

Conceptual Understanding of Financial Literacy Among Agribusiness Students

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Abstract: Financial literacy is a critical competency that influences individuals' ability to make informed financial decisions and sustain long-term financial well-being. This study assessed the conceptual understanding of financial literacy among second-year Agribusiness students at Sorsogon State University–Castilla Campus, which focused on saving, spending, budgeting, and investing. A mixed-methods research design was employed using a structured survey questionnaire administered to 120 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using weighted mean, while qualitative responses were examined through thematic analysis. Results revealed a high level of conceptual mastery of financial literacy concepts, with an overall composite mean of 3.76. Saving ($\bar{x} = 3.82$), spending ($\bar{x} = 3.85$), budgeting ($\bar{x} = 3.61$), and investing ($\bar{x} = 3.58$) all fell within the high literacy level. However, students' financial behavior registered a comparatively lower composite mean of 3.61, indicating a gap between conceptual understanding and consistent practical application. Thematic findings identified limited financial resources, lack of formal financial education, weak financial discipline, social influences, and restricted access to financial institutions as major challenges in applying financial concepts. Based on these findings, a Financial Literacy Enhancement Module was developed to strengthen applied competencies, particularly in budgeting and investing. The study proposed a targeted, practice-oriented curricular interventions to bridge the gap between financial knowledge and financial behavior among Agribusiness students.

Keywords: Financial Capability, Agribusiness Education, Student Financial Behavior, Financial Management Practices, Agripreneurial Preparedness.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Financial literacy had become an essential life competency in modern economies, which enabled individuals to make informed and responsible decisions regarding saving, spending, budgeting, and investing. As financial systems grew increasingly complex through digital transactions, mobile banking, and diversified financial products, young adults were increasingly required to manage financial decisions with greater independence and accountability [1], [2].

Empirical studies consistently indicated that financial literacy extended beyond conceptual knowledge and required the ability to translate financial understanding into everyday financial practices. While students demonstrated adequate knowledge of financial principles, gaps frequently persisted in the consistent application of budgeting, saving, and investment behaviors [3]. These gaps were influenced by contextual factors such as limited financial resources, weak financial discipline, social pressures, and access to financial

services, particularly among students in developing economies [4].

Agribusiness students represented a critical yet understudied population in financial literacy research. Beyond managing personal finances, they were expected to develop competencies in resource allocation, cost control, and investment planning as future agripreneurs and enterprise managers. However, existing Philippine studies had largely focused on general college populations, with limited attention given to discipline-specific analyses that examined both conceptual understanding and financial behavior among Agribusiness students [5].

II. OBJECTIVES

This study aims to assess the financial literacy of Agribusiness students by determining their level of mastery in the key components of financial literacy, namely saving, spending, budgeting, and investing. It further seeks to evaluate students' overall financial literacy in terms of

knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. In addition, the study examines the relationship between students' conceptual understanding of financial literacy and their actual financial management practices to identify potential gaps between knowledge and application. It also aims to identify the challenges that hinder students from effectively understanding and applying financial literacy concepts in real-life contexts. Finally, based on the findings, the study proposes curriculum-based interventions or learning strategies to enhance financial literacy education among Agribusiness students, consistent with the objectives of outcomes-based and practice-oriented higher education.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, which integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches that comprehensively assessed the conceptual understanding of financial literacy among Agribusiness students. The quantitative component measured students' mastery of financial literacy concepts, while the qualitative component explored challenges encountered in applying financial knowledge to actual financial behavior.

B. Respondents and Sampling

The respondents consisted of 120 second-year Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness students enrolled at Sorsogon State University-Castilla Campus during the Academic Year 2024-2025. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across class sections, which enhanced the reliability and generalizability of the findings within the study population.

C. Research Instruments

Data were collected using a researcher-developed survey questionnaire composed of two parts. The first part measured students' conceptual understanding of financial literacy in terms of saving, spending, budgeting, and investing using a five-point Likert scale. The second part consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit students' experiences and perceived challenges in applying financial literacy concepts. The instrument was subjected to content validation by experts in finance and education to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives.

D. Data Collection Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate university authorities prior to data collection. The questionnaire was administered to respondents in person, with clear instructions provided to ensure informed and voluntary participation. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were strictly observed throughout the research process.

E. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using weighted mean to determine the level of students' conceptual understanding of financial literacy in terms of saving, spending, budgeting, and investing. Each indicator was measured using a five-point Likert scale, with numerical values interpreted as follows: 5.00–4.20 (Very High Literacy), 4.19–3.40 (High Literacy), 3.39–2.60 (Moderate Literacy), 2.59–1.80 (Low Literacy), and 1.79–1.00 (Very Low Literacy). Composite means were computed for each financial literacy dimension and for overall financial literacy to assess general mastery levels.

Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which followed a systematic process of data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Emergent themes were used to explain contextual factors influencing students' financial behavior and to complement the quantitative findings. Integration of quantitative and qualitative results was conducted during interpretation to provide a holistic understanding of the relationship between conceptual understanding and financial behavior.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Level of Conceptual Understanding of Financial Literacy

Table 1 presents the level of conceptual understanding of financial literacy among Agribusiness students in terms of saving, spending, budgeting, and investing. Results showed an overall composite mean of 3.76, which indicated a high level of financial literacy. Among the four dimensions, spending ($\bar{x} = 3.85$) and saving ($\bar{x} = 3.82$) obtained the highest mean scores, which suggested strong conceptual mastery of day-to-day financial management practices. These findings implied that students were generally aware of responsible spending habits and the importance of saving, which were often reinforced through personal experience and family influence.

Table 1. Level of Conceptual Understanding of Financial Literacy Among Agribusiness Students

Financial Literacy Component	Mean (\bar{x})	Descriptive Interpretation
Saving	3.82	High Literacy
Spending	3.85	High Literacy
Budgeting	3.61	High Literacy
Investing	3.58	High Literacy
Composite Mean	3.76	High Literacy

In contrast, budgeting ($\bar{x} = 3.61$) and investing ($\bar{x} = 3.58$), while still classified under high literacy, recorded comparatively lower mean scores. This indicated that although students understand these concepts at a theoretical

level, their mastery was less robust compared to saving and spending. Similar patterns had been reported in previous studies, which suggested that budgeting and investing required more formal instruction and experiential learning

than basic financial practices [3], [4]. The results supported the view that financial literacy was uneven across domains, with more complex concepts which required targeted educational intervention.

B. Financial Behavior of Agribusiness Students

Table 2 presents the level of financial behavior of the respondents, with an overall composite mean of 3.61, indicating a high level of financial behavior. This suggested that the students generally demonstrated positive financial practices in terms of saving, spending, budgeting, and investing. However, when compared with their higher level

of conceptual understanding, the results indicated that the consistent application of financial concepts, particularly in budgeting discipline and investment planning, remained comparatively less robust.

This knowledge-behavior gap was consistent with existing literature, which emphasized that financial knowledge alone did not automatically translate into prudent financial behavior [2], [5]. Behavioral factors such as self-control, income limitations, and social influence mediated the application of financial knowledge in real-life situations.

Table 2. Financial Behavior in Terms of Saving, Spending, Budgeting, and Investing

Financial Behavior Component	Mean (\bar{x})	Descriptive Interpretation
Saving Behavior	3.68	High Literacy
Spending Behavior	3.74	High Literacy
Budgeting Behavior	3.55	High Literacy
Investment Behavior	3.47	High Literacy
Composite Mean	3.61	High Literacy

These findings implied that conceptual mastery should be reinforced through structured, practice-oriented learning experiences to strengthen sustained and effective financial behavior.

C. Challenges in Applying Financial Literacy Concepts

Qualitative analysis of open-ended responses revealed several recurring themes that explain the observed gap between financial knowledge and behavior. The most prominent challenges included limited financial resources, which restrict students' ability to practice saving and investing; lack of formal financial education, particularly on budgeting and investment instruments; weak financial discipline, characterized by impulsive spending; social influences, including peer pressure; and limited access to financial institutions.

These findings contextualized the quantitative results and highlighted that financial behavior was shaped by both individual and structural factors. The themes supported prior studies which asserted that financial literacy initiatives must address environmental constraints and behavioral influences, not merely cognitive understanding [1], [4]. The integration of qualitative insights strengthened the interpretation of results by explaining why high literacy levels did not automatically translate into consistent financial behavior.

D. Implications for Financial Literacy Enhancement

Based on the findings, the development of a Financial Literacy Enhancement Module is justified, particularly to address weaknesses in budgeting and investing. The module emphasizes practical exercises, scenario-based learning, and real-world financial decision-making to bridge the gap between knowledge and application. This intervention aligns with the study's results and responds directly to the identified challenges, reinforcing the importance of practice-oriented financial education within Agribusiness curricula.

V. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the conceptual understanding and financial behavior of second-year Agribusiness students and revealed that, while respondents demonstrated a high level of financial literacy, the application of financial concepts in daily financial practices remained inconsistent. Students showed stronger mastery of saving and spending concepts, whereas budgeting and investing, although still within the high literacy range, emerged as comparatively weaker areas. These findings indicated that conceptual knowledge alone was insufficient to ensure consistent and effective financial behavior.

The presence of a knowledge-behavior gap highlighted the influence of contextual and behavioral factors, including limited financial resources, weak financial discipline, social pressures, and restricted access to formal financial services. These factors constrained students' ability to translate financial knowledge into practice, particularly in budgeting and investment-related decisions. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings underscored the importance of addressing both cognitive and environmental dimensions of financial literacy.

The development of a Financial Literacy Enhancement Module directly responds to the study's findings by emphasizing applied learning, real-life financial scenarios, and skill-based activities. This intervention provides a practical framework for strengthening financial capability among Agribusiness students and supports the integration of financial literacy into higher education curricula. Overall, the study contributes empirical evidence to the growing body of financial literacy research and emphasizes the need for practice-oriented, discipline-specific financial education to promote sustainable financial behavior among future agripreneurs and professionals.

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