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Generation Z's Conceptualization

of the "Dream Home"

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This production thesis explores how Generation Z (Gen Z) in Metro Manila conceptualizes the "dream home" as a profound symbol of liberation, psychological sanctuary, and identity. The project addresses a critical gap in existing housing discourse, which predominantly focuses on pragmatic concerns like economics and physical aesthetics, by instead delving into the deeply personal and emotional meanings Gen Z attaches to their ideal dwelling. It asserts that for this generation, a home is not merely a tangible structure but a subjectively constructed space shaped by lived experiences and aspirational ideals. The primary output of this project is a multimedia-rich web magazine featuring three creative nonfiction articles. These articles are the result of in-depth interviews with Gen Z individuals and are designed to be a human-centered and nuanced exploration of the topic. The magazine's format is deliberately chosen to align with the digital native sensibilities of its target audience, utilizing interactive and dynamic elements for engagement. Key theoretical frameworks, namely Affordance Theory and the Sense of Place framework, guide the project's creative direction. Affordance Theory is used to design the web magazine in a way that encourages user participation and emotional connection, while the Sense of Place framework provides a lens to analyze how interviewees form deep, meaningful connections to their imagined spaces. By concentrating on the internal, emotional landscape of the "dream home," this study expands the academic discourse on the subject, recognizing its crucial role in individual well-being beyond its function as a physical shelter. Ultimately, this thesis endeavors to reveal the compelling human stories behind a generation's search for personal freedom and sanctuary.

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I. Introduction

Nature and Description of the Project

For Generation Z (Gen Z) in Metro Manila, the concept of "home" extends far beyond a physical dwelling, it embodies their aspiration for liberation and psychological sanctuary. As they navigate the early stages of their careers and the complexities of independent living in a densely populated urban city, their vision of an ideal living space becomes a powerful reflection of their deepest desires for autonomy, self-expression, and emotional stability.

With that, the output centers on developing a web *magazine* designed to explore the subjective conceptualization of the "dream home" among Gen Z individuals residing in Metro Manila. A web magazine is particularly helpful for Gen Z because its interactive and multimedia-rich format aligns with their digital native sensibilities and preference for dynamic content consumption. Gen Z generally shows a strong preference for digital media over traditional forms; they are digital natives, having grown up with the internet, social media, and mobile devices, shaping their expectations for speed, convenience, and on-demand access (Chang & Chang). The primary objectives of this project are to provide a profoundly human-centered and psychologically nuanced understanding of the "dream home" concept for Gen Z, moving beyond superficial aesthetics or mere pragmatic affordability, and making this accessible and engaging through a digital medium. Specifically, it aims to explore how lived adversities transform the "dream home" into a potent symbol of liberation, psychological sanctuary, and identity, thereby expanding the academic discourse

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on "home" beyond a physical structure to encompass its vital role in individual well-being and self-actualization.

Guiding this project are key theoretical frameworks, including Affordance theory and the Sense of Place framework. Affordance theory, as conceptualized by James Gibson and refined by Don Norman, offers a lens through which to understand the interactive potential of our digital web magazine. It focuses on how the platform's design actively invites Gen Z users to engage with and shape their conceptualizations of a dream home, creating emotional connection and direct participation rather than passive consumption (Gibson; Norman). The Sense of Place framework, drawing on the work of Dai and Liu (2024) and Raymond, Kytta, and Stedman (2020), explores how individuals form profound meanings about spaces, whether physical or virtual. This framework is instrumental in examining how Gen Z's "dream home" transcends mere physical structure, becoming an emotional and aspirational entity shaped by their lived experiences and digital interactions. The selection of a digital web magazine over a static physical publication is precisely because its dynamic, interactive, and multimedia capabilities are crucial for capturing the multifaceted nature of Gen Z's understanding of "home."

Each creative nonfiction article will incorporate customized visual and thematic elements that directly reflect the interviewees' visions of their ideal homes. This includes tailored design, color palettes, imagery, and interactive features unique to each narrative, mirroring the emotional and aesthetic landscape of their "dream home." In addition to these immersive narratives, the web magazine will feature informational sections, including 'Design & Autonomy,' 'Sustainable Living,' 'Financial Liberation,' and 'Expert Q&A.' It will

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also feature interactive elements like comment sections, a 'Community Forum,' 'Quizzes,' and 'Reader Submissions.' These components are designed to create an immersive user experience, allowing readers to virtually "walk through" the narratives and engage with the multifaceted concept of a dream home. The immersive design will dynamically adjust visual and interactive elements as users navigate each narrative, symbolically representing the interviewee's journey in conceptualizing their ideal living space.

This digital medium is particularly fitting as it allows for a dynamic and interactive presentation of diverse perspectives. It utilizes multimedia elements such as images, videos, and written narratives to capture the nuanced understanding of "home." The core concept driving this project is to investigate the intricate relationship between varied lived experiences and the formation of this ideal "dream home," moving beyond a mere physical structure to encompass emotional, social, and aspirational dimensions of belonging and personal space.

Background of the Study

The conceptualization of a "dream home" among Gen Z individuals in Metro Manila is deeply embedded within a complex social and cultural landscape. This generation, often characterized as "digital natives," has grown up with unprecedented access to global trends and architectural aesthetics through social media and online platforms (Manalac). This exposure has broadened their perspectives on what an ideal home can be, moving beyond traditional Filipino housing models to embrace diverse design influences such as minimalist, modern, or eco-friendly concepts (Colliers).

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Furthermore, the urban reality of Metro Manila, marked by increasing population density and rising property costs, significantly shapes their housing aspirations. Metro Manila's population density, estimated at over 21,000 people per square kilometer, makes it one of the most densely populated regions in the world (Philippine Statistics Authority). This intense urbanization is compounded by significant housing cost inflation; for instance, the national residential real estate price index rose by 5.3% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2024, presenting a considerable barrier to homeownership for many young professionals (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas).

Furthermore, the urban reality of Metro Manila, marked by increasing population density and rising property costs, significantly shapes their housing aspirations. Metro Manila is one of the densest regions in the Philippines, leading to challenges in mobility and a severe lack of urban planning implementation (Alvaira). While traditional Filipino values often emphasize multi-generational households and close-knit family structures, there is an observable shift towards nuclear families and single-person households among younger generations, influencing a demand for housing options that prioritize convenience, accessibility to work and amenities, and adaptable spaces, such as condominiums and townhouses (Baricaua).

Economically, navigating early career stages in a highly competitive urban environment means that affordability and financial stability are significant concerns. A survey by PhilhealthCare, Inc. (PhilCare) found that while many Gen Z individuals believe their earnings suffice for retirement and leisure, they lack confidence in managing unforeseen expenses and view homeownership as an "elusive dream rather than a realistic

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possibility" (Manalac). This financial reality often leads them to consider more flexible options like renting or seeking properties with favorable payment schemes and entry-level pricing (Baricaua; RichestPH).

Rationale

This production thesis aims to understand the nuanced conceptualization of the "dream home" among Gen Z, moving beyond superficial aesthetics or mere pragmatic affordability. Existing architectural media and broader housing discourses, such as high-end publications like *Architectural Digest* and specialized issues like *YES! Magazine: The Affordable Housing Issue* (2018), frequently showcases aspirational residences and addresses general housing issues. Yet they often overlook the deeply personal, psychological, and symbolic meanings individuals, particularly Gen Z, attach to their ideal dwelling.

Furthermore, this production seeks to address this critical gap by exploring how challenging lived experiences, such as strict upbringings, persistent financial hardship, or abusive domestic environments, transform the notion of a "dream home" into a symbol of liberation, psychological sanctuary, and identity formation. This production critically differentiates between a 'house' as a tangible physical structure and a 'home' as a dynamic, emotionally resonant, and subjectively constructed space. The focus is not on architectural blueprints or property values, but rather on the deeply personal and symbolic meanings that transform a mere dwelling into a cherished sanctuary and an embodiment of personal ideals. This, therefore, asserts that for Gen Z, the 'dream home' transcends its architectural

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form to become a profoundly subjective, emotional, and psychological 'home', a symbol of liberation, psychological sanctuary, and identity formation.

This exploration is fundamentally guided by Affordance Theory and the Sense of Place framework. These frameworks together provide the theoretical lens to analyze how these subjective, psychological, and symbolic meanings are formed through interaction with environments, both lived and digital, thereby addressing the gap in current discourses. By concentrating on the internal experience of the dream home, particularly its emotional landscape, this study posits that a "dream home" represents a fundamental psychological aspiration. This perspective expands the academic discourse on "home" beyond its definition as a physical structure, recognizing its vital role in individual well-being and self-actualization. Ultimately, this thesis endeavors to reveal the compelling human stories underlying the 'dream home' for a generation navigating distinctive challenges, demonstrating that media serves not merely as a source of inspiration but as a critical tool for psychological coping, aspirational pursuit, and the attainment of personal freedom and sanctuary.

Assumptions

Only humans can build a home. Jerry Moore, an archaeologist and professor at California State University, argues in his award-winning book that while animals tend to construct shelters, humans build homes that hold meaning beyond physical function (1). Across cultures, people require spaces to gather, work, socialize, and rest. Hasty, Lewis, and Snipes, researchers from Oregon State University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the

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University of West Georgia, elucidate that "Dominant ideas about work, gender, marriage, parenting, hospitality, and status all shape the places we call home. Home involves a combination of materials, technologies, social relationships, everyday practices, deeply held values, and shared ideas" (ch. 3). This meaning is expressed in modern architectural designs and developmental landscape, where the foundation of structures is no longer fixed, but incessantly recalibrated by human experiences lived through these spaces. (Nicolini 2) The first assumption of this study is that it is innate for humans to create a home based on their environment, language, and culture, as each home is made to reflect their respective needs. However, as social and cultural conditions evolve, what constitutes a home ceases to be definite. In particular, for younger generations like Gen Z, whose environments are influenced by digital spaces, economic precarity, and changing family structures, the meaning of home is becoming more fluid and fragmented.

The second assumption is that while existing discourse on homeownership highlights its economic and sociological dimensions, the psychological motivations behind having a dream home remain underexplored. A survey conducted by RocketMortgage, a retail mortgage lender, reveals that 72% of Gen Z Americans regard homeownership as a primary aspiration (Lenzen). Another American-based study reports that over 90% of individuals aged 18 to 44 wish to own a home at some point in their lives (Goodman and Mayer 32). Whereas, in the Philippines, 39% of Gen Z identify homeownership as one of their top concerns for the future (Antivola). It is consequential to acknowledge the complex emotional and psychological factors that drive these homeownership aspirations. In line

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with this, Boston Consulting Group, through its Manila division based in Bonifacio Global City, implemented a study led by Oundjian et al. observing that even those who already own homes remain hopeful about acquiring better ones that offer greater security (4). It follows that the factors that define security are more than a material goal, which reveals an ongoing emotional pursuit.

The notions behind these emotional pursuits are drawn from media portrayals of houses, aggregated to suggest how a 'home' might be defined. Kiessel and Stubbs, professors from Arkin University of Creative Arts & Design and Cyprus International University, discovered that science-fiction dystopian houses accentuate societal discourses on class. They posit that following the depiction of utopian motifs of houses, eventually transformed by postmodern semiotic transformation, what remains is a sense of human isolation and the absence of 'home' (54-64).

Simultaneously, emotions serve a fundamental purpose in movies, which evoke positive and negative emotional states in individuals (Luz et. al 4). Building on this, the third assumption postulates how media, particularly films and television, can affect the housing aspirations of a dream home. If media can inspire action anchored in storytelling, it becomes necessary to examine how these portrayals emotionally resonate with audiences, and in turn, accommodate their vision for a home.

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Scope and Limitations

This study will produce a web magazine consisting of three creative nonfiction articles, complemented by visual designs inspired by architectural and domestic elements. The magazine will feature narratives from three Filipino Gen Z members, whose conceptualizations of a dream home are informed by significant personal experiences such as complex family dynamics, mental health challenges, and formative environments. It will also address subtopics such as finances, identity formation, education, and environmental influences, supported by insights from architecture, engineering, and psychology professionals. These themes will contextualize how the meaning of home for Filipino Gen Z has evolved in response to shifting social, cultural, and economic factors.

Only three samples will be chosen to allow for a deeper focus on each narrative, taking into account the diversity of the participants' backgrounds. Each subject will be selected based on the richness of their experiences and their potential to yield detailed, meaningful insights relevant to the topic. They will be treated as individual case studies to fully capture their lived experiences. In a study published by SAGE Publications, Schoch, a case study researcher, notes that using a case study "provides you with the chance to get an in-depth look at the inner workings and interactions of that organization or individual" (246). To support this approach, purposive sampling will be employed. As van Rijnsoever, a professor from Utrecht University, explains, "purposive scenarios are much more efficient than the random chance scenario" (12). This study is limited in scope to a small sample size, consisting of three Gen Z subjects and three expert informants. As such, the findings will provide qualitative insights rather than statistically representative conclusions.

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Gibson's theory of affordances presents a compelling alternative to how objects are typically perceived by the mind. Rather than observing an object's physical features and mentally interpreting its function, Gibson contends that individuals directly perceive what the object affords — that is, what actions it makes possible. When applied to digital environments, such as websites or digital magazines, affordances refer to the immediate, relational possibilities offered to users: the capacity to learn, to interact, to reflect, or to be immersed. Within this study's digital magazine, the narrative affordance of a third-person perspective will be utilized. According to Gander and Gander, researchers from Sweden, third-person narratives lead readers to adopt a third-person visual perspective, in which a vantage point is introduced that allows for a more observational and reflective stance. Interestingly, they found that readers of nonfiction are more visually aligned with the protagonist, suggesting a deeper emotional resonance and awareness even when written from an external viewpoint. This reflects the affordance of the narrative form. It positions readers as empathetic participants who engage with the material critically.

Furthermore, the project will focus exclusively on the perspectives of Filipino Gen Z and will not explore the experiences of other generational or national groups. While the study touches on economic, social, and emotional dimensions of homeownership and domestic aspirations, it does not claim to address the full range of factors influencing these phenomena. The project's production, from the conduct of conducting interviews to the development of developing the digital magazine, will take place from September to December 2025. Although only one issue will be developed during the production period,

the project envisions the potential for a continuing series, depending on future interest and available capacity.

Statement of the Problem

Existing discourse often falls short in exploring the subjective and psychological dimensions of housing aspirations, particularly how Gen Z individuals in Metro Manila conceptualize their "dream home" as more than just a dwelling, but as a potent symbol of liberation and psychological sanctuary. There's a significant gap in understanding how specific lived adversities influence this unique conceptualization among this demographic. This study aims to bridge these gaps by investigating how these lived experiences shape their "dream home" concept and, in turn, how the aesthetic and functional elements they prioritize in their envisioned homes reflect their pursuit of personal autonomy, identity expression, and emotional well-being, ultimately offering a more holistic and psychologically informed perspective on the evolving housing needs and aspirations of Gen Z.

Study Framework

Theoretical Framework

James Gibson coined the term affordance theory in his book *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, first published in 1977. He described affordances as what the environment offers a person or an animal, meaning the possible actions made available by

objects and surroundings (Gibson 127). According to Gibson, how an object is used is tied to its physical shape, but affordances also depend on the relationship between the user and the object. Affordances do not need to be physically noticeable or even consciously perceived. Osiurak, Rossetti, and Badets explain, "They are objective because they exist independently of the act of perception, but they are also subjective because the frame of reference is the individual's action capabilities."

Some affordances remain unrecognized until they are acted on. Don Norman redefined the idea of affordances in the context of Human-Computer Interaction, focusing on how digital tools offer users possibilities for interaction. He described affordance as "the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used" (*Norman*). In this study, the subject would be Gen Z, and the object would be the digital magazine platform. Affordance refers to what the platform allows Gen Z to do, such as imagine their dream homes, engage emotionally, and interact with the content. Norman also emphasized that affordances are part of communication, which aligns with this study's aim to make the magazine not just something to consume, but something that invites participation through feedback, reflection, and emotional identification.

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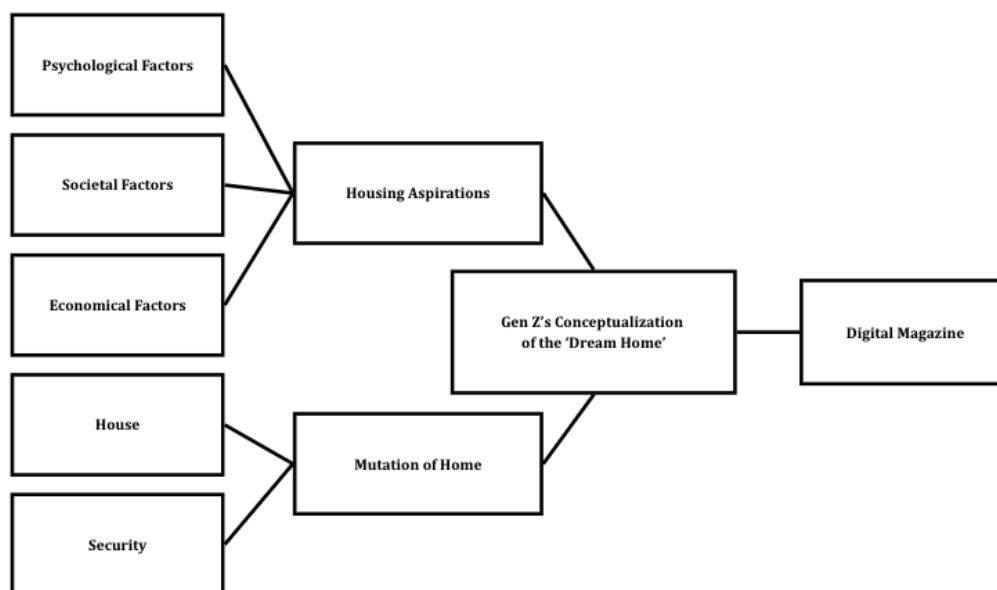
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Conceptual Framework

This study presents a conceptual framework that explores how Gen Z forms their idea of a dream home. It focuses on two central areas: housing aspirations, which refer to the psychological, societal, and economic motivations behind wanting a home, and the mutation of a home, which considers how the meaning of "home" shifts over time and across contexts. These are examined through the lens of sense of place, a variable adapted from the framework of Dai and Liu (2024).

While Dai and Liu's original study is not centered on housing, it explains how both digital and physical interactions shape people's experiences of place. They note that "the fusion of digital and physical space practices enables continuous innovation in our experiences of place, leading to the formation of a more inclusive and extensive sense of

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place" (5). This provides a foundation for understanding how Gen Z may not view home strictly as a physical structure, but as something shaped by lived experiences, emotions, and media.

To strengthen this perspective, the study also draws from Raymond, Kytta, and Stedman (2020), who argue that sense of place research has often overlooked how meanings are formed through direct perception and sensory engagement. They suggest that affordance theory can address this by explaining how people form meaning through real-time interaction with their environment. As they write, "affordance theory could overcome a number of blind spots in sense of place scholarship" by bridging immediate, felt experiences with longer-term, socially constructed meanings (11). This supports the study's use of affordance theory as its theoretical lens and highlights how Gen Z actively engages with physical and digital spaces that shape their emotional understanding of home.

Bringing these ideas together, the conceptual framework guides the analysis of how housing aspirations and changing meanings of home contribute to the conceptualization of a dream home. These narratives will be expressed through the production of a digital magazine, which serves as both the creative output and a digital "place" that reflects how Gen Z imagines, remembers, and aspires toward home. The magazine transforms into a safe space for both subjects and readers to engage with the evolving idea of what a home can be.

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II. Review of Related Literature

The study's review of related literature provides a focused discussion on the "dream home" concept for Gen Z. All related literature found below are research-based and will support the content of the articles.

Gen Z's Conceptualization of the 'Dream Home'

The "dream home" for Gen Z is not merely a physical structure but a multilayered and deeply personal concept that embodies aspirations for psychological sanctuary, liberation, and identity. This conceptualization is contextualized within the unique socio-economic landscape and digital fluency of this generation. For many, a dream home serves as a symbol of autonomy, a safe haven from external pressures, and a space for self-expression.

Paz-Pardo argues that declining homeownership among younger generations is driven by a lack of financial security and rising house prices, forcing many to delay this life milestone (2022). Sheedy, Shah, and Pan's research on young adults in Australia corroborates this, finding that while homeownership remains a key aspiration for many, a significant minority rejects it for the sake of freedom and flexibility (2023). This desire for freedom is also a key driver for those who opt to delay ownership to pursue other lifestyle goals. Abidoye et al.'s study in Jakarta, Indonesia, further reinforces these findings, noting that while homeownership is a major challenge, young adults are driven by functional motivations like a place to live or to start a family, rather than by pride or social status

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(2020). The authors identify affordability and insufficient income as crucial barriers. Similarly, Byun and Shon's research on South Korean youth highlights that while co-living is a pragmatic solution to reduce costs, young adults often frame it as a lifestyle choice to conceal the reality of their limited options (2022). This "duplicity" suggests that for many, housing decisions are a compromise between economic reality and a desire to maintain a certain image.

The collective findings from these studies demonstrate a significant disconnect between the traditional aspiration of homeownership and the realities faced by Gen Z. The broader context of this literature suggests that while the "dream home" remains a powerful ideal, its conceptualization is undergoing a fundamental shift. Financial precarity and a desire for freedom have led to a re-evaluation of what constitutes a stable and fulfilling living situation. Homeownership is no longer the sole marker of success, with many Gen Z individuals prioritizing flexibility and experiential living. This interpretation highlights a new dynamic where housing choices are not just about securing an asset, but about navigating a complex landscape of financial constraints, personal values, and psychological needs.

This literature is highly relevant as it provides a foundation for exploring Gen Z's unique conceptualization of the "dream home." The research informs this study by validating that housing decisions are driven by economic necessity, personal aspirations for freedom, and psychological well-being. The findings from Paz-Pardo and Abidoye et al. provide essential context on the financial barriers facing this generation, while Sheedy, Shah, and Pan's work highlights the emerging trade-off between security and freedom. The

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concept of "duplicity" from Byun and Shon is particularly insightful, as it allows us to analyze how Gen Z's public portrayal of their housing choices may differ from their private motivations. This allows the study to move beyond a simplistic view of housing and investigate how economic and societal pressures are actively reshaping what a "dream home" truly means for this generation.

Housing Aspirations

Housing aspirations refer to an individual's personal goals and desires regarding their ideal living situation. These aspirations are not static, they are a behavioral response to an individual's current residential environment, shaped by a combination of personal feelings, mental assessments of their living situation, and the influence of cultural and social norms.

The reviewed literature offers a comprehensive understanding of housing aspirations as a complex concept. Opoko et al. (2015) explore aspirations within an informal urban settlement, revealing that residents' desires to move are driven by a combination of practical factors such as poor living conditions, household size, and a need for exclusive facilities, as well as personal circumstances like age and marital status. Their research posits that housing aspiration is a behavioral response rooted in an individual's subjective assessment of their environment and is a key predictor of mobility or home modification (Opoko et al. 119). Similarly, Diaz-Serrano's study on homeownership and housing satisfaction demonstrates a strong link between tenure status and perceived well-being (2009). The research found that a change from renting to owning significantly increases

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housing satisfaction, suggesting that a portion of this satisfaction is a result of fulfilling the expectation or aspiration to own a home. This underscores the psychological and emotional weight attached to achieving one's housing goals.

These studies collectively highlight that housing aspirations are a crucial component of an individual's overall well-being and are influenced by a complex relationship of personal circumstances and external factors. The broader context of this literature suggests that while aspirations are deeply personal, they are not formed in a vacuum, they are a direct response to an individual's current living conditions, as seen in the desire for better facilities in informal settlements. The findings also indicate a significant emotional and psychological reward tied to fulfilling these aspirations, particularly when it comes to the cultural ideal of homeownership. This interpretation emphasizes that housing is a central, and often emotional, aspect of human life, and a primary driver for major life decisions.

This literature is highly relevant to the study because it provides a foundational understanding of what drives housing aspirations beyond simple aesthetics. The findings from Diaz-Serrano are insightful, as they suggest that the emotional satisfaction of achieving a "dream home" may be tied less to the physical structure itself and more to the fulfillment of the aspiration to own. This provides a valuable lens for the study, allowing researchers to investigate whether Gen Z's "dream home" is an authentic desire for a specific type of space or a response to societal expectations and the psychological gratification of achieving a significant life milestone.

Psychological Factors

Psychological factors, in the context of this study, are defined as the mental and emotional aspects that shape a person's relationship with their living space. These include emotions, well-being, sense of security, and the psychological benefits derived from a home.

The reviewed literature highlights the profound psychological significance of home environments. Graham, Gosling, and Travis argue that despite the considerable emotional and financial investment people place in their homes, psychological research has largely overlooked this domain (346). They advocate for a deeper study into how homes serve as a real-world context for social, developmental, and cognitive processes, suggesting that homes are vital for emotional regulation and well-being. This perspective is supported by Park and Kim, who investigated the relationship between homeownership and life satisfaction (2023). Their research found that while homeownership can boost life satisfaction, this psychological benefit is significantly diminished for individuals who experience housing affordability stress, indicating that the emotional reward is tied to financial security. Further reinforcing this, Seo and Park examined the link between housing and the mental health of young adults living independently (2021). Their study reveals a negative association between perceived poor housing quality and material hardship and the mental health of young adults, especially those living alone, highlighting the critical role of a stable and quality living environment in promoting psychological well-being during the transition to adulthood.

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The collective findings from these studies underscore that the home is not merely a backdrop for life but an active and influential agent in a person's psychological well-being. The literature demonstrates that the emotional and mental benefits of a home, including a sense of sanctuary, stability, and satisfaction, are tangible and measurable. The aspiration for a "dream home" is therefore a deep psychological pursuit, yet the research also suggests this pursuit is fraught with challenges. The psychological rewards of home are conditional on factors like affordability and housing quality. This implies that for a generation facing economic precarity, their "dream home" is more than a desire, it is a fundamental psychological need for security and a stable environment, which may be at odds with their current reality.

This literature is highly relevant as it provides a basis for exploring the psychological dimensions of the "dream home" for Generation Z. The research informs this study by validating that the home is a critical context for psychological processes, including emotional regulation and identity formation. The findings from Park and Kim and Seo and Park are particularly insightful, as they directly link housing affordability and quality to mental health outcomes in young adults. This allows the study to move beyond superficial aesthetics and investigate how lived adversities, such as a lack of a stable home environment, can intensify the desire for a "dream home" as a symbol of mental well-being and a space of personal sanctuary.

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Societal Factors

Societal factors, in the context of this study, are defined as the social norms, cultural values, and shared beliefs that influence a generation's perceptions and aspirations regarding housing. These elements extend beyond individual financial capacity and include the emotional and psychological weight placed on the concept of "home," such as its role in establishing identity, social standing, and a sense of belonging.

The reviewed literature provides a multifaceted understanding of the societal and cultural influences on housing aspirations. Preece highlights the significant role of socio-cultural factors, such as identity and social norms, in guiding people's views on housing (2018). This research suggests a need to investigate whether new trends, such as house-sharing, are a lifestyle choice or a coping strategy for young adults. In a related vein, Odermatt and Stutzer challenge the widespread belief that homeownership intrinsically leads to happiness. Their study found that home buyers, particularly those with extrinsically-oriented life goals, often systematically overestimate the life satisfaction they will gain from owning a home, suggesting that a socially ingrained belief may drive the aspiration more than the reality (2022). Complementing this, Zavisca and Gerber discuss how homeownership functions as a socio-cultural foundation for stability and belonging. They explain that beyond its material value as an asset, a home can embody an extension of the self, signal social status, and enhance a sense of community, thereby influencing subjective well-being and civic engagement (2016).

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These studies collectively demonstrate that the "dream home" is not merely a financial or logistical goal but a deeply embedded social and psychological ideal. The literature suggests that society's traditional view of homeownership as the ultimate symbol of happiness, stability, and success may be a cultural construct that is being re-evaluated. For a generation navigating unprecedented social and economic shifts, the emotional and social motivations behind housing choices are more complex than ever. The research indicates a potential gap between a deeply held cultural ideal and the realized experiences of homeownership, pointing to the possibility that young adults may be seeking different, perhaps less traditional, avenues to achieve the sense of stability and identity historically associated with owning a home.

This literature is highly relevant as it provides a strong academic basis for exploring the social and cultural dimensions of the "dream home" for Gen Z. The research informs this study by highlighting that a home is more than a physical shelter, it is a social and psychological concept tied to identity and social norms. These findings are crucial for investigating whether Gen Z still holds the traditional ideal of homeownership or if they are actively redefining what "home" means to them, prioritizing new social norms like community-based living or flexibility. The research also helps to frame the analysis of whether Gen Z's aspirations are driven by a genuine desire for the benefits of homeownership or by a socially conditioned belief that it leads to happiness.

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Economic Factors

Economic factors, in the context of this study, refer to the financial and market conditions that influence an individual's ability to acquire, afford, and maintain a home. These factors include but are not limited to income levels, employment stability, housing affordability, interest rates, and the broader macroeconomic environment. For Gen Z, these elements are particularly significant as they shape the gap between their housing aspirations and the practical realities they face.

Preece et al. examine the literature on housing aspirations, arguing for a more precise definition of the term and a move away from focusing solely on homeownership (90). The authors highlight how broader trends, such as declining homeownership rates, affordability issues, and precarious labor markets, are fundamentally reshaping people's housing goals. Building on this, Galiani et al. present a study on aspiration adaptation in resource-constrained environments (2021). Their research indicates that while individuals in poor neighborhoods may initially increase their housing aspirations in response to community upgrades, these aspirations eventually decay and return to baseline levels when faced with persistent resource limitations. This suggests that without the means to act on them, aspirations can fade. Finally, Vaidynathan et al. analyze the effect of economic indicators on housing prices, concluding that factors like CPI, real GDP, and interest rates significantly influence the real estate market (201). The authors emphasize the need for policies that increase housing supply to mitigate price hikes and address the demand for affordable housing.

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These studies collectively demonstrate a critical disjunction between an individual's housing aspirations and the economic realities that enable or hinder their achievement. The literature confirms that aspirations are not static but are shaped by a complex relationship of personal desires, social context, and financial capacity. In the broader context, this means that for a generation facing significant economic precarity, the "dream home" is less of a fixed ideal and more of a fluid concept that must constantly be adapted to external pressures. The research underscores that simply desiring a home is insufficient, the ability to realize that desire is deeply tied to market conditions and resource availability, which, as shown, can be both a source of hope and a source of frustration.

This studies are relevant as it provides a strong academic basis for understanding how economic factors define and limit the conceptualization of the "dream home" for Gen Z. The research informs this study by highlighting that aspirations for housing are not fixed ideals but are fluid and must be constantly adapted to financial realities. It provides a lens to analyze how Gen Z's ideals may be shaped by the threat of aspiration fatigue, or the possibility of scaling down their dreams in the face of affordability issues and unstable labor markets. These insights are crucial for investigating how broader market forces and financial limitations directly influence Gen Z's housing expectations and choices, ultimately positioning the study to uncover the dynamic and often constrained nature of their housing dreams.

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Mutation of Home

People would not be holistically satisfied with their needs if not for their homes. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, coined by Abraham Maslow in 1943, established a framework wherein human needs are identified at a hierarchical level. Maslow's theory contends that basic survival needs must be met before an individual can pursue higher-level psychological needs (Maslow). The physiological needs located at the bottom of his pyramid framework include necessary conditions for human survival, such as air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, and sleep. These needs are seen as paramount and must be fulfilled in order to attain the other levels of human needs.

Shelter, then, as elucidated by Samanani et al., researchers from *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, has always been central to how people experience and define their humanity: "houses, homes, and practices of homemaking have been an inescapable background within anthropological writing throughout the discipline's history." The implications of a house and a home serve as a foundation to further understand key social science theories, from how family relationships are defined, how social status is maintained across generations, to how our senses are influenced by our environment. They furthermore theorize that "when we imagine home, it is often not the structures themselves but the feelings, practices, and relationships within familiar spaces which give home a powerful sense of belonging." The meaning of home is one that transforms and transcends, a story that is constant in changing the definition according to its readers.

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The mutation of how home is defined does not confine a definite circumstance, race, or religion. Home mutates because of how much it is desired and how relevant it still is in attaining the necessary conditions to be considered human. In Christianity, the Book of Genesis tells of the Garden of Eden, where the first humans, Adam and Eve, were placed in their original "home." The biblical paradise was intended to have everything to satisfy the humans so that they would never want for more (The Bible, Gen. 2.15). This signifies how a home has always been intended to provide one's needs. When Eve became enlightened by the serpent, it can be argued that her definition of a home, a paradise, no longer simply encapsulated her current shelter, because she wanted more. From this, it is clear that this phenomenon is inevitable: as society continues to change and humanity evolves, the only constant is the mutation in how a home is perceived.

Home as a House

The house is an intimate extension of a person's identity, built upon layers of memory, development, and lived experience. While the term "house" is broadly defined as "a building for habitation," the word "home" is first and foremost "the place where a person or animal dwells" and only secondarily "the place where one lives or was brought up, with reference to the feelings of belonging, comfort, etc., associated with it" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). These two definitions are often used synonymously. In informal spaces like social media, for instance, phrases such as "moving house" and "moving home" are used

without much thought for their deeper meanings. Still, to define a house is to trace the trajectory of one's personal and cultural history.

In the Philippine context, architecture carries its own social narrative. According to Del Castillo and Corpuz-Mendoza, researchers from the College of Architecture at the University of the Philippines Diliman, the meaning of a house varies depending on socioeconomic background. Informal settlers associate it primarily with shelter and family. Project housing residents value the role of community. Residents of gated subdivisions express more individualized meanings tied to self-expression and status (Del Castillo and Corpuz-Mendoza). Their study also notes that many homes in the country are not designed by professional architects or well-known designers. Instead, they are often self-built or modified with the help of skilled laborers. This raises a critical discussion investigating what people genuinely value in the spaces they build or buy for themselves?

Historical conditions further shape how houses have been conceptualized. Yamaguchi, a researcher from Ateneo de Manila University, writes about how Filipino elites during the American colonial period constructed "American-style" wooden houses in the absence of American-built homes for Filipinos. These structures, which followed the visual language of colonial superiority, reflected aspirations for modernity and became part of family legacies and rising social status. Yamaguchi argues that these homes were not just places of dwelling but physical assertions of colonial alignment (Yamaguchi). This also opens a critical lens. During colonization, the home for many Filipinos may have been reduced to merely a house, shaped by inherited systems and hierarchies that left little room

for personal or cultural growth. In such a setting, even calling a place "home" might have felt like a luxury because identifying as Filipino was itself a complicated act.

Home as a Form of Security

The constructs of a home are immortalized in what it offers to its inhabitants. The word *security* holds multiple meanings. It is defined as "the quality or state of being secure," such as "freedom from danger" and "freedom from fear or anxiety" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In the book *Living with Buildings*, Ian Sinclair, a writer and filmmaker from London, highlights how buildings and structures "can isolate and endanger us, but they can also heal us. We project our hopes and fears onto buildings, while they absorb our histories."

The process of formulating the meaning of a home may seem uncomplicated on the surface, but the cognitive and emotional layers behind it are intricate. According to Sigmon, Whitcomb, and Snyder, researchers in the field of community psychology, "the psychological home addresses a feeling of connection and belonging to others that goes beyond a physical dwelling." Similarly, Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher, elaborated on the idea of *dwelling* as the connection formed between people and places, making it a philosophical inquiry into existence.

The way people perceive home as a form of security varies and can be seen as a need that is constantly desired and influenced by different realities. In Malaysia, for instance, Ismael et al., researchers from the Universiti Sains Malaysia, found that the concept of secure

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homes often points to gated or protected residential areas. However, there is no single authoritative definition of what makes a home secure, since people define it based on their circumstances. To someone wealthy, it might mean privacy and protection in an exclusive neighborhood. To someone less privileged, it could simply mean having a roof over their head and a space that keeps their family together.

In a study conducted by Capistrano et al., scholars from Colegio de San Juan de Letran in Calamba, Laguna uncovered that the idea of home among adolescents was rooted in love, unity, peace, and understanding. These participants had experienced trauma, including physical and sexual abuse from family members, yet they found a sense of home in a shelter that provided them emotional and physical safety. Even in more unconventional spaces, the idea of home continues to evolve. Duncan, a fandom enthusiast from the University of the Witwatersrand, points out that home is an often an overlooked concept in fandom communities, where shared digital spaces can offer comfort and a sense of belonging.

Altogether, the idea of home as a form of security is not limited to its physical structure. It also includes the emotional, relational, and cultural elements that is integrated in how individuals feel safe, connected, and whole.

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Digital Magazine

A digital magazine possesses information that continues to engage its reader, bringing to life stories that have yet to be heard. But what makes it different from other forms of medium, when it can be used all the same to tell a story? In an age where people are using artificial intelligence for their therapy, it is not too far-fetched to rely on digital media to enrich people's minds. The shift from traditional to digital publishing has redefined how audiences engage with media.

In the Philippines, *Summit Media's* complete digital transformation in 2018 serves as a key example. Once known for its popular print titles such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Candy*, the company shut down its remaining six print magazines and successfully migrated all its content online. Summit Media president Lisa Gokongwei-Cheng explained that this pivot was driven by their respect for audience behavior and the evolution of digital consumption. Brands like *Cosmo.ph* and *Preview.ph* have since thrived in the digital space, continuing to uphold their distinct voices while catering to Gen Z's online habits ("Summit Media Completes").

This trend is echoed globally by companies like *NME* (*New Musical Express*), which, after 66 years in print, ceased publication and transitioned into an online-only platform in 2018. Despite the print edition's wide distribution, it failed to meet financial expectations. As NME editor Charlotte Gunn noted, "From the moment we closed the print mag, we were a profitable business again" (Clarke). By November of the same year, NME reportedly reached

the highest number of unique monthly users in its 22-year digital history (Clarke). Clarke, a journalist for *The Drum*, emphasized that this success illustrates the potential for profitability and reach in digital formats.

These examples affirm the viability and potential of digital magazines as interactive, accessible, and sustainable mediums. Julie Dayton, an engineer from Western Michigan University, emphasizes how digital media is quicker, more affordable, and capable of reaching wider audiences than traditional formats (Dayton). Similarly, Henderson, Finger, and Selwyn, educators from Australian universities, argue that mobile accessibility increases engagement, particularly among students, allowing publications to be viewed anywhere through a simple web link (Henderson et al.).

Beyond practicality, the digital magazine serves as a site of affordance. According to sociologist Ian Hutchby, affordances are "functional and relational aspects, which frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object" (444). In digital contexts, this means that technology enables but does not dictate user behavior, making room for interactivity, personalization, and engagement. Leonardi and Barley, scholars in organizational communication and sociology, further argue that technology's materiality and human agency intersect to shape its use, making the concept of affordance especially useful in studying digital spaces (Leonardi and Barley 161).

This supports the structure of *The Haven*, a digital magazine where readers get to conceptualize their own dream home along the way. They are not passive consumers but

active participants, scrolling through dream houses, listening to soundbites, and leaving real-time comments.

Compared to a static PDF or print format, a digital magazine offers an immersive, story-driven experience. *The Haven* envisions a publication that mimics entering a home, using visual transitions, animated elements, and sound. This not only draws readers in but also addresses Gen Z's shortened attention spans and preference for dynamic, mobile-first content. In line with Christine Greenhow and Benjamin Chapman, teachers from Michigan State University who found that digital tools support civic participation and active learning, *The Haven* aims to be a hybrid platform for storytelling, emotional resonance, and community-building (Greenhow and Chapman 6–8).

Thus, the digital magazine as a medium aligns with the study's aim to understand how Gen Z imagines their dream homes. The digital format does more than spread awareness. It invites readers to inhabit it, as a home would do.

Gap in Literature

Research on housing has largely focused on practical and structural concerns, particularly those tied to economic stability, ownership, and shelter as mentioned in the previous sections. These studies often address housing access, urban development, and policy-related frameworks. While crucial, such scholarship leaves a gap in understanding

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the emotional, psychological, and symbolic dimensions of home, especially how individuals, especially younger generations like Gen Z, conceptualize their "dream home."

Samanani et al. maintain that although homes shape the very foundation of social life, they are frequently treated as self-evident and remain underexamined in analytical discourse. The house is often viewed as a static backdrop rather than an active component of identity, memory, and aspiration. Following this line of reasoning, Del Castillo observes that much of the literature on Filipino architecture lacks deeper engagement with how Filipino culture both communicates and is communicated through built structures. Cultural values, aspirations, and meanings embedded in these spaces are often overlooked in favor of more utilitarian analyses.

Marta et al., a team of Italian educators, strengthen this oversight in global housing literature. While acknowledging the role of home in personal well-being, they note that few studies have examined the lived experiences of individuals transitioning from homelessness to independent housing, again emphasizing the lack of focus on daily life and emotional attachment.

These gaps highlight the need for more nuanced, interdisciplinary inquiries into how people imagine, idealize, and emotionally relate to their homes. This study attempts to respond to that absence by examining the reasons why Gen Z leans into the idea of a "dream home."

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III. Methodology

A. Method

Format of the creative nonfiction articles

Various articles and columns collectively served as a basis for the webzine. In terms of the writing style, the researchers took inspiration from The New Yorker. The publication is regarded for its long-form articles, many of which range from 2,000 to 10,000 words in length. An example of one that follows the researchers' preferred storytelling approach is *A House Is Not a Home* by Eula Biss, which uses personal anecdotes and philosophical musings to explore the profound meanings embedded in domestic spaces, mirroring the project's storytelling approach. Each article will be a long-form piece, ranging from 1,500 to 3,000 words, designed to provide in-depth, human-centered narratives that capture the subjective experiences of Generation Z individuals. The choice of this format is deliberate, as it allows for the nuanced exploration of how lived adversities and aspirations for autonomy are manifested in a person's vision of their ideal home.

Format and creative direction of the webzine

The project will consist of three creative nonfiction articles, each supported by customized visual and thematic elements. The web magazine's design will be highly intentional, with a unique color palette, imagery, and interactive features for each narrative,

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directly reflecting the interviewees' visions of their ideal homes. The immersive design will dynamically adjust visual and interactive elements, as users navigate each narrative, symbolically representing the interviewee's journey in conceptualizing their ideal living space. To further enhance this immersive experience, soundbites from the interviews will be included, allowing users to hear the authentic voices and emotions of the individuals as they describe their dream homes. This approach is guided by Affordance Theory, which ensures the platform's design actively invites user participation and emotional engagement, and the Sense of Place framework, which is used to capture how each interviewee's "dream home" transcends a mere physical structure to become an emotional and aspirational entity. The webzine is conceived as an interactive journey, where the user does not simply read about a dream home but experiences its formation alongside the narrative's protagonist.

Data Collection

Sampling Procedure

The chosen sampling procedure for this qualitative study is purposive sampling. This method, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, involves intentionally selecting participants based on their specific characteristics and relevance to the research question. The researchers' judgment is key in identifying individuals who can provide rich, in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation, in this case, the subjective conceptualization of a "dream home" among Generation Z in Metro Manila. The goal is not to

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generalize findings to a larger population, but to deeply understand the diverse and nuanced experiences of a targeted group. This procedure allows for the efficient collection of highly relevant data from individuals whose backgrounds and lived adversities directly inform the research's core themes.

Purposive sampling offers several strengths, including the ability to select "information-rich" cases, which is crucial for the depth required in qualitative research. It is also a cost-effective and time-efficient method, as it focuses resources on gathering high-quality data from a select few rather than a large, random sample. However, this method also has significant weaknesses, most notably limited generalizability and the potential for researcher bias. Because the sample is not random, the findings may not represent the full diversity of Generation Z in Metro Manila, and the researchers' subjective criteria for selection could introduce bias. To mitigate these weaknesses, the study will aim for theoretical generalization. While acknowledging that its findings may not be statistically generalizable, this approach ensures that the insights gained will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the "dream home" concept. This rich, contextual knowledge can then be applied by other researchers and practitioners to similar contexts.

Contacting the Participants

The stories on the CNF articles will be sourced from three mutual friends of the researchers. The pair reached out to them via private messaging and properly briefed them on the nature of the thesis. Upon signing the informed consent form, the researchers will ask each of them to enumerate what particular subject matter(s) they will be comfortable discussing. An in-depth interview via Zoom will be conducted afterwards in relation to these subject matter(s).

Each interview will run for approximately 45-60 minutes. Afterwards, an audio recording will be generated solely for transcription purposes. This will be a crucial step in the production process to ensure that the participants will not be misquoted.

Profile of the Participants

Found below is a profile of each participant, which consists of their chosen pseudonyms, age and the themes that they discussed:

PSEUDONYM AND AGE	Theme(s) to be discussed
Blair, 21 years old	Abuse, Repressed Personal Identity
Lala, 22 years old	Religion, Homophobia
Elijah, 20 years old	Mental Health, Financial Precarity

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Consent of the Subjects

The three subjects were sent an informed consent form to sign. The 4-page document strictly follows the format provided by De La Salle University and consists of the following details: the names of the researchers, thesis project title, purpose of the thesis project, study procedures, study duration, voluntary participation terms, confidentiality terms and the researchers' contact information in case they had any further inquiries about their role in the project. Finally, the consent agreement portion asks for the participant's full name, signature and the date the document was signed.

Each participant will be given one week to read and understand the informed consent form. They are free to drop out of the project in the event that they are no longer comfortable with the terms that will be presented to them, or for other reasons, could simply no longer accommodate the researchers.

Profile of the Experts

Found below is a profile of each expert that will be contributing informal but educational commentaries to the CNF articles. Details that are enumerated include their names, current profession and educational background:

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EXPERT	CREDENTIALS
Lucia Da Silva	She is an accomplished Interior Designer who earned her Bachelor of Science in Interior Design from SoFa Design Institute in 2024.
Gabrielle B. Zambrano	She is a dedicated mental health professional with a strong academic background. Currently serving as an OIC Guidance Counselor, she is also a Registered Psychometrician. She is expanding her expertise by pursuing a Master of Arts in Guidance and Counseling, having completed 36 units. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2018.
John Kelly Josue	A seasoned Civil Engineer with a strong background in both professional practice and academia, he currently serves as a Project Manager at Neptel Design + Build, a position he has held since 2022. Concurrently, he contributes to the education sector as a College Instructor at Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology in Manila, a role he started in 2020. He also held a faculty position at National University, Philippines from 2023 to 2025. His academic qualifications include a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from National University, earned in 2019, and a Master of Science in Construction Management from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, completed in 2022. Since 2024, he has been a dedicated member of the Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers.

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Contacting the Experts

Each expert listed above was contacted via email and was properly briefed on the nature of the thesis. The interviews will commence after all three stories for the creative non fiction articles had been gathered, as the questions crafted per expert will be based on the personal accounts. The interview proper will run for approximately 20-30 minutes via Zoom, and an audio recording will be generated solely for transcription purposes. The researchers will request that these interviews to be articulated in its simplest form possible, as utilizing layman's terms would appeal greatly to the CNF articles' target audience.

Outline of the CNF Articles

Provided below is a detailed outline of the CNF articles, which enumerates every subsection, its projected length and what information they shall contain. As previously mentioned, all three CNF articles will be supplemented by commentaries from various experts:

Intro	
	The opening will invite readers to reflect on their personal concept of a "dream home." It challenges the possibility that everyone holds a vision of home,

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	whether they realize it or not.
First Story	*A woman who has lived in multiple homes will share how each move was an attempt to escape the psychological hold of an abusive father.*
Second Story	*A queer woman grapples with the weight of religious expectations, describing how her dream home is one where she can live truthfully, without fear or shame.*
Third Story	*A man quietly battles the fear that his dreams of owning a home, of building stability, may never materialize due to financial burdens and family responsibilities.*
Expert Story	*Interwoven insights from professionals and experts will contextualize the broader implications of a dream home.*

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B. Budget and Timetable

Production Timeline

Gathering of data for the creative nonfiction articles

Activity	September 2025			
Weeks	1	2	3	4
Interviews with the three subjects	███			
Interviews with the experts		███		
Transcribing of all the interviews		███		
Submission of outlines for the creative nonfiction articles to the mentor			███	

Writing of the creative nonfiction articles

Thesis production will begin with the collection of stories through interviews with the three subjects during the first week of September. In the second week, the experts will be interviewed regarding their insights in relation to the stories. The researchers will also

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work closely with the three experts and the three subjects to ensure that nobody is misquoted.

Activity	October 2025				November 2025				December 2025			
Weeks	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Writing of the first drafts	■	■	■	■								
Writing of the second drafts						■	■	■				
Writing of the final articles									■	■		

Creating the illustrations

The researchers will reach out to artists in September 2025 for the project. Given that each CNF article tackles a different subject matter, an illustration was commissioned for each one. The researchers will work closely with these artists up until December 2025 to ensure that the art best represented the stories told by the subjects.

Activity	September 2025				November 2025				December 2025			
Weeks	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Contacting of artists		■										

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Artists working on the illustrations											

Budget

ITEM	COST
Website	Php 20,000.00
Three Dream Homes Illustration	Php 3,000.00
Token for Resource Persons	Php 2,500.00
Contingency Funds	Php 3,000
TOTAL	Php 28,500.00

The proposed budget for the digital magazine is estimated at Php 28,500. The bulk of the cost will go toward building a fully functional website, which will cover both front-end and back-end development. This includes interactive features, visual transitions, and free hosting integration to keep costs manageable. The goal is to create an immersive reading experience where each article scrolls into the subject's dream home design.

To complement the overall design of the website, three custom illustrations will be commissioned to represent the dream houses of the featured subjects. These visuals will appear in their respective sections of the magazine to enhance storytelling and emotional

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connection. Moreover, there will be no transportation or meal expenses for the researchers, as most tasks and transactions will be conducted online. The final budget remains flexible and may be adjusted depending on the needs of production.

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