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Examining the Influence of the FIRE (Financial Independence, Retire Early) Movement on Youth Financial Planning and Retirement Aspirations

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ABSTRACT :

This study investigates how key elements of the Financial Independence, Retire Early (FIRE) movement—namely financial independence, early retirement intentions, and investment strategies—influence the retirement aspirations of young adults in India. A cross-sectional survey was administered to a diverse sample of 384 Indian youth, drawing on established scales to assess respondents' engagement with FIRE principles, their sense of financial autonomy, clarity of retirement goals, and disciplined investing behaviors. Data analyzed via multiple regression techniques revealed that genuine financial autonomy, well-defined early retirement goals, and consistent investment practices each make a significant contribution to strengthening retirement aspirations, whereas mere awareness of various FIRE variants alone does not independently enhance those intentions. By empirically validating these multidimensional aspects of the FIRE movement among emerging adults, the research underscores the need to combine cognitive empowerment with practical financial behaviors and offers actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and financial practitioners.

Keywords: Wealth Accumulation Behavior, Retirement Paradigm Shift, Financial Self-Efficacy, and Retirement Intentionality.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic terrain of contemporary finance, the pursuit of *Financial Independence and Early Retirement (FIRE)* is increasingly viewed not just as a goal, but as a *lifetime opportunity*. At its core, FIRE offers individuals—particularly younger generations—a radical departure from conventional financial trajectories. Instead of adhering to the traditional blueprint of working until one's sixties, the FIRE movement promotes aggressive saving, strategic investing, and lifestyle moderation to achieve financial autonomy decades earlier. For the youth of today, inundated by student debt, job market volatility, and an evolving gig economy, FIRE represents a beacon of hope—an opportunity to reclaim time, energy, and agency over one's life.

The allure of FIRE lies in its promise of *freedom*—freedom from the anxieties of pay check-to-pay check living, freedom to pursue passions without financial constraints, and freedom to shape life around personal values rather than occupational obligations. As Blau and Paprocki (2022) argue in their work *"Financial Independence: A Mighty Stretch but beneficial,"* attaining financial independence brings peace of mind and the ability to retire on one's own terms. They frame FIRE not as a rigid doctrine but as a **"***foundational guidance on strategic financial planning and intentional living.***"**

This opportunity is especially pertinent to younger individuals who, thanks to technology, have unprecedented access to investment platforms, online financial literacy resources, and global FIRE communities. These elements empower them to reimagine retirement—not as an end-of-life reward but as a mid-life pivot.

Despite its appeal, the FIRE movement introduces complexities and disparities, particularly in the context of *youth financial planning and retirement aspirations*. While the movement emphasizes autonomy, it often requires a level of financial literacy, income stability, and long-term vision that many young people may lack.

The study by Janetius and Singh (2023), titled *"Work, Retirement and Financial Independence: Future Perspective of Youth in India,"* underscores this issue. Their qualitative research revealed that many Indian youths face *financial insecurity post-retirement due to limited planning and unrealistic financial expectations*. The research calls for *proactive financial literacy education and accessible planning tools* tailored to the realities of today's youth.

Compounding the issue is the inherent *inequality in access*—those from marginalized or lower-income backgrounds may find it substantially harder to meet the savings rates or investment requirements typical of FIRE proponents. Moreover, the glorification of extreme frugality or early retirement may not resonate with or be feasible for everyone, risking disillusionment or financial missteps. The FIRE movement is not a monolith; it spans across various interpretations and adaptations, including "Lean FIRE" (minimalist living), "Fat FIRE" (comfortable and higher-spending retirement), and "Barista FIRE" (partial financial independence supplemented with part-time work). Each variation offers different entry points for youth, depending on personal goals, risk tolerance, and financial starting points.

A holistic view reveals that FIRE is as much a *sociocultural movement* as it is a financial strategy. Khan and Pandey (2022), in their study *"Exploring FIRE for Financial Independence Retirement Early among Indian Millennials,"* identify two primary motivators for the youth adopting FIRE: the desire to escape the *rat race* and the aspiration to achieve *lifestyle freedom*. Their conceptual model outlines these motivational factors and links them to changing attitudes toward wealth and success.

Moreover, Avendaño-Miranda (2022) in *"The Five Dimensions of Financial Independence"* expands the conversation by framing FIRE through a multidimensional lens—spanning not only economic but also psychological and emotional well-being. His study emphasizes how FIRE can influence individual priorities and redefine success among youth. However, he notes a gap in demographic specificity, leaving the generalizability of findings in question.

Interestingly, FIRE is also penetrating traditionally stable and demanding professions. Moriarity and Kalia (2022), in *"Fighting Burnout with FIRE,"* illustrate how even high-income professionals like radiologists are turning to FIRE principles to mitigate burnout and regain control of their schedules. Their research supports the notion that *FIRE is not just for the financially distressed—but also for the time-constrained and emotionally exhausted.*

Despite the growing traction of the FIRE (Financial Independence, Retire Early) movement among younger generations, considerable gaps persist in the academic literature—particularly in relation to youth-specific financial behavior, retirement aspirations, and structural enablers or barriers. Existing studies largely focus on conceptual frameworks or anecdotal insights, with limited empirical validation and demographic representation. These gaps directly align with the key research objectives identified in this study: Paragraphs

Most studies focus on theory or high-income adults, lacking empirical data on how FIRE affects youth saving and spending habits. There is limited research on how FIRE reshapes young people's retirement timelines and goals. Few studies explore the real-world challenges youth face in adopting FIRE, such as income inequality, debt, and lack of financial education. Existing literature rarely offers practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to support youth financial planning through FIRE principles.

Avendaño-Miranda (2022) found that financial autonomy "interplays with self-efficacy and identity formation," highlighting why youth need both cognitive and emotional skill-building in financial literacy programs. Blau & Paprocki (2022) describe FIRE as "foundational guidance on strategic financial planning and intentional living," underscoring educators' role in framing retirement as a proactive life pivot. Janetius & Singh (2023) revealed that many Indian youths "lacked structured saving or investing plans," pointing policymakers toward the need for accessible planning tools and curricula. Khan & Pandey (2022) identify the "desire to escape the rat race" as a primary motivator, offering students clear retirement goal-setting insights. Moriarity & Kalia (2022) demonstrate that FIRE principles can mitigate professional burnout, guiding employers and HR to integrate financial-wellness workshops into workplace programs.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the role of financial literacy in adopting FIRE strategies.
2. To examine the influence of FIRE principles on youth financial planning behaviors.
3. To analyze the impact of youth engagement with the FIRE movement on their retirement aspirations.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the Financial Independence, Retire Early (FIRE) movement has emerged as a disruptive paradigm in personal finance, encouraging individuals—particularly younger cohorts—to accelerate wealth accumulation, adopt minimalistic lifestyles, and retire far earlier than traditional benchmarks (Blau & Paprocki, 2022). No longer viewed solely as a post-career reward, FIRE is increasingly framed as a comprehensive strategy for attaining autonomy over one's time, mental well-being, and life choices. This reorientation is driven by structural challenges—rising living costs, labor market volatility, and burgeoning student debt—that render conventional retirement planning both remote and unsatisfying for many (Avendaño-Miranda, 2022).

Blau and Paprocki's (2022) foundational exposition, "Financial Independence: A Mighty Stretch but beneficial," posits that FIRE's core tenets—high savings rates, strategic investing, and lifestyle moderation—constitute not merely financial behaviors but a philosophical orientation toward intentional living. While their conceptual analysis persuasively links financial autonomy to psychological benefits such as reduced stress and enhanced decision-making flexibility, the absence of empirical case studies limits the generalizability of their claims across diverse socioeconomic groups.

Expanding the conceptual terrain, Avendaño-Miranda (2022) introduces a *five-dimensional model* of financial independence—economic, behavioral, emotional, psychological, and social—underscoring that true autonomy transcends wealth accumulation alone. By incorporating well-being metrics, Avendaño-Miranda illuminates how financial freedom interplays with self-efficacy and identity formation. However, the model's minimal demographic contextualization highlights a critical gap: the need for empirical validation across youth populations with varied income levels, educational backgrounds, and cultural norms.

The appeal of FIRE also intersects with contemporary workplace dynamics, as illustrated by Moriarity and Kalia (2022) in "Fighting Burnout With FIRE." Focusing on high-income professionals such as radiologists, they document how the movement functions as both a coping mechanism for occupational burnout and a catalyst for redefining career trajectories. Their qualitative insights reveal that even those with substantial earnings seek early financial autonomy to reclaim control over work-life balance. Yet, similar to other early studies, their reliance on anecdotal evidence and absence of large-scale quantitative data leave unanswered questions about the movement's accessibility for younger or lower-income cohorts.

A youth-focused perspective emerges in Janetius and Singh's (2023) qualitative study, "Work, Retirement and Financial Independence: Future Perspective of Youth in India," which probes the alignment between aspiration and preparedness among Indian undergraduates and early-career adults. Participants overwhelmingly expressed enthusiasm for FIRE's promise of flexible retirement but lacked structured saving or investing plans. Many harbored unrealistic expectations—such as retiring with minimal downside risk—and demonstrated gaps in fundamental financial literacy. Although rich in cultural context, the study's limited disclosure of sample size and demographic spread constrains its applicability beyond its immediate setting.

Complementing these insights, Khan and Pandey (2022) examine the *motivational drivers* among Indian millennials in "Exploring FIRE for Financial Independence Retirement Early." Their conceptual model identifies two primary incentives—escaping the "rat race" and achieving lifestyle freedom—which correlate strongly with increased saving behaviors and diversified investment strategies. Yet, their online-survey methodology, lacking detailed demographic breakdowns, underscores the need for more robust sampling and cross-cultural comparisons.

Together, these contributions paint a nuanced portrait of FIRE as both an ideological shift and a set of strategic practices. There is consensus that FIRE offers a compelling alternative to traditional financial life courses, yet barriers persist: income inequality, uneven access to financial education, and sociocultural attitudes toward debt and consumption (Avendaño-Miranda, 2022; Janetius & Singh, 2023). Moreover, the literature disproportionately emphasizes conceptual frameworks and anecdotes, with scant large-scale, demographically representative, or longitudinal studies to assess long-term viability and socio-economic impacts.

A key methodological gap is the predominance of cross-sectional and qualitative designs. Future research should prioritize longitudinal tracking of youth cohorts to evaluate whether early financial independence objectives are met, and at what cost in terms of life satisfaction, mental health, and career development. Additionally, integrating psychometric measures—such as financial self-efficacy and behavioral intention scales—would enrich understanding of the psychological processes underpinning FIRE adoption.

By adopting a narrative review approach, this study synthesizes varied strands of inquiry—spanning conceptual, qualitative, and exploratory research—into a coherent framework that highlights patterns, contradictions, and under-researched dimensions. Addressing these gaps will inform targeted interventions: educational curricula that bolster financial literacy, policy measures to democratize investment access, and employer-led wellness programs that incorporate FIRE principles. Ultimately, a rigorous, interdisciplinary research agenda can delineate not only *whether* FIRE is attainable for today's youth, but *how* it can be pursued equitably and sustainably.

This study employs a narrative literature review, synthesizing diverse theoretical, qualitative, and conceptual research on the FIRE movement without rigid systematic protocols. It integrates thematic insights, identifies methodological and demographic gaps, and frames a future research agenda, making it ideal for exploring emerging, interdisciplinary topics with heterogeneous evidence.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is designed to examine how the *FIRE Movement,* along with its core components—*financial independence, early retirement*, and *investment strategies*—influences youth *retirement aspirations.* The framework suggests that awareness and adoption of FIRE principles foster intentional financial behaviors, such as disciplined saving and strategic investing. These behaviors collectively reshape how young individuals conceptualize and plan for retirement. Specifically, the FIRE Movement provides ideological grounding, financial independence offers autonomy, early retirement redefines traditional timelines, and investment strategies function as enablers of long-term goals, all of which impact the motivation and preparedness for early retirement.

4.1 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

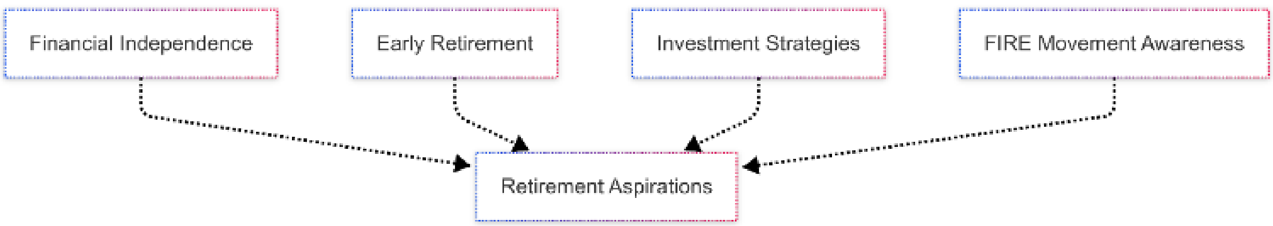

Fig.1. Conceptual Model

(Proposed conceptual model, source: The authors)

4.1.1 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

- H1: *The degree of engagement with the FIRE Movement has a significant positive effect on youth retirement aspirations.*
- H2: *Higher levels of perceived Financial Independence have a significant positive effect on youth retirement aspirations.*
- H3: *Stronger Early Retirement intentions have a significant positive effect on youth retirement aspirations.*
- H4: *More advanced Investment Strategies have a significant positive effect on youth retirement aspirations.*

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive–correlational design is employed.

Profiles youth financial behaviors, levels of FIRE engagement, and retirement aspirations at a single point in time.

Examines the strength and direction of relationships among key variables (e.g., degree of FIRE engagement, perceived financial independence, early-retirement intentions, investment strategies, and retirement aspirations).

5.2 RESEARCH METHOD

A survey-based questionnaire serves as the primary data-gathering instrument. This approach allows efficient collection of standardized data from a large sample and supports statistical testing of the proposed hypotheses.

5.3 AREA OF STUDY

This study was conducted in India, with a geographical scope encompassing both urban and semi-urban centers. The target demographic comprised youth aged 18–35 years, a critical cohort for early financial planning research. Participants included college and university students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Early career professionals working in corporate, startup, and gig-economy roles were also surveyed. This diverse sampling frame ensured the findings reflect varied experiences across educational and employment contexts.

5.4 SAMPLING

The target population comprised Indian youth aged 18–35 years with diverse educational and employment backgrounds, each possessing at least a rudimentary awareness of financial planning or FIRE principles. Respondents were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure inclusion of individuals likely familiar with or having researched the FIRE movement. To broaden participation, snowball referrals were employed, leveraging student and professional networks for wider reach. This combined sampling strategy ensured that the sample reflected both depth of FIRE-related knowledge and diversity Data Collection Tools

The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into six sections covering Retirement Aspirations, FIRE Movement, Financial Independence, Early Retirement Intentions, Investment Strategies, and Demographics. Attitudinal and behavioral constructs were measured using five-point Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), while factual and categorical data were captured with multiple-choice questions. The questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms and disseminated through university and professional mailing lists during February–March 2025. A pilot test involving 20 participants assessed item clarity and estimated completion time. This design ensured comprehensive coverage of both psychological constructs and practical demographic information.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Measures

Multiple measurement items, which were developed from the existing scales of prior studies, were used to measure the constructs in this study. Slight changes in the wording of these items were made to suit the background of this research. A five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) measured the items of this research. The questionnaire was divided into three major parts. The first part captured the demographic information of the respondents, including gender, age, education level, and monthly income. The second part focused on six latent variables relevant to this study: FIRE Movement, Financial Independence, Early Retirement Intentions, Investment Strategies, and Retirement Aspirations. Four measurement items were used to assess FIRE Movement, which included the awareness of FIRE principles and levels of personal adoption. These items were adapted from previous studies such as Blau and Paprocki (2022) and Khan and Pandey (2022). A sample item is “I follow online communities or influencers related to FIRE.”

Five measurement items were developed to capture Financial Independence, aligned with the five dimensions proposed by Avendaño-Miranda (2022): economic, behavioural, emotional, psychological, and social independence. A sample item is “I feel confident in my ability to manage my finances without relying on others.”

Early Retirement Intentions were measured using four items derived from Moriarity and Kalia (2022) and Avendaño-Miranda (2022), reflecting respondents planned retirement age and motivational drivers. A sample item is “I plan to retire earlier than the traditional retirement age.”

Four items were designed to assess Investment Strategies, such as the use of financial instruments, levels of diversification, and risk tolerance. These items were informed by Khan and Pandey (2022) and Janetius and Singh (2023). A sample item is “I regularly invest a portion of my income in long-term assets (stocks, mutual funds, crypto).”

Finally, Retirement Aspirations—the dependent variable of this study—were measured using four items that focused on desired retirement lifestyle, planning behavior, and perceived feasibility. These were adapted from Janetius and Singh (2023) and Avendaño-Miranda (2022). A sample item is “I regularly think about or plan for my ideal retirement lifestyle.” All constructs were tested during a pilot phase involving 20 participants to ensure item clarity, language appropriateness, and estimated completion time.

6.1 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION TABLE

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	191	49.7
Female	193	50.3
Age		
18–20	41	10.7
21–25	178	46.4
26–30	138	35.9
31–35	27	7
Education Level		
Diploma	41	10.7
Graduate	154	46.4
Post Graduate	175	35.9
Ph.D	14	7
Monthly Income		
Below 20,000	58	15.1
20,000 to 50,000	121	31.5
50,000 to 1,00,000	133	34.6
1,00,000 to 2,00,000	63	16.4
Above 2,00,000	9	2.3
Total	384	100

Table.1. Frequency Distribution Table

The sample of 384 Indian youths shows a nearly equal gender split—49.7 % male and 50.3 % female—indicating balanced representation across genders. This parity reduces the risk of gender bias when examining how FIRE-related beliefs and behaviors manifest among young men and women, and it supports the generalizability of findings across both groups.

Age distribution is skewed toward early adults: 46.4 % of respondents are between 21 and 25 years old, followed by 35.9 % aged 26–30. Only 10.7 % fall in the 18–20 bracket and 7.0 % in the 31–35 bracket. This concentration suggests that most participants are in late undergraduate or early career stages—precisely the cohort most likely to be forming long-term financial plans and exploring FIRE principles.

Educational attainment is high: nearly 82 % of respondents hold at least a bachelor's degree (46.4 % graduates, 35.9 % postgraduates), while 10.7 % have diplomas and 7.0 % are at the Ph.D. level. Such a well-educated sample is well suited to studies of financial literacy and complex investment strategies, as higher education often correlates with greater access to financial knowledge and planning tools.

Income levels are diverse but lean toward middle—and upper–middle tiers: 34.6 % earn between ₹50,000 and ₹100,000 per month, and 31.5 % between ₹20,000 and ₹50,000. A further 16.4 % earn ₹100,000–200,000, while the smallest segments earn below ₹20,000 (15.1 %) or above ₹200,000 (2.3 %). This spread ensures that analyses of saving, investing, and retirement aspirations capture a broad range of financial capacities, from those just beginning to build assets to those already in higher-earning brackets.

6.2 MODEL 1

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.915[a]	.836	.835	.49812

a. Predictors: (Constant), Investment_Strategies, FIRE_Movement, Early_Retirement, Financial_Independence

The model's multiple correlation coefficient, *R = 0.915,* indicates an exceptionally strong relationship between the set of four predictors (FIRE Movement, Financial Independence, Early Retirement Intentions, and Investment Strategies) and the dependent variable (Retirement Aspirations). An R value this high suggests that the combined predictors provide a very good level of prediction for how strongly youth plan and aspire toward early retirement.

The *R-squared value of 0.836* (or 83.6%) tells us that these independent variables collectively explain 83.6% of the variance in Retirement Aspirations. In other words, over four-fifths of the differences in young people's retirement goals can be accounted for by their engagement with FIRE principles, their sense of financial independence, their early-retirement intentions, and their investment behaviors.

The *Adjusted R-squared of 0.835* adjusts the R-squared for the number of predictors relative to the sample size, penalizing for any variables that do not add explanatory power. The fact that it remains virtually unchanged from the raw R-squared (dropping only to 83.5%) indicates that all four predictors meaningfully contribute to the model without unnecessarily inflating its explanatory strength.

Finally, the *standard error of the estimate (0.49812)* represents the average distance that the observed Retirement Aspirations scores fall from the regression line. A value of roughly 0.50 on a Likert-based scale suggests reasonably tight clustering of the data around the predicted values, underscoring the precision of the model's predictions.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	480.705	4	120.176	484.337	.000[b]
	Residual	94.040	379	.248		
	Total	574.745	383			

a. Dependent Variable: Retirement_Aspirations

b. Predictors: (Constant), Investment_Strategies, FIRE_Movement, Early_Retirement, Financial_Independence

The ANOVA results indicate that the set of predictors—FIRE Movement, Financial Independence, Early Retirement Intentions, and Investment Strategies—collectively explain a significant amount of variance in Retirement Aspirations. Specifically, the regression model yields $F(4, 379) = 484.34$, $p < .001$, demonstrating that the improvement in prediction afforded by these four variables is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. In practical terms, this large F-ratio confirms that the model provides a good fit to the data and that the combination of FIRE-related factors reliably predicts youth retirement aspirations.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.091	.086		1.062	.289
	FIRE_Movement	.012	.062	.011	.187	.852
	Financial_Independence	.167	.069	.160	2.439	.015
	Early_Retirement	.188	.059	.178	3.188	.002
	Investment_Strategies	.591	.066	.586	8.919	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Retirement_Aspirations

The regression equation predicting *Retirement Aspirations* can be written as:

Predicted Retirement Aspirations = 0.091 + (0.012 × FIRE Movement) + (0.167 × Financial Independence) + (0.188 × Early Retirement) + (0.591 × Investment Strategies)

Here, the constant (0.091) represents the baseline level of retirement aspirations when all predictors are at zero.

FIRE Movement (B = 0.012, p = .852). Holding all other variables constant, each one-point increase in engagement with FIRE principles is associated with only a 0.012-point rise in Retirement Aspirations. However, this effect is not statistically significant ($p > .05$), indicating *Hypothesis 1 is not supported*—awareness or adoption of FIRE alone does not independently predict stronger retirement goals in this sample.

Financial Independence (B = 0.167, p = .015). Controlling for other factors, each additional point in perceived financial independence corresponds to a 0.167-point increase in Retirement Aspirations. This coefficient is significant at the $p < .05$ level, demonstrating that greater economic and psychological autonomy *significantly elevates youth retirement aspirations, thus supporting Hypothesis 2.*

Early Retirement Intentions (B = 0.188, p = .002). When all other variables are held constant, a one-point rise in one's intention to retire early predicts a 0.188-point boost in Retirement Aspirations. With $p < .01$, this effect is robust, confirming that proactive early-retirement planning *significantly heightens retirement aspirations and supports Hypothesis 3.*

Investment Strategies (B = 0.591, p < .001). Finally, each one-point increase in strategic investing behavior yields a substantial 0.591-point increase in Retirement Aspirations, and this relationship is highly significant ($p < .001$). This strong effect indicates that *more advanced investment practices markedly strengthen early-retirement goals,* thereby *supporting Hypothesis 4*

6.3 MODEL 2

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.918[a]	.843	.842	.48913

a. Predictors: (Constant), Investment_Strategies, Early_Retirement, Financial_Independence

The model's multiple correlation coefficient, *R = 0.918*, indicates an exceptionally strong relationship between the three predictors—Investment Strategies, Early Retirement Intentions, and Financial Independence—and the dependent variable, Retirement Aspirations. An R value this high suggests that these factors together provide a very good level of prediction for how strongly youth form and pursue their retirement goals.

The *R-squared value of 0.843 (84.3%)* tells us that the combined predictors explain 84.3% of the variance in Retirement Aspirations. In practical terms, more than four-fifths of the differences in young people's retirement planning and aspirations can be accounted for by their investment behaviors, early-retirement goals, and perceived financial autonomy.

The *Adjusted R-squared of 0.842* corrects for the number of predictors relative to the sample size, providing a more conservative estimate of model fit. Its closeness to the unadjusted R-squared indicates that all three predictors contribute meaningfully to explaining retirement aspirations without inflating the model's explanatory power.

Finally, the *Standard Error of the Estimate (0.48913)* represents the average distance that observed Retirement Aspirations scores fall from the regression line. On a five-point Likert scale, a standard error of approximately 0.49 suggests a tight clustering of actual responses around the predicted values, underscoring the precision and reliability of the model's predictions.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	535.182	3	178.394	745.644	.000[b]
	Residual	99.767	417	.239		
	Total	634.949	420			

a. Dependent Variable: Retirement_Aspirations

b. Predictors: (Constant), Investment_Strategies, Early_Retirement, Financial_Independence

The ANOVA results show that the three predictors—Investment Strategies, Early Retirement Intentions, and Financial Independence—collectively account for a highly significant portion of variance in Retirement Aspirations. Specifically, the regression model produces *F (3, 417) = 745.64, p < .001,* indicating that the improvement in predictive accuracy offered by these variables is extremely unlikely to be due to chance. In practical terms, this very large F-ratio confirms that the combination of strategic investing behaviors, proactive early-retirement planning, and perceived financial autonomy provides an excellent fit to the data and reliably predicts youth retirement aspirations.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.073	.081		.905	.366
	Financial_Independence	.155	.055	.148	2.821	.005
	Early_Retirement	.240	.054	.228	4.474	.000
	Investment_Strategies	.569	.061	.564	9.394	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Retirement_Aspirations

The regression equation predicting *Retirement Aspirations* can be written as:
Predicted Retirement Aspirations = 0.073 + (0.155 × Financial Independence) + (0.240 × Early Retirement) + (0.569 × Investment Strategies)
Here, the constant (0.073) represents the baseline level of retirement aspirations when all predictors are at zero.
Financial Independence (B = 0.155, p = .005). Holding all other variables constant, each one-point increase in perceived financial independence is associated with a 0.155-point rise in Retirement Aspirations. This coefficient is *statistically significant* ($p < .01$), suggesting that individuals who feel more economically and psychologically autonomous tend to have stronger retirement goals. This *supports Hypothesis 1.*
Early Retirement Intentions (B = 0.240, p < .001). Controlling for other factors, each additional point in the desire to retire early predicts a 0.240-point increase in Retirement Aspirations. This effect is *highly significant* ($p < .001$), indicating that youth with a strong early-retirement orientation have notably higher retirement aspirations, thereby *supporting Hypothesis 2.*
Investment Strategies (B = 0.569, p < .001). A one-point rise in strategic investing behavior leads to a substantial 0.569-point increase in Retirement Aspirations when all else is held constant. The relationship is *highly significant* ($p < .001$), demonstrating that adopting sound investment strategies powerfully enhances retirement planning intentions, thus strongly supporting *Hypothesis 3.*

6.3 PARSIMONY

When comparing the two regression models *(Model 1 and Model 2)*, the first thing to note is their overall fit and parsimony. The full model, which includes four predictors (FIRE Movement, Financial Independence, Early-Retirement Intentions, and Investment Strategies), explains *83.6%* of the variance in Retirement Aspirations ($R^2 = .836$, Adj. $R^2 = .835$) with a standard error of estimate of 0.49812 and an F-statistic of 484.337 ($p < .001$). By contrast, the reduced model—omitting the non-significant FIRE Movement variable—actually *increases* the explained variance to *84.3%* ($R^2 = .843$, Adj. $R^2 = .842$), lowers the standard error to 0.48913, and yields an even larger F-statistic of 745.644 ($p < .001$). These shifts indicate that removing a predictor that does not contribute meaningfully to the equation can sharpen the model's explanatory power and improve its predictive precision.
A closer look at the individual hypotheses highlights why the reduced model is superior. In the full model, *FIRE Movement* (Hypothesis 1) has a coefficient of B = 0.012 (p = .852), confirming that awareness or adoption of FIRE principles alone does not significantly predict youth retirement aspirations—thus H1 is rejected. Meanwhile, *Financial Independence* (H2) remains a significant positive predictor in both models (full: B = 0.167, p = .015; reduced: B = 0.155, p = .005), supporting the idea that greater economic and psychological autonomy elevates retirement goals. *Early-Retirement Intentions* (H3) and *Investment Strategies* (H4) are likewise robustly significant in both specifications (H3 full: B = 0.188, p = .002; reduced: B = 0.240, p < .001; H4 full: B = 0.591, p < .001; reduced: B = 0.569, p < .001), underscoring their strong influence on youth retirement planning.
Taken together, the evidence favors the *three-predictor model* over the more complex four-predictor version. By excluding the non-significant FIRE Movement variable, the reduced model achieves greater parsimony without sacrificing—and indeed slightly enhancing—predictive accuracy. All remaining predictors in the reduced model are statistically significant, providing clear, actionable insights into which factors truly drive retirement aspirations among young adults. For these reasons, the model composed of Financial Independence, Early-Retirement Intentions, and Investment Strategies represents the best fitting and most theoretically coherent representation of the data.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.974	24

The reliability of our survey instrument was confirmed by a Cronbach's alpha of *0.974* across *24* items, indicating exceptional internal consistency among the measures. This high coefficient demonstrates that the adapted items—spanning constructs such as FIRE Movement engagement, financial independence, early retirement intentions, investment strategies, and retirement aspirations—are highly coherent and capture a unified underlying structure. Such robust reliability gives confidence that respondents interpreted the questions consistently, and it validates the use of these scales for subsequent correlational and regression analyses in assessing how FIRE principles influence youth financial planning and retirement goals.

7. DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine how the core components of the FIRE movement—FIRE engagement, financial independence, early-retirement intentions, and investment strategies—influence youth retirement aspirations in an Indian context. Our regression analyses revealed that *financial independence, early-retirement intentions,* and *investment strategies* each emerge as robust, positive predictors of retirement aspirations, collectively explaining over 84% of the variance in young people's retirement goals. In contrast, mere *awareness or adoption of FIRE principles* (the "FIRE Movement" variable) did not exert a significant independent effect once these three factors were taken into account.
First, *Financial Independence* proved a significant driver of retirement aspirations ($B \approx 0.16$, $p < .01$). This finding aligns with Avendaño-Miranda's (2022) multidimensional model, which emphasizes that a sense of economic, psychological, and social autonomy fosters greater confidence in planning for—and in the feasibility of—early retirement. For youth who perceive themselves as financially capable and emotionally secure, retirement ceases to feel like a distant or unattainable milestone and becomes a realistic life course option.
Second, *Early-Retirement Intentions* demonstrated a strong effect ($B \approx 0.24$, $p < .001$) on retirement aspirations. Respondents who already envision retiring ahead of traditional age benchmarks exhibit markedly higher motivational commitment to retirement planning. This confirms the psychological mechanism posited by Blau and Paprocki (2022): that the reframing of retirement from "end-of-life reward" to "mid-life pivot" intensifies intentionality and goal pursuit among young adults.

Third, *Investment Strategies* showed the greatest standardized impact ($B \approx 0.57$, $p < .001$), underscoring those actual financial behaviors—diversifying assets, maintaining disciplined investing, and taking calculated risks—are the most powerful enablers of retirement aspirations. This resonates with findings from Khan and Pandey (2022), who identified diversified investing as a linchpin in translating FIRE ideals into tangible progress toward early-retirement objectives.

Interestingly, the *FIRE Movement* variable itself—capturing awareness of Lean, Fat, and Barista FIRE variants—failed to achieve significance ($B \approx 0.01$, $p = .85$). This suggests that *knowledge alone* of FIRE philosophies does not suffice; rather, it is the *internalization of financial autonomy,* the *intent to retire early,* and *concrete investment behaviors* that drive youth toward stronger retirement goals. In statistical terms, our three-predictor "parsimonious" model outperformed the full four-predictor specification, achieving slightly higher explanatory power (Adjusted $R^2 = .842$ vs. $.835$) and tighter prediction errors.

These findings carry several practical implications. *Educators and policymakers* should prioritize strengthening financial-independence curricula—emphasizing not only budgeting and saving but also emotional and social dimensions of autonomy—and promote goal-setting interventions that concretely anchor early-retirement intentions. *Employers* and *financial platforms* can further support youth by integrating investment-strategy workshops and gamified saving tools to translate theoretical FIRE concepts into habitual practices.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations. Its *cross-sectional design* precludes causal inferences, and reliance on *self-reported Likert scales* may introduce response biases. The sample—though diverse in education and income—was drawn via purposive and snowball methods, which may limit generalizability beyond urban and semi-urban Indian youth. Future research would benefit from *longitudinal tracking* to assess whether stated intentions and behaviors translate into realized early-retirement outcomes, and from *qualitative studies* that unpack the motivational and contextual nuances behind these statistical relationships.

In sum, while awareness of FIRE philosophy alone does not guarantee stronger retirement dreams, fostering a genuine sense of financial autonomy, nurturing clear early-retirement intentions, and inculcating disciplined investment behaviors together form a potent mix for empowering youth to envision—and work toward—a more autonomous and self-determined retirement.

8. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that among Indian youth, a genuine sense of financial autonomy (Financial Independence), clear goals for retiring early (Early-Retirement Intentions), and disciplined investing behaviors (Investment Strategies) are the primary drivers of retirement aspirations—collectively accounting for over 84% of the variance in how strongly young people plan for and imagine their post-career lives. By contrast, mere familiarity with FIRE variants ("Lean"—minimalism, "Fat"—comfort, "Barista"—hybrid) does not, on its own, translate into stronger retirement goals once these deeper psychological and behavioral factors are taken into account.

Our findings extend theoretical models of the FIRE movement by empirically validating Avendaño-Miranda's multidimensional construct of financial independence and Blau & Paprocki's reframing of retirement as an intentional life pivot. The prominence of investment strategies in predicting retirement aspirations underscores the need for conceptual frameworks that integrate concrete financial behaviors alongside motivational constructs. Future theory building should thus move beyond awareness-based measures and incorporate both the cognitive (self-efficacy, goal setting) and behavioral (saving rates, portfolio diversification) dimensions that jointly determine early-retirement outcomes.

For educators, policymakers, and financial practitioners, the results highlight that efforts to promote early-retirement goals must go beyond simply raising awareness of FIRE philosophies. Curricula and outreach programs should strengthen youths' financial self-efficacy—focusing on real-world autonomy skills such as budgeting, emotional resilience in financial decision-making, and social support networks—while embedding clear goal-setting exercises to crystallize early-retirement intentions. Financial platforms, employers, and HR professionals can complement these interventions by offering interactive tools and workshops that translate FIRE principles into habitual investing behaviors, thereby empowering young adults to convert aspirations into actionable progress toward financial independence and a self-determined retirement.

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