia Financial Resilience Index Indonesia 2025* report (Sun Life Indonesia, 2025) shows that many individuals remain in a vulnerable financial condition due to cost-of-living inflation and economic uncertainty. According to Sun Life Indonesia (2025), this pressure causes people to focus more on meeting daily needs than on preparing long-term financial goals such as savings or retirement funds. This vulnerability is reflected in the increasingly dominant short-term financial orientation in people's financial management, where 63% of respondents prioritize meeting daily needs, while only 43% prioritize education and only 36% prioritize retirement preparation (Sun Life Indonesia, 2025). This condition shows that most people remain focused on meeting present needs, so that long-term financial planning tends to be neglected—even though the ability to plan finances for the future is an important aspect of building sustainable financial resilience.

The issue of financial resilience is even more evident among young people. According to Sun Life Indonesia (2025), Generation Z is the most financially vulnerable group compared to other

generational groups, with a sense of financial security reaching only 57%, lower than that of millennials and older generations. As a group in the early stages of building careers and economic independence, Generation Z tends to have unstable income, limited assets, and a relatively lower level of financial preparedness, as also noted by Kumar and Sandhu (2024) regarding the limited financial capability of young adults. In addition, the Sun Life Indonesia (2025) report also reveals a gap between perception and actual financial resilience: 64% of respondents feel confident in meeting short-term financial obligations and 58% believe they can achieve long-term savings goals, yet only 49% of respondents feel prepared to face a financial emergency. These findings indicate that financial resilience is influenced not only by economic conditions, but also by individuals' ability to plan their finances, improve their financial literacy, and prepare themselves for various risks that may arise in the future.

Various studies have sought to identify the factors that influence *financial resilience*. Hamid et al. (2023) found that financial literacy and financial inclusion have a positive effect on individuals' ability to build financial resilience, whereby individuals with good financial knowledge and access to financial services tend to be better able to manage expenses, develop financial plans, and prepare for future financial risks. Beyond literacy and financial inclusion, Kumar and Sandhu (2024) show that *financial capability* and *financial self-efficacy* also play an important role in shaping *financial resilience*, as individuals with the capability and confidence to manage their finances tend to be better prepared to face economic pressure and better able to make appropriate financial decisions. Meanwhile, Ariana et al. (2024) and Rahayu et al. (2024) show that digital financial literacy, saving behavior, and the use of financial technology also contribute to improving individuals' financial resilience, while Garcia-Santillan et al. (2026) add that *financial well-being* and gender differences also influence an individual's level of financial resilience.

Although previous studies have made important contributions to explaining the factors that influence *financial resilience*, most of them still rely on a quantitative approach that positions *financial resilience* as an outcome variable measured through statistical relationships between variables. The studies by Hamid et al. (2023), Kumar and Sandhu (2024), Ariana et al. (2024), Rahayu et al. (2024), and Garcia-Santillan et al. (2026) generally focus on the influence of factors such as financial literacy, financial inclusion, *financial capability*, *financial self-efficacy*, digital financial literacy, saving behavior, and *financial well-being* on *financial resilience*. These findings have succeeded in explaining the factors that contribute to financial resilience, yet, as Hamid et al. (2023) themselves note, quantitative approaches have not been able to capture how individuals actually build and maintain financial resilience in daily life. In addition, research that specifically examines *financial resilience* among young people remains relatively limited, particularly research using qualitative approaches, even though young people today face a context that differs from previous generations—such as rising living costs (BPS, 2026; IMF, 2026), labor-market uncertainty, digital technological developments, and changing financial behavior influenced by social media and digital financial services (Deloitte, 2026). These conditions may give rise to various adaptation strategies and financial experiences that cannot yet be fully explained through quantitative approaches.

Based on these conditions, there is a research gap indicating that studies on *financial resilience* remain dominated by research focusing on the factors that influence financial resilience (Hamid et al., 2023; Kumar & Sandhu, 2024; Ariana et al., 2024), while research exploring the experiences, strategies, and adaptation processes of young people in building *financial resilience* amid economic uncertainty remains relatively scarce. This study was therefore conducted to gain a deeper understanding of how young people build and maintain their financial resilience in facing continually evolving economic challenges.

The urgency of this study is grounded in the increasing importance of young people's ability to cope with uncertain economic challenges. Global economic uncertainty (IMF, 2026; World Bank, 2026), rising living costs, and changing labor-market conditions can heighten individuals' financial vulnerability, particularly for Generation Z, who are in the early stages of building their careers and economic independence. Various survey results (Deloitte, 2026; Sun Life Indonesia, 2025) also show that young people continue to face high levels of financial concern and have relatively limited preparedness to face financial emergencies. Therefore, the ability to build and maintain *financial resilience* is an important aspect in supporting the financial well-being of young people, both now and in the future. From an academic standpoint, research on *financial resilience* remains dominated by quantitative approaches focused on identifying the factors that influence financial resilience (Hamid et

al., 2023; Kumar & Sandhu, 2024). Although previous research has made important contributions in explaining relationships between variables, understanding of how young people build, maintain, and adjust their financial strategies in facing economic uncertainty remains relatively limited. This study is therefore expected to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and adaptation processes of young people in building *financial resilience*, while enriching the field of financial management, particularly in the area of financial resilience.

2. Literature Review

Concept and Definition of Financial Resilience

Conceptually, financial resilience refers to an individual's ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from unexpected financial pressures or shocks arising from macroeconomic conditions or personal life events. Hamid et al. (2023) define financial resilience as the capacity to absorb financial stress without a significant decline in well-being through financial literacy, financial inclusion, and access to resources. Kumar and Sandhu (2024) further emphasize that financial resilience is not merely a static outcome but a dynamic process involving financial capability and self-confidence in managing finances over time. Similarly, Garcia-Santillan et al. (2026) position financial resilience as part of the broader concept of financial well-being, while Ariana et al. (2024) and Rahayu et al. (2024) highlight the role of digital financial literacy and saving behavior in supporting long-term financial stability. The development of financial resilience literature shows a shift from a macroeconomic perspective focused on households' ability to withstand crises toward a broader understanding that incorporates psychological and social dimensions. Kumar and Sandhu (2024) argue that this shift enables researchers and policymakers to identify internal factors that can be strengthened through education and policy interventions. Consequently, financial resilience is increasingly understood as a multidimensional construct involving cognitive, behavioral, psychological, and structural aspects rather than merely the ownership of material resources.

Dimensions of Financial Resilience

Based on a synthesis of previous studies, financial resilience can be divided into several key dimensions. The first is financial buffer capacity, namely the availability of savings or emergency funds to cope with economic shocks, which Hamid et al. (2023) identify as an important determinant of financial resilience. The second is financial management capability, including budgeting, spending control, and long-term financial planning, which Kumar and Sandhu (2024) consider a prerequisite for building sustainable financial resilience. The third is the psychological dimension, particularly financial self-efficacy and attitudes toward financial risk, where individuals with greater confidence in managing finances tend to respond more adaptively to economic pressures (Kumar & Sandhu, 2024). The fourth dimension is the social and structural dimension, referring to access to social support and formal financial services. Ariana et al. (2024) demonstrate that digital financial technology can strengthen this dimension by expanding access to financial services, especially among young people. In addition, Rahayu et al. (2024) introduce a temporal-adaptive dimension, namely the ability to learn from past financial shocks and apply these experiences to future challenges. Together, these dimensions illustrate that financial resilience is a multidimensional and dynamic construct formed through the interaction of financial, psychological, social, and adaptive capacities.

Conservation of Resources Theory

One theoretical framework relevant to explaining financial resilience is the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory developed by Hobfoll (1989). The theory argues that individuals seek to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable resources because resource loss can lead to stress and instability. Hobfoll (1989) classifies resources into object, condition, personal, and energy resources, while emphasizing that resource loss has a greater psychological impact than an equivalent gain, encouraging individuals to develop strategies to protect their resources. In the context of financial resilience, COR Theory explains how individuals build and preserve resources such as savings, emergency funds, and social support networks to mitigate the impact of economic shocks. Individuals with greater resource reserves are generally more capable of coping with financial pressures than those with limited resources. The theory also explains the concept of a loss spiral, in which the loss of one resource triggers further losses, a phenomenon reflected in the findings of Sun Life Indonesia (2025) regarding the vulnerability of individuals without emergency funds. Conversely, individuals who successfully accumulate material

and psychological resources are more likely to generate a positive cycle that strengthens their financial resilience over time (Hobfoll, 1989).

Financial Capability Theory

The Financial Capability Theory proposed by Sherraden (2013) explains that financial capability is shaped not only by financial knowledge and skills but also by access to financial products and services. According to Sherraden (2013), financial literacy without financial inclusion, and vice versa, is insufficient to produce sound financial decisions and sustainable financial resilience. The importance of strengthening financial capability among young people is further emphasized by Vilantika and Santoso (2024), who found that financial literacy education programs for Generation Z effectively improve financial understanding and preparedness for future financial challenges. In addition to knowledge and access, Sherraden (2013) highlights financial behavior as the link between financial capability and financial outcomes. Financial literacy and inclusion will not lead to financial resilience unless they are translated into behaviors such as saving, budgeting, and the effective use of financial services. This view is supported by Rahayu et al. (2024), who identify saving behavior as an important mediator between digital financial literacy and financial resilience, as well as by Hamid et al. (2023) and Ariana et al. (2024), who demonstrate the joint contribution of financial literacy and financial inclusion to financial resilience. Furthermore, Masjidah, Vilantika, and Santoso (2024) show that financial attitudes, knowledge, and locus of control simultaneously influence financial management behavior, reinforcing the relevance of Financial Capability Theory in explaining financial resilience in the digital era.

Social Cognitive Theory and Financial Self-Efficacy

In addition to capability factors, psychological aspects also play an important role in building financial resilience. Social Cognitive Theory developed by Bandura (1986) explains that individual behavior is shaped by the interaction between personal factors, behavior, and environment through the principle of reciprocal determinism. A central concept of this theory is self-efficacy, namely an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a particular action. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. In the financial context, this concept is referred to as financial self-efficacy, or an individual's confidence in their ability to manage finances effectively. Kumar and Sandhu (2024) found that higher financial self-efficacy contributes to stronger financial resilience by encouraging proactive financial planning and adaptive responses to economic pressures. Garcia-Santillan et al. (2026) further note that financial self-efficacy is influenced by life experiences and demographic characteristics, including gender. These findings suggest that strengthening financial resilience among young people requires not only improving financial knowledge but also enhancing confidence in financial decision-making through educational and experiential interventions (Bandura, 1986).

Life Course Theory and Young People

To understand the position of young people in the context of financial resilience, this study adopts Life Course Theory proposed by Elder (1998). The theory explains individual development through five principles: historical time and place, timing of lives, linked lives, human agency, and long-term development. These principles emphasize that individual experiences and decisions are shaped by historical context, social relationships, personal choices, and experiences accumulated throughout the life course. These principles are particularly relevant for understanding Generation Z, which is currently transitioning toward economic independence amid digitalization, post-pandemic labor-market uncertainty, and rising living costs. Deloitte (2026) reports that financial concerns among Generation Z are higher than among older generations, while Sun Life Indonesia (2025) found that Generation Z's financial security level remains relatively low. In line with the principle of linked lives, young people's financial resilience is also influenced by family conditions and social support networks. Therefore, Life Course Theory provides an important framework for understanding financial resilience as a phenomenon shaped by specific social and historical contexts rather than by individual factors alone (Elder, 1998).

Financial Well-Being as a Broader Context

In addition to the four main theories above, this study considers the financial well-being framework as the broader context in which financial resilience is situated. Garcia-Santillan et al. (2026) explain that financial well-being consists of four aspects: control over daily finances, the ability to

absorb financial shocks, freedom in financial decision-making, and confidence in achieving future financial goals. Among these dimensions, the ability to absorb financial shocks is the aspect most closely related to financial resilience, positioning financial resilience as a key pillar of overall financial well-being. The financial well-being framework is relevant because it places financial resilience within the broader context of individuals' financial lives. Individuals with strong financial resilience are generally better able to manage daily finances, make financial choices, and maintain optimism about their financial future. Rahayu et al. (2024) support this perspective by showing that saving behavior driven by digital financial literacy contributes not only to financial resilience but also to overall financial well-being. Therefore, financial resilience and financial well-being should be understood as interconnected and mutually reinforcing constructs.

Synthesis of Previous Research

Previous studies on financial resilience can generally be grouped into three main clusters. The first focuses on financial capability and literacy factors, as reflected in the studies of Hamid et al. (2023) and Ariana et al. (2024). The second emphasizes psychological factors, particularly financial self-efficacy, as highlighted by Kumar and Sandhu (2024). The third examines behavioral and technological factors, such as saving behavior and digital financial literacy, as demonstrated by Rahayu et al. (2024) and Garcia-Santillan et al. (2026). Collectively, these studies indicate that financial resilience emerges from the interaction of cognitive, psychological, and behavioral factors. Despite these contributions, several limitations remain. Most previous studies employ quantitative approaches that treat financial resilience as an outcome variable, thereby providing limited understanding of individuals' lived experiences in developing resilience. Research focusing specifically on Generation Z is also still relatively scarce, despite the distinct socio-economic challenges faced by this generation. Furthermore, many studies have not sufficiently considered age-specific historical contexts and life transitions as emphasized by Life Course Theory (Elder, 1998). These gaps provide the rationale for adopting a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore how Generation Z experiences and develops financial resilience in conditions of economic uncertainty.

Research Framework

Based on the theoretical review above, this study develops a conceptual framework that views financial resilience among young people as the result of interactions among four main theoretical perspectives within the broader context of financial well-being. Conservation of Resources Theory explains the importance of protecting and accumulating resources (Hobfoll, 1989), Financial Capability Theory emphasizes financial literacy and access to financial services (Sherraden, 2013), Social Cognitive Theory highlights the role of financial self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986), and Life Course Theory places these processes within the transitional life stage of Generation Z (Elder, 1998). These perspectives operate in an integrated and complementary manner in shaping financial resilience among young people. Therefore, the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.1 was independently developed by the researchers as a synthesis of these theories rather than being directly adapted from previous studies. Using financial well-being as the overarching context, this framework serves as an analytical lens to understand how Generation Z interprets, develops, and maintains financial resilience amid economic uncertainty, while also exploring the processes, strategies, and life experiences underlying its formation.

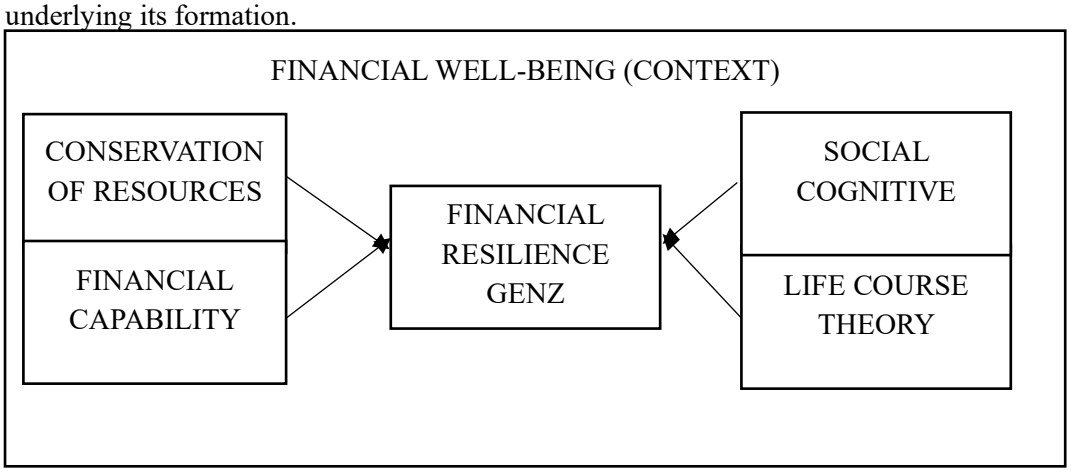


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of Generation Z Financial Resilience

Figure 1.1 illustrates that this study views Generation Z's financial resilience as a phenomenon shaped by the interaction of multiple theoretical perspectives within the broader context of financial well-being. Unlike quantitative studies that typically position financial resilience as a dependent variable, this study uses these theories as analytical lenses to understand the experiences, strategies, and adaptation processes of young people facing economic uncertainty. This perspective is consistent with Hamid et al. (2023) and Kumar and Sandhu (2024), who argue that financial resilience is a multidimensional construct influenced by economic, behavioral, and psychological factors.

Within this framework, Conservation of Resources Theory explains individuals' efforts to protect financial resources (Hobfoll, 1989), Financial Capability Theory highlights the roles of financial literacy, financial inclusion, and financial behavior (Sherraden, 2013), Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes financial self-efficacy in financial decision-making (Bandura, 1986; Kumar & Sandhu, 2024), and Life Course Theory situates these processes within Generation Z's transition toward economic independence (Elder, 1998). The integration of these perspectives guides the process of data collection, thematic analysis, and interpretation of informants' experiences to develop a more comprehensive understanding of financial resilience among young people (Garcia-Santillan et al., 2026; Rahayu et al., 2024; Ariana et al., 2024).

3. Research Method

Approach and Type of Research

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how young people interpret, experience, and build *financial resilience* in facing economic uncertainty—a phenomenon that is difficult to explain adequately through a quantitative approach that merely measures relationships between variables, as has commonly been done in previous research (Hamid et al., 2023; Kumar & Sandhu, 2024). A phenomenological approach was considered appropriate because it focuses on exploring *lived experiences* and the meaning individuals attach to phenomena they experience directly. Qualitative research is used when researchers seek to understand the experiences, perspectives, and meanings individuals construct regarding a social phenomenon through an inductive and interpretive process, thereby allowing themes to emerge from field data rather than from the testing of predetermined hypotheses (Wiesner, 2022; Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

A phenomenological design was chosen because this approach aims to uncover the essential meaning of *lived experience* as understood and felt directly by the individuals who experience it. A phenomenological approach allows the researcher to explore how individuals make meaning of their experiences from their own perspective, without being dominated by predetermined assumptions or conceptual frameworks (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). In addition, a phenomenological approach is highly suitable when several individuals experience a similar phenomenon but interpret it in different ways, as is the case with young people who collectively face economic pressure during a relatively similar period (Dodgson, 2023). Through this approach, the researcher sought to explore young people's subjective experiences in facing economic pressure and the adaptation strategies they developed to maintain their *financial resilience*, so that the resulting findings can complement the understanding that has thus far been dominated by quantitative research (Hamid et al., 2023; Ariana et al., 2024). In line with the principles of phenomenological research, the researcher sought to apply reflexivity by temporarily setting aside personal assumptions and experiences during the research process, so that the resulting interpretations genuinely originate from the informants' experiences rather than from the researcher's own subjective interpretation (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

Research Subjects and Location

The subjects of this study are individuals from Generation Z aged 21–26 years. This age range was selected based on the findings of Sun Life Indonesia (2025) and Deloitte (2026), which show that this age group is in a transitional phase toward economic independence and is classified as the most financially vulnerable group compared to other generational groups. In line with the perspective of Life Course Theory (Elder, 1998), research subjects were also selected because they are undergoing a similar life transition, namely the shift from education to employment and financial independence. At this stage, individuals begin to face various economic responsibilities, such as managing income, independently meeting living needs, and preparing long-term financial plans. Their experiences were therefore

considered relevant for in-depth examination through a phenomenological approach in order to understand how financial resilience is formed in the face of various financial challenges.

Informants were determined using a *purposive sampling* technique, namely the selection of informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objective. This technique is considered appropriate for phenomenological research because the selected informants must have genuine, direct experience of the phenomenon under study, so that they are able to provide in-depth information about their lived experience of that phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The informant criteria in this study include:

(1) aged 21–26 years,
(2) already having an independent source of income, either from employment or business,
(3) having experienced financial pressure or shocks, such as rising living costs, income instability, or a financial emergency, and
(4) willing to openly share their financial experiences.

This study involved a minimum of 10 informants who met all four criteria. This number of informants was chosen because, in phenomenological research, the main emphasis lies in the depth of exploration of experience, not merely in a large number of participants. Involving a minimum of 10 informants was expected to provide a more diverse range of experiences while still allowing the researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration of each informant's lived experience. In phenomenological research, the adequacy of the number of informants is determined by the data's ability to explain the essence of the phenomenon under study, not by considerations of statistical generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with each informant until *data saturation* was reached, namely the condition in which additional interviews no longer yield significant new themes or information related to the *financial resilience* phenomenon under study. Accordingly, the final number of informants was a minimum of 10 and could increase if the data-collection process indicated that data saturation had not yet been reached.

This study was conducted in Gresik Regency, East Java Province, involving informants residing in that area. Gresik Regency was chosen based on its characteristics as one of the main industrial areas in East Java with dynamic economic activity, marked by the presence of various industrial, trade, and service sectors capable of absorbing labor from among young people. On the other hand, this economic development has also been accompanied by rising living costs, consumption needs, and challenges in maintaining financial stability during the transition toward economic independence. These conditions make Gresik Regency a relevant location for examining Generation Z's experience of financial resilience in facing various financial pressures, as well as the strategies they employ to maintain financial resilience.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection in this study was carried out through in-depth interviews as the main method ofobtaining research data. Interviews are the most appropriate technique in phenomenological research because they allow the researcher to explore informants' subjective experiences and the meanings they attach to their *lived experience* through their own narratives and reflections (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). Through in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to understand how informants make meaning of their experiences in facing various financial pressures and challenges during the process of moving toward economic independence. The use of interviews as the primary technique is also in line with developments in contemporary qualitative research, which positions interviews as the main method for exploring individuals' experience of a social phenomenon.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using an interview guide developed based on the theoretical framework of *Conservation of Resources* (Hobfoll, 1989), *Financial Capability* (Sherraden, 2013), and *financial self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1986). Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide direction for the data-collection process while still giving informants the freedom to share their experiences, perceptions, and strategies in facing various challenging financial conditions. In this way, the researcher was able to obtain in-depth information without rigidly restricting informants' answers to a predetermined list of questions, allowing the essence of informants' experiences to be explored more comprehensively.

The interview process was carried out until *data saturation* was reached, namely the condition in which additional interviews no longer produced significant new information, themes, or patterns related to the phenomenon under study. The concept of *data saturation* is now regarded as an important

indicator for ensuring the depth, credibility, and quality of qualitative research, particularly in phenomenological studies focused on exploring individuals' lived experiences. All interview results were recorded with the informants' consent and subsequently transcribed to facilitate the data-analysis process. The use of in-depth interview techniques was expected to produce a comprehensive picture of Generation Z's experience of *financial resilience* in Gresik Regency in facing various financial pressures and uncertainties.

Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the main instrument (*key instrument*), directly involved in the process of collecting, interpreting, and making meaning of the data obtained from informants. This role allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and social context underlying the phenomenon under study. The concept of *researcher as instrument* asserts that the researcher's characteristics, experience, and position can influence both the data-collection and data-interpretation processes, making researcher reflexivity an important aspect of maintaining the quality of qualitative research (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). To support this role, the researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide as a supporting instrument, covering key question areas including informants' experiences in facing economic pressure, the financial management strategies they applied, the sources of social and financial support they utilized, their level of confidence in managing finances, and the meaning of financial resilience from the informants' own perspective. In addition to the interview guide, the researcher also used a voice recorder and field notes to document nonverbal information and situational context that emerged during the data-collection process.

Data Trustworthiness

To maintain the trustworthiness and credibility of the data, this study used the technique of *member checking*, namely the process of confirming the researcher's interpretation with informants to ensure that the meanings and experiences interpreted by the researcher align with what informants actually intended to convey. This technique allows informants to provide clarification, correction, or confirmation of the interpretations developed by the researcher, thereby increasing the credibility and accuracy of the research findings. In qualitative research, *member checking* is regarded as an important strategy for ensuring that research results accurately represent participants' experiences and perspectives (Erdmann & Potthoff, 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2024).

In addition, the researcher also applied a *peer debriefing* procedure, namely discussing the research process and findings with other parties not directly involved in the study to obtain an external perspective that could help identify potential bias in the data-interpretation process. In qualitative research, *member checking* and *peer debriefing* are considered effective strategies for enhancing the credibility of findings, as they allow the researcher to verify interpretations and gain input from different points of view on the data-analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Through the application of both strategies, this study sought to ensure that the resulting interpretations genuinely represent informants' experiences accurately, rather than being merely a subjective interpretation from the researcher's point of view.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using the thematic analysis technique further developed by Braun and Clarke (2021), which consists of six main stages. The first stage is familiarization with the data as a whole, through transcription and repeated reading of the interview results. The second stage is initial coding of data relevant to the research questions. The third stage is grouping codes into initial themes representing patterns in informants' experiences (*generating initial themes*). The fourth stage is reviewing and refining themes by comparing them again against the original data to ensure their appropriateness (*reviewing and developing themes*). The fifth stage is the final definition and naming of themes (*refining, defining, and naming themes*), and the sixth stage is the writing up of the analysis results in the form of a coherent narrative supported by quotations from informants to reinforce the interpretation of the research findings (*writing up*).

The analysis process was carried out iteratively between the field data and the theoretical framework used, while ensuring that the resulting interpretations remain rooted in the experiences and meanings that informants themselves attached to the phenomena they directly experienced. In phenomenological research, theory functions as an interpretive lens to help understand participants' experiences, rather than as a rigid category that determines the direction of analysis from the outset of

the research process (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). The themes that emerged were then linked to the conceptual framework of *financial resilience* developed in the literature review section—namely the dimensions of financial buffer capacity, financial management capability, the psychological dimension, and the socio-structural dimension—so that the research findings could contextually explain how these four dimensions manifest in the real-life experiences of young people.

Research Ethics

This study observed the principles of qualitative research ethics as emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2024), given that it involved exploring informants' personal experiences related to sensitive financial conditions. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher explained the study's purpose and obtained *informed consent* from each informant. Informants' identities were kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms in reporting the research results, and all data collected were used solely for academic purposes. Informants were also given the right to decline to answer certain questions or to stop the interview at any time they felt uncomfortable, as a form of respect for informants' autonomy and psychological comfort throughout the research process.

Research Procedure

Overall, this study was carried out through four main stages. The first stage was preparation, which included developing the interview guide based on the established theoretical framework and identifying prospective informants according to the specified criteria. The second stage was data collection, carried out through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation review of selected informants until data saturation was reached (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Yang et al., 2022). The third stage was data analysis, carried out through coding and theme development following the thematic-analysis stages developed by Braun and Clarke (2021), accompanied by a process of member checking and peer debriefing to maintain the credibility of the findings (González-Salgado et al., 2024). The fourth stage was report writing, namely presenting the analysis results in the form of a thematic narrative describing the experiences, strategies, and meaning of *financial resilience* for young people, while relating them back to the theoretical framework developed in the literature review section, so that this study is expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions to the study of young people's financial resilience.

4. Results and Discussion

Characteristics of Research Informants

The data-collection process in this study involved eleven Generation Z informants residing in Gresik Regency who met the purposive-sampling criteria established in the methods section, namely being aged 21–26 years, having an independent source of income, having experienced financial pressure or shocks, and being willing to openly share their financial experiences. This number of informants met the planned minimum number for the study. During the interview process, the researcher no longer found significant new themes or patterns of experience after the interviews with the tenth and eleventh informants, indicating that *data saturation* had been reached and that the data obtained were considered adequate to describe the essence of the *financial resilience* phenomenon under study (yanHennink & Kaiser, 2022).

The eleven informants had fairly diverse occupational backgrounds, ranging from factory laborers or production operators, warehouse staff, mechanics, and freelance workers, to students working part-time on campus. This diversity produced a fairly wide range of income levels, from around Rp600,000 to Rp1,000,000 per month among informants with irregular freelance work, up to Rp5,000,000–Rp5,500,000 per month among informants working as technical staff at private companies. Ten of the eleven informants still lived with their parents, while one informant lived independently in a boarding house due to distance from campus. The characteristics of the informants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants

Informant Code	Age	Occupation / Status	Monthly Income (range)	Living Status
R1	21	Agrotechnology student; shop head and staff at a perfume store	± Rp2,000,000	With parents

R2	22	Industrial Engineering student; factory warehouse staff	± Gresik minimum wage	With parents
R3	21	Kitchen portioning staff, SPPG (Free Nutritious Meal program)	± Rp2,000,000	With parents
R4	21	Warehouseman at a private company	± Rp2,600,000	With parents
R5	22	Accounting student; lab assistant and cooperative finance admin	Rp1,500,000–2,000,000	With parents
R6	21	Factory operator (new); previously a seasonal freelance worker; family breadwinner	Irregular, ± Rp180,000/day	With parents
R7	23	Mechanic at an authorized repair shop	Rp4,000,000–5,000,000	With parents
R8	21	Engineer at a private company; additional income from digital affiliate marketing	Rp5,000,000–5,500,000	With parents
R9	21	Food Technology student; freelance worker (assessor and courier)	Rp600,000–1,000,000	Boarding house
R10	23	Staffing employee at a logistics company; studying while working	± Rp3,000,000	With parents
R11	21	Financial Management student; part-time work in a culinary business	Rp2,000,000–3,500,000	With parents

Source(s): Authors' own creation

Based on the results of the thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2021) stages, five main themes were identified reflecting the dimensions of *financial resilience* developed in the literature review, namely: (1) *financial buffer capacity*, (2) financial management capability, (3) the psychological dimension, or *financial self-efficacy*, (4) the socio-structural dimension, and (5) the temporal-adaptive dimension, or learning from experiences of financial shocks. These five themes are described and discussed in the following section.

The Thematic Analysis Process: From Coding to Themes

Before describing these five themes, this section first presents an audit trail of the thematic-analysis process to show how the final themes were formed from the raw data, following the six stages of Braun and Clarke (2021) explained in the Data Analysis Technique section. During the familiarization stage, all interview transcripts from the eleven informants were read and re-listened to repeatedly to gain a thorough understanding of the context and nuances of each experience shared. During the initial coding stage, each statement relevant to the phenomenon of *financial resilience* was assigned an open code representing its specific meaning, without being forced into a predetermined category. Table 2 presents an example of this initial coding process, drawn from quotations representing the variety of experiences among the eleven informants.

Table 2. Example of the Initial Coding Process (Familiarization and Initial Coding Stages)

Informant	Quotation / Data Description	Initial Code
R1	*"I separate the money right away, so I split it up: this is separate, this is separate, this is separate."*	Mental budgeting without record-keeping
R1	*"I don't have an emergency fund right now. Sometimes my parents help."*	Absence of an emergency fund; dependence on parents
R1	*"I don't know about financial literacy… [but I'm] very confident, sure of myself."*	High self-efficacy despite low literacy
R1	*"Not from friends, [I'm] afraid of being a burden."*	Reluctance to ask peers for help
R2	*Sets aside Rp100,000–200,000 per month for an emergency fund*	Regular emergency-fund allocation
R2	*"I'm interested in using a spreadsheet… but I'm still looking for the right tutorial."*	Intention to use financial technology not yet realized
R2	*"If I'm having money trouble, I can ask them [my parents] for help."*	Family as a source of emergency assistance

R3	*"Never go without emergency money, because it's hard when you don't have any."*	Learning after job loss
R3	*Admits "not understanding" financial literacy yet feeling "very confident"*	Paradox of self-efficacy versus formal literacy
R4	*"They tried to teach me, but it just went in one ear and out the other."*	Family financial teaching not internalized
R4	*Still vulnerable to temptations to spend on socializing despite setting a weekly limit*	Conditional and fragile self-efficacy
R5	*"I definitely keep records, so I can see the bigger picture… usually in Excel."*	Formal, consistent financial record-keeping
R5	*"What has helped me most is really just myself."*	Full independence without others' assistance
R6	*"I'm not sure right now, and I'm usually helped by my mother."*	Self-doubt accompanied by family dependence
R6	*"I think it's like gambling, and I'm afraid of losing, so I play it safe."*	Avoidance of risky financial instruments
R6	*"It's been unstable from back then until now."*	Repeated failure of adaptive learning
R7	*Not interested in gold/stocks ("haven't had the chance"); has never gone into debt*	Independent management capability without formal records
R8	*Once went "without holding any money at all" for two months while unemployed*	Turning point in learning from a period of unemployment
R8	*Has two income sources and three types of asset storage*	Diversification of resources after a crisis
R9	*Small emergency fund often depleted due to irregular freelance income*	Vulnerability of buffer capacity with unstable income
R9	*Older sibling cited as the most helpful person during hardship*	Sibling as an alternative safety net
R10	*"I control it with a two-ATM system."*	Structural strategy of separating accounts
R11	*Sets aside Rp10,000 every day for an emergency fund, "no matter how hard, I can still set something aside"*	Daily discipline in setting aside emergency funds
R11	*Has invested in Antam gold since high school due to a bad family experience with stocks*	Diversification into non-cash assets based on family experience
R11	*Sets aside 2.5% for charity before other allocations from every income received*	Percentage-based income-allocation system

Source(s): Authors' own creation

After the initial coding of all transcripts was completed, the *generating initial themes* stage proceeded by grouping codes with related meanings into candidate themes. During the *reviewing themes* stage, each candidate theme was reviewed against the raw data to ensure that all the codes it encompassed genuinely represented a consistent pattern, while also checking for any overlapping codes between candidate themes or codes that needed to be separated into new candidates. Through this iterative process, five candidate themes were ultimately retained because they consistently appeared across most informants' transcripts. During the *defining and naming themes* stage, these five candidate themes were given final names and linked to the dimensions of *financial resilience* and the relevant theoretical perspectives, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mapping of Candidate Themes into Final Themes (Generating, Reviewing, and Naming Themes Stages)

Related Codes	Final Theme	Financial Resilience Dimension	Theoretical Perspective

Emergency-fund allocation and absence; diversification into gold; avoidance of risky instruments; vulnerability with unstable income	Financial Buffer Capacity: Variation in Awareness and Limited Reserve Resources	Financial buffer capacity	Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989)
Mental budgeting; formal record-keeping; percentage-allocation system; account separation; independent management capability without record-keeping	Financial Management Capability: Intuitive Budgeting and Account Separation	Financial management capability	Financial Capability Theory (Sherraden, 2013)
High self-efficacy despite low literacy; conditional/fragile self-efficacy; self-doubt accompanied by dependence	Financial Self-Efficacy: Self-Confidence Amid Limited Formal Literacy	Psychological dimension	Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)
Family/sibling as a source of help; reluctance to ask friends for help; full independence; family financial teaching not internalized; unrealized intention to use technology	Socio-Structural Dimension: Family as the Primary Safety Net and Limited Access to Financial Technology	Socio-structural dimension	Life Course Theory – *linked lives* (Elder, 1998)
Turning point from unemployment; learning after job loss; repeated learning failure; structural strategies born from past mistakes	Adaptive Learning from Experiences of Financial Shocks	Temporal-adaptive dimension	Life Course Theory – historical time (Elder, 1998); *loss spiral* (Hobfoll, 1989)

Source(s): Authors' own creation

These five final themes were then written up and narrated in depth in the *writing up* stage, as presented in the following discussion, supported by verbatim quotations from informants to ensure that the resulting interpretation remains rooted in informants' own experiences, rather than solely in predetermined theoretical categories.

Results of the Data-Trustworthiness Test

The results of *member checking* show that all informants stated that the researcher's interpretations were consistent with their own experiences and views regarding efforts to build *financial resilience* amid uncertain economic conditions. All the themes and interpretations developed by the researcher were considered to accurately represent informants' experiences, and no substantive corrections or changes to the research results were identified. Meanwhile, the results of *peer debriefing* show that the coding, theme-grouping, and interpretation processes carried out were consistent with the empirical data obtained from informants and relevant to the theoretical framework used in the study. The input obtained through this process related only to editorial refinement and sharpening of the interpretation of the research findings.

Financial Buffer Capacity: Variation in Awareness and Limited Reserve Resources

The findings show fairly sharp variation among informants in terms of financial buffer capacity, consistent with the principle of Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which emphasizes that individuals consistently strive to acquire and protect resources in order to cushion the impact of shocks. Some informants had consciously and systematically separated their emergency fund from their regular savings. R11, for example, consistently set aside Rp10,000 every day specifically for an emergency fund, regardless of their financial condition at the time*: "There are days when it feels hard to set money aside for savings. But at that time I still forced myself, I still set it aside, two thousand or whatever amount, no matter how hard it was, I could still set something aside"* (R11, 21 years old). A similar pattern was seen in R10, who used a two-account system to ensure that the emergency fund was not mixed with money for daily needs, and in R2, who regularly set aside Rp100,000–Rp200,000 each month for an emergency fund.

Conversely, several other informants had not yet developed adequate buffer capacity. R1 admitted that all of their savings were used up for tuition (UKT) payments, meaning they had never

truly set aside an emergency fund*: "There's no emergency fund right now. It's just that in an emergency or urgent situation, sometimes my parents help"* (R1, 21 years old). An even more vulnerable condition was experienced by R6, who became the family breadwinner after their parents' separation and reported that their emergency fund was *"still there a little, but keeps shrinking"* due to unstable employment; R6 even reported having once been unable to afford to buy food. This pattern illustrates the *loss spiral* phenomenon described by Hobfoll (1989), namely a condition in which a scarcity of initial resources makes it more difficult for individuals to accumulate new resources, as also reflected in the findings of Sun Life Indonesia (2025) that individuals without emergency-fund reserves tend to be more vulnerable to prolonged financial pressure.

In terms of how resources are stored, the majority of informants (nine of eleven) kept their savings in cash in bank accounts as a short-term instrument. A small number of informants had begun diversifying their financial buffer into non-cash assets, particularly gold, as a long-term value-protection strategy. R11 has consistently invested in physical Antam gold since high school, citing more predictable risk compared to stocks: *"With stocks there's no physical form to it… at the time, my family, my relatives, they once played the stock market, put in 50 million. Then suddenly the stock price crashed, and of course they lost money"* (R11, 21 years old). R5 and R9 also kept part of their savings in gold, albeit in limited amounts. Meanwhile, higher-risk investment instruments such as stocks and cryptocurrency were consistently avoided by almost all informants, citing reasons ranging from limited time to study fundamental analysis (R5), a bad family experience (R11), to the perception that such instruments resemble gambling, as expressed by R6*: "I think it's like gambling, and I'm afraid of losing, so I play it safe."* This pattern shows that young people's resource-accumulation strategies in Gresik remain heavily oriented toward conventional, low-risk instruments, consistent with the findings of Sun Life Indonesia (2025) that young people's financial orientation remains dominated by meeting short-term needs rather than more complex long-term financial planning.

Financial Management Capability: Intuitive Budgeting and Account Separation

The second theme emerging from the data analysis relates to financial management capability, which, according to Financial Capability Theory (Sherraden, 2013), is one of the important prerequisites for the formation of *financial resilience*, alongside literacy and access. An interesting finding of this study is that the majority of informants (eight of eleven) budgeted mentally, or *"in their head,"* without written records, yet still displayed fairly structured management behavior. R1 explained how they divided their salary into certain allocations without recording it: *"Oh, that's only in my head. As for records, no, I don't write down my expenses. It's just that I separate the money right away, so I split it up: this is separate, this is separate, this is separate, like that"* (R1, 21 years old). A similar pattern was expressed by R7, R6, and R9, who confirmed that income allocation was based on estimation and habit rather than systematic record-keeping.

A small number of other informants, by contrast, had adopted a more formal record-keeping system. R5, an accounting student who also works as a cooperative finance admin, consistently records their monthly budget using Excel: *"I definitely keep records, so I can see the bigger picture… usually in Excel"* (R5, 22 years old). R11 had also previously kept similar records, although they admitted that their consistency had declined due to a busy schedule of coursework and work: *"I think I once itemized my own needs, income and expenses, in Excel. It's just that with how busy things got… I became less consistent"* (R11, 21 years old). R8 had also tried recording their expenses in writing early in their employment, but gradually reverted to mental calculation due to inconsistency. These patterns show that time constraints and the burden of a dual study–work schedule are the main structural obstacles to maintaining consistent financial record-keeping practices, even when informants are aware of its importance.

Another notable strategy is the separation of accounts or financial instruments as a self-control mechanism. R10 uses a two-ATM system, one without mobile-banking access specifically for savings so as not to be easily tempted to spend it, and another for daily transactions: *"I control it with a two-ATM system at once. The first one, I don't use mobile ATM access for it I use that one to hold my savings. The other one has mobile ATM access, and I use that one for daily needs"* (R10, 23 years old). R11 applies a percentage-based allocation system for each salary received, setting aside 2.5% for zakat/charity before allocating the remainder for their parents, gold investment, and living expenses. This kind of capability reinforces Sherraden's (2013) view that financial knowledge without being translated into concrete behavior will not be sufficient to form *financial resilience*; most informants in

this study had in fact developed effective *financial behavior* through experience, even though it was not always grounded in formal *financial literacy*.

One recurring cognitive pattern that appeared in nearly all interviews is informants' ability to distinguish between needs and wants as a basis for making major spending decisions. R11 stated this explicitly: *"There's a difference, you know, between wants and needs. Wants and needs are two different things. If it's a need, it's primary—it really has to be met right away. But if it's a want, maybe it can be postponed"* (R11, 21 years old). The same principle was expressed by R1, R5, and R2 when explaining their considerations before making large purchases such as a mobile phone or motorcycle. This mindset is a concrete manifestation of financial management capability formed through experience rather than formal education, and serves as an important buffer that prevents impulsive spending amid limited income.

Financial Self-Efficacy: Self-Confidence Amid Limited Formal Literacy

One of the most notable findings of this study is the paradox between low formal financial literacy and, conversely, high financial self-efficacy among the majority of informants. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), *self-efficacy* is formed primarily through mastery experience—that is, success experiences an individual gains directly, not merely through theoretical knowledge. This phenomenon is clearly illustrated by R1, who openly admitted having no familiarity whatsoever with the term *"financial literacy,"* yet still expressed a high level of confidence in managing their own finances*: "Oh, I don't know about financial literacy… [I'm] very confident. Sure of myself*" (R1, 21 years old). A similar pattern was seen in R3, who admitted *"not understanding"* financial literacy but still felt *"very confident*" managing their own money, as well as in R7 and R9, who displayed moderate to high levels of confidence despite acknowledging their limited formal knowledge.

This source of self-confidence consistently stemmed from long experience of working and managing their own money from a young age, rather than from formal education or training. R1, for instance, asserted that their ability to manage finances was *"purely learned from experience… from those experiences I was able to learn,"* including through financial failures they had previously experienced. This is consistent with Bandura's (1986) principle that mastery experience—even experience that includes failure—can still strengthen self-efficacy, as long as the individual succeeds in extracting learning from it. In line with this, Kumar and Sandhu (2024) found that *financial self-efficacy* plays an important role in shaping *financial resilience* because it drives individuals to be more proactive and quicker to adapt to economic pressure; this pattern is evident in R8, who, after experiencing two months of unemployment with no income, is now highly confident and disciplined in managing two income sources simultaneously.

Nevertheless, not all informants displayed a high level of self-efficacy. R6, who is in the most financially vulnerable condition as the family breadwinner with unstable income, explicitly expressed self-doubt*: "I'm not sure right now, and I'm usually helped by my mother"* (R6, 21 years old). Similarly, R4 admitted that their confidence was conditional and fragile, as they remain vulnerable to peer pressure to spend on socializing, even after setting a weekly spending limit. This variation shows that *financial self-efficacy* among young people is not formed uniformly, but is strongly influenced by the stability of each individual's personal economic condition and life experience, as also emphasized by Garcia-Santillan et al. (2026), who note that the level of financial self-efficacy is influenced by demographic characteristics and life experiences that are not uniform across individuals.

The Socio-Structural Dimension: Family as the Primary Safety Net and Limited Access to Financial Technology

The socio-structural dimension in this study is revealed through two main patterns: the role of family as a source of financial support and financial learning, and the still-low level of digital financial technology use. On the first aspect, family—particularly parents—consistently emerged as the party most frequently helping informants when facing financial difficulties. Nine of the eleven informants named their parents or an older sibling as their primary source of assistance during emergencies, as expressed by R2: *"Mostly my parents, because we're not far from them—I live at my parents' house too, so if I'm having money trouble, I can ask them for help"* (R2, 22 years old). This pattern aligns with the principle of *linked lives* in Life Course Theory (Elder, 1998), which explains that individuals' lives, including in the financial aspect, are consistently connected to the social networks around them, particularly family.

Interestingly, most informants were reluctant to ask peers for help, even when they had close friendships. R1 stated firmly, *"Not from friends. I never go to friends because I'm afraid of being a burden"* (R1, 21 years old), while R4 and R7 gave similar answers. This reluctance suggests a social norm among young people in Gresik that views financial assistance between peers as something that could potentially burden social relationships, making family the most reliable financial safety net. On the other hand, some informants displayed full independence without relying on assistance from any party, such as R7 and R10, who stated that no one helped them during financial difficulty, and R5, who explicitly identified themselves as the party who helped the most: *"What has helped me most is really just myself."*

Relatedly, family also plays an important role as a source of financial-behavior learning, although its intensity varies among informants. R5, R8, R11, and R10 explicitly stated that family, particularly parents with occupational backgrounds related to finance or accounting, played a major role in shaping their money-management habits from childhood. R5, for example, described how their father taught them the habit of saving from an early age through the daily setting-aside of pocket money. In contrast, several other informants, such as R1, R7, and R4, stated that they learned to manage finances on their own, as their families only reminded them to be frugal without providing concrete guidance, as R4 expressed: *"They tried to teach me, but you know how it is it just went in one ear and out the other."* This variation reinforces Kumar and Sandhu's (2024) argument regarding the importance of strengthening capability through concrete mentoring, rather than mere verbal advice, in shaping young people's *financial resilience*.

In terms of access to financial services and technology, the findings show that the use of digital financial-management applications remains very low among informants, even though awareness of their benefits is beginning to grow. Of the eleven informants, only R5 regularly used an application (Excel) to record their finances, while the majority managed their finances purely mentally. Several informants, such as R2 and R9, expressed interest in beginning to use financial record-keeping applications or spreadsheets, but had not yet done so due to various obstacles, particularly limited time: "*I saw it on social media and became interested in using a spreadsheet… but right now I still haven't used it, I'm still looking for the right tutorial"* (R2, 22 years old). This gap between intention and realization shows that time constraints resulting from the dual burden of studying and working are a significant structural obstacle to the use of digital financial technology; unlike the findings of Ariana et al. (2024), which emphasize the significant role of digital financial technology use in strengthening *financial resilience*, in the context of young working students in Gresik, this potential appears not yet optimally utilized.

Adaptive Learning from Experiences of Financial Shocks

The fifth theme to emerge from the data analysis is the temporal-adaptive dimension, namely informants' ability to turn previous experiences of financial shocks into a basis for learning in facing subsequent economic pressure, as emphasized by Rahayu et al. (2024). Nearly all informants displayed a similar pattern: financial shocks experienced—whether job loss, poor money management, or impulsive spending—became a turning point that drove a shift toward more adaptive financial behavior. R3, who had lost their job due to their workplace's temporary closure and experienced hardship to the point of "*not being able to go out because there was no money*," drew a very specific lesson from that experience: "*Never go without emergency money, because it's hard when you don't have any*" (R3, 21 years old).

A similar pattern of adaptive learning was seen in R10, who had previously mixed savings with money for daily needs, causing their savings to frequently run out, and who then adapted a two-account system as a structural solution to that mistake. R8, who had experienced two months of unemployment with no income at all, is now one of the informants with the highest level of financial discipline, having two income sources and three methods of asset storage. R8 explicitly reflected on this learning: "*The biggest lesson when I was going through financial hardship was that when I felt like I was at rock bottom, I learned that people actually help each other. And I also learned how to manage my finances*" (R8, 21 years old). These patterns show that the temporal-adaptive dimension is not merely a theoretical concept, but a real mechanism underlying young people's shift in financial behavior after experiencing a shock, consistent with the view that *financial resilience* is a dynamic process rather than a static condition (Kumar & Sandhu, 2024).

Nevertheless, not all informants succeeded in translating their experience of shocks into significant behavioral improvement. R6, who at the time of the interview remained in a vulnerable

financial condition, admitted having not yet been able to break free from a recurring pattern of hardship: "*I don't really know, because I've never really experienced [stability]—it's been unstable from back then until now*" (R6, 21 years old). Their situation—having to bear the burden of being the family breadwinner with unstable employment—shows that an individual's capacity for adaptive learning is also constrained by the availability of structural resources around them; without sufficient space and resources to experiment with new strategies, repeated experiences of financial hardship risk becoming a continuing *loss spiral* (Hobfoll, 1989), rather than a source of learning as the temporal-adaptive dimension would suggest.

Integrated Discussion: Financial Resilience among Generation Z in Gresik through a Multi-Theory Lens

Overall, the findings of this study show that the *financial resilience* of Generation Z in Gresik Regency is formed through the dynamic interaction of the four theoretical perspectives that serve as this study's analytical framework. Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) consistently explains informants' basic motive for protecting their financial resources, whether through separating emergency funds, diversifying into gold assets, or avoiding high-risk instruments such as stocks and cryptocurrency. However, this study also found that the capacity to protect resources in this way is highly dependent on the availability of income surplus; informants with unstable income or heavy family responsibilities, such as R6 and R9, find it structurally more difficult to accumulate buffer resources, making them more vulnerable to becoming trapped in a *loss spiral*, as explained by Hobfoll (1989).

In terms of capability, this study's findings add important nuance to Financial Capability Theory (Sherraden, 2013). Whereas previous quantitative research (Hamid et al., 2023; Ariana et al., 2024) generally measures *financial literacy* as a formal variable assessed through standardized instruments, this study finds that most informants actually possess fairly good financial management capability at the behavioral level, even while admitting they do not formally understand the concept of "*financial literacy*." This capability was formed through informal learning processes and direct experience, rather than through formal financial education, thereby enriching Sherraden's (2013) understanding that *financial behavior* can form independently as an adaptive response to life pressures, without always being preceded by adequate formal literacy.

This phenomenon, in turn, is closely related to the findings on *financial self-efficacy* within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). The paradox between low formal literacy and high self-confidence found in this study confirms and extends the findings of Kumar and Sandhu (2024), showing in more detail that mastery experience—including experiences of financial failure or job loss actually serves as the primary source of financial self-efficacy formation among young working people in Gresik, even more so than theoretical knowledge. This pattern aligns with one of the four sources of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura, namely direct mastery experience, which in the context of this study largely stems from experiences of overcoming hardship rather than from conditions that always run smoothly.

The perspective of Life Course Theory (Elder, 1998) helps explain why these patterns emerge as distinctive to this generation. The principle of *historical time and place* is reflected in the way informants relate their financial hardship to the context of rising prices of basic necessities and recurring economic uncertainty repeatedly mentioned (R11, R8), in line with the IMF's (2026) and World Bank's (2026) projections regarding the global economic slowdown. The principle of *linked lives* is clearly reflected in the central role of family as a safety net and source of learning, while the principle of *human agency* is evident in informants' independence and initiative in developing their own financial strategies, even without adequate formal mentoring.

Thus, *financial resilience* among Generation Z in Gresik Regency cannot be understood merely as a static end result, but rather as an ongoing process shaped by the interaction between resource-protection efforts, behavioral capability that grows from experience, self-confidence formed through learning from failure, and the socio-historical context of a generation facing economic uncertainty distinctive to their time. These findings complement the understanding that has thus far been dominated by quantitative approaches (Hamid et al., 2023; Kumar & Sandhu, 2024; Ariana et al., 2024), by describing in greater depth the processes and mechanisms underlying relationships between variables that have previously only been measured statistically, while also affirming that young people's *financial resilience* is a highly contextual construct rooted in specific individual life experiences.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that the *financial resilience* of Generation Z in Gresik Regency is formed through a dynamic and multidimensional process, rather than a mere static end result. Based on the experiences of eleven informants, five interrelated main themes were identified: financial buffer capacity, which varies according to the availability of income surplus; financial management capability, which is largely formed intuitively through experience rather than formal record-keeping; high *financial self-efficacy* despite low formal financial literacy, stemming from mastery experience, including experiences of failure; the socio-structural dimension, in which family serves as the primary safety net while the use of digital financial technology remains minimal; and adaptive learning, whereby financial shocks become a turning point for behavioral change, even though not all informants succeeded in breaking free from recurring patterns of vulnerability.

Theoretically, this study enriches the understanding of *financial resilience* by showing how Conservation of Resources Theory, Financial Capability Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Life Course Theory are interwoven within the lived experience of young people, while complementing previous quantitative studies that have thus far dominated the field, by offering a deeper picture of the underlying processes and mechanisms. Practically, these findings indicate the need for interventions that focus not only on improving formal financial literacy, but also on strengthening concrete mentoring, particularly for young people with unstable income or heavy family responsibilities, so that their buffer capacity and financial management capability can develop more evenly.

This study has several limitations, including a scope of informants limited to a single region (Gresik Regency), meaning the findings cannot be broadly generalized, as well as a cross-sectional design that has not been able to capture changes in *financial resilience* over time. Future research is recommended to expand the geographic and background scope of informants, and to consider a longitudinal design in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of young people's *financial resilience* amid ongoing economic change.

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