

Global Awareness and Understanding of Decentralized Finance (DeFi)

Chetankumar Prajapati

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Abstract: This paper investigates the global awareness and understanding of Decentralized Finance (DeFi) by analyzing the perceptions of diverse demographic groups. Using a qualitative methodology based on interviews with blockchain professionals and users from multiple countries, this study identifies knowledge gaps, regional differences, and educational factors impacting DeFi adoption. The findings indicate that while awareness is increasing in technologically advanced regions, substantial educational and infrastructural barriers persist in developing countries. Participants shared varied experiences ranging from comprehensive DeFi usage to initial confusion regarding its core concepts, highlighting the uneven distribution of blockchain literacy. Moreover, cultural perceptions, local economic conditions, and trust in traditional financial systems significantly influence the degree of DeFi adoption. Key factors such as language accessibility, availability of localized content, community engagement, and government stance on digital assets also contribute to shaping user attitudes. This paper contributes to the growing body of literature on DeFi by offering practical insights into how global awareness initiatives can support equitable adoption and engagement with decentralized financial systems. It further emphasizes the importance of coordinated efforts between industry stakeholders, educators, and regulators to design scalable and inclusive educational programs that address global disparities in DeFi comprehension and foster informed participation in the decentralized financial landscape.

Keywords: *Decentralized Finance (DeFi), Global Awareness, Blockchain Literacy, Digital Inclusion, Crypto Education, Financial Technology, Emerging Markets, Socioeconomic Barriers, Trust in Institutions, Fintech Adoption.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Decentralized Finance (DeFi) represents a paradigm shift in financial systems, eliminating intermediaries and providing financial services through blockchain technologies. Built on open-source protocols, DeFi platforms enable peer-to-peer transactions, lending, borrowing, and yield generation without the need for traditional banks or financial institutions. Despite its transformative potential, global awareness and understanding of DeFi remain uneven. This study explores how DeFi is perceived across different regions, with a focus on digital literacy, access to information, and socio-economic influences shaping awareness. A significant challenge lies in the accessibility of DeFi-related content, often published in

English and embedded in highly technical jargon, which can alienate potential users in non-English-speaking and less digitally literate populations. Moreover, misinformation and media sensationalism have contributed to skepticism in some regions, equating DeFi with high-risk or fraudulent activity. As blockchain continues to disrupt traditional finance, understanding the socio-demographic factors that influence awareness and adoption is increasingly important. This research seeks to fill the gap by providing a comparative analysis of perceptions from developed and developing economies. By identifying the structural and cognitive barriers to DeFi adoption, the study aims to recommend actionable strategies for stakeholders to design outreach programs that are culturally relevant, accessible, and scalable on a global level.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Awareness of DeFi is closely tied to digital literacy, access to blockchain education, and socio-cultural factors (Taherdoost, 2023). Research suggests that early adopters in technologically advanced economies often benefit from proactive fintech exposure and community knowledge-sharing (Ramos & Zanko, 2020). These regions typically exhibit higher adoption rates due to well-established digital infrastructures, government support for innovation, and greater investment in emerging technologies. However, studies also highlight significant disparities in understanding DeFi concepts among individuals in low-income regions due to infrastructural and educational limitations (Ozili, 2022). For instance, lack of high-speed internet, insufficient blockchain curriculum in public education systems, and restricted access to smartphones and digital wallets hinder engagement. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) provide a foundation for examining how users become aware of and interact with DeFi platforms (Prajapati, 2025). TAM highlights the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in technology adoption, while DOI emphasizes the roles of innovators, early adopters, and laggards. Scholars have also begun incorporating elements of trust, transparency, and perceived risk into adoption models specific to blockchain technology. Furthermore, the literature suggests that DeFi education must address not only technological literacy but also behavioral economics, financial risk management, and cross-cultural communication to ensure effective and equitable adoption (Prajapati, 2025).

III. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research involved semi-structured interviews with 20 individuals from North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, including fintech professionals, developers, investors, and end users. Interview data were coded and analyzed thematically to uncover patterns in DeFi awareness and understanding. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in technological exposure and geographic representation. The study employed a grounded theory approach to allow themes to emerge organically from the participants' narratives. Interviews were conducted via Zoom and Google Meet, with each session lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. Transcripts were coded using NVivo software, and recurring themes included trust in DeFi, access to learning resources, influence of peer networks, and government regulation. Ethical considerations were strictly followed, including informed consent, participant anonymity, and data protection measures. The interview questions were designed to elicit perspectives on first exposure to DeFi, challenges in understanding or using DeFi platforms, sources of knowledge, and perceived benefits or risks. Efforts were made to include voices from both urban and rural settings to capture a broader range of experiences. Triangulation was conducted through

peer debriefing and member checking to validate key findings and ensure interpretive rigor in the thematic analysis.

IV. ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis of participant responses revealed five major dimensions influencing DeFi awareness across global contexts. First, technological access and affordability played a foundational role—those with reliable internet, updated smartphones, and consistent digital access reported greater awareness and usage of DeFi platforms. Second, language barriers were a recurring obstacle, especially in non-English-speaking regions where DeFi materials were not localized, reducing effective engagement and comprehension.

Third, peer networks and community support strongly influenced awareness and learning. Users frequently cited social groups on Telegram, Reddit, or local blockchain meetups as essential to their initial exposure and continued education. Fourth, trust in traditional institutions shaped openness to DeFi. In countries with unstable financial systems, participants expressed greater willingness to explore DeFi alternatives, while those in stable economies were more cautious and treated DeFi as a speculative opportunity.

Finally, perceptions of risk and security—including concerns about scams, rug pulls, and user errors—emerged as a critical theme, particularly among new or marginalized users. These concerns were magnified by a lack of formal consumer protections. The analysis underscores the necessity for culturally tailored outreach, multilingual resources, and institutional collaborations to build both awareness and trust in DeFi systems globally.

V. FINDINGS

Respondents from developed regions reported higher familiarity with DeFi concepts such as smart contracts, decentralized exchanges, and yield farming. They often learned through online forums, technical blogs, YouTube tutorials, and academic coursework. Many cited participation in DeFi communities on Reddit, Discord, and Telegram as vital in keeping pace with emerging tools and protocols. In contrast, participants from developing regions cited barriers such as limited internet access, low crypto education, and misinformation. For example, users in Sub-Saharan Africa and rural parts of India shared difficulties in distinguishing between DeFi platforms and centralized crypto exchanges, often leading to security vulnerabilities and financial loss. There was also a common misunderstanding between cryptocurrencies and DeFi, with many users equating DeFi solely with speculative trading. Some participants from underbanked regions viewed DeFi with hope, particularly its potential to provide access to financial services where traditional infrastructure is lacking. However, trust issues related to platform security, scams, and unclear regulations often prevented deeper engagement. A

minority of users who were actively involved in DeFi protocols emphasized the importance of transparency, community governance, and real-world use cases like remittances and savings protocols. These findings highlight an urgent need for targeted education, platform localization, and trust-building mechanisms in emerging markets.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings reflect significant regional disparities in DeFi awareness. While some individuals are exploring complex DeFi strategies, others lack basic comprehension due to language barriers, lack of infrastructure, and insufficient exposure. Global awareness initiatives—such as multilingual resources, community workshops, and educational campaigns—are essential to bridge this gap. Participants from developed regions often credited their awareness to grassroots blockchain meetups, social media influencers, and professional networking groups, indicating the power of peer-driven learning ecosystems. In contrast, individuals in less developed areas emphasized the role of radio programs, mobile-based education, and regional fintech startups in sparking initial interest. This underscores the need for localized outreach strategies tailored to the media and cultural preferences of each region. Moreover, improving trust and regulatory clarity may support DeFi education efforts, particularly in skeptical or underbanked populations. Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could play a vital role by endorsing transparent DeFi solutions or integrating them into national digital literacy campaigns. Collaborations between blockchain firms and academic institutions can also yield scalable models for formal DeFi education. The study further suggests incorporating financial literacy and consumer protection principles into DeFi awareness programs to mitigate risks and enhance confidence, especially among first-time users and vulnerable communities.

VII. CONCLUSION

Understanding the global awareness of DeFi is critical to shaping inclusive fintech policies and educational frameworks. Addressing regional inequalities in access to DeFi knowledge will empower individuals globally to participate in decentralized economies. The study reinforces the idea that DeFi adoption is not merely a function of technology availability but is deeply intertwined with digital access, trust in institutions, cultural familiarity with financial innovation, and regulatory clarity. To foster a truly inclusive DeFi ecosystem, stakeholders must co-create programs that are linguistically and culturally accessible, especially in regions where traditional finance is either inaccessible or distrusted. Future research should explore the long-term impact of structured DeFi education programs on adoption behavior across various demographic and economic segments. Quantitative studies could be conducted to measure the efficacy of different educational interventions across diverse

populations. Additionally, policy-oriented research could investigate how governments and international bodies might standardize DeFi literacy benchmarks. An inclusive DeFi future depends on multi-stakeholder collaboration, from blockchain developers and educators to regulators and community leaders. As the DeFi space continues to evolve, proactive investment in global education, responsible innovation, and equitable access will be crucial in democratizing financial services and unlocking the full potential of decentralized finance for all.

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