

Financial Literacy in Brunei: A Socio-Cultural Analysis

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of the relationship between the social and cultural background of Bruneians and their financial literacy level, with a focus on younger and middle-aged adults in Brunei. The focal research questions address demographics and awareness of financial literacy concepts and variations between groups: what are the key socio-cultural factors that impact financial decision-making and behavior in Bruneian communities, and to what extent does financial literacy vary among socio-economic and demographic groups in Brunei? To collect data, a questionnaire was distributed via mainstream social media platforms. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: Socio-demographic Background, Financial Inclusion, and Financial-Related. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS, with ANOVA tests performed to address the research questions. The study finds that the financial literacy level is influenced by socio-cultural variables, including ethnicity, first language, and education.

The study's findings underscore the need to improve public education efforts across various contexts, starting from an early age, to ensure that all Bruneians achieve and maintain financial literacy throughout their lives (Al Rahahleh, 2022). Although there are variations across demographic categories and other characteristics, all age groups included in the sample showed a need for increased support in relation to financial literacy.

JEL classification numbers: G53, G40, D14, Z10.

Keywords: Financial literacy, Financial education, Socio-cultural factors, Financial decision making, Brunei.

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1. Introduction

In contemporary society characterized by its interconnectedness and diversity, people worldwide engage in economic interactions on a daily basis ranging from simple transactions, such as purchasing groceries and paying bills, to complex financial activities, such as investing in stocks, trading currencies, and participating in global supply chains. According to Davoli & Rodriguez-Planas (2020), in present-day conditions, people encounter progressively intricate financial decisions in every phase of adulthood and that the ability to make solid financial judgements and avoid financial mistakes is critical to their functioning in everyday life, whether in the immediate present or over the long-term. Therefore, in an increasingly precarious and interconnected market, people need both considerable financial knowledge and access to financial services in order to make well-informed financial decisions and act on them accordingly (Al Rahahleh, 2022, 2023, 2025; Al-Hanawi and Al Rahahleh, 2024). Financial literacy is defined as the ability to analyze economic information and make informed decisions regarding financial planning, which encompasses asset accumulation, debt management, budgeting, saving, investing, insurance, and retirement savings (Al Rahahleh, 2022; Lusardi, 2019). However, financial literacy levels vary considerably between people for a number of reasons, including socio-cultural background. Defining the sociocultural perspective as the belief that an individual's development, thoughts, and behavior are influenced by the society and organizations they are part of, Rahmatirad (2020) emphasizes that people think and behave differently based on their exposure to given social and cultural contexts as they grow up. The dynamics of financial decision-making are inextricably linked to socio-cultural influences such that understanding the intersection of socio-cultural elements and financial literacy has emerged as a critical topic of research with practical implications. Sari et al. (2025) argued that financial education tailored to local cultural values enhances students' financial literacy by connecting financial concepts with their cultural contexts and daily experiences. A more nuanced understanding of this intersection will shed light on the ways in which socio-cultural background influences how people perceive, comprehend, and interact with financial concepts, eventually impacting their financial behaviors and outcomes. According to Guiso and Viviano (2015), people show a significant deficiency in their understanding of the fundamental financial concepts that should ideally inform their financial choices. Amid rapid changes and continuous advancements in the financial sector and the wider economy, it is crucial to determine whether or not people possess the necessary skills to successfully manage the complex array of financial choices they encounter in everyday life. In greater detail and following Al Rahahleh (2022), this study examines variations in financial literacy levels across factors such as gender, age, educational attainment, income, and employment sector. The primary research questions are: How financially literate are the citizens of Brunei? Are there demographic- and characteristic-based differences in financial literacy levels among the surveyed sample? The analysis primarily reflects the financial literacy of younger and middle-

aged adults in Brunei, making the findings both timely and crucial for informing the country's financial literacy strategy, as well as for strengthening the infrastructure required to support it effectively.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents a literature review. The methodology is detailed in Section 3 together with a description of the instrument used and sample screening and preparation. The key findings are presented in Section 4. The general discussion is presented in Section 5 and concluding remarks in Section 6.

2. Literature Review

Several studies have explored the relationship between cultural factors and financial literacy. Sari et al. (2025) argued that financial education that is adapted to the cultural values of the local community is more effective in enhancing financial literacy as it connects financial concepts with their everyday experiences and cultural context. According to Davoli & Rodriguez-Planas (2020), culture can influence financial literacy by shaping a person's beliefs and values regarding the importance of acquiring the information needed to make well-founded financial choices, including on matters such as precautionary savings, level of risk to assume, portfolio diversification strategy, reliance on and type of debt, and risks associated with high inflation or deflation. In De Beckker et al. (2020), national culture exerts a significant influence on financial literacy such that it is crucial to consider cultural aspects in international studies on financial literacy. Aracil et al. (2016) found that school-level social and cultural factors, including the provision of music and drama programs, volunteering activities, mathematics competitions, positive student–teacher relationships, and active parental involvement in school activities, were positively associated with adolescents' financial literacy. Adshebami and Aldhyani (2022) pointed to the significance of both parental and peer influence in the development of financial literacy, as well as the value of financial literacy in motivating young people to save money. According to Rink et al. (2021), although some researchers have examined the impact of financial decision-making on financial awareness, particularly among women, there is still a lack of comprehensive information about the influence of culture on financial literacy.

Demographic factors, such as education and monthly income, have been found to impact financial literacy (Yildirim et al., 2017). Specifically, both basic and advanced financial literacy tend to improve as educational level and monthly income increase. In a study by Lusardi and Mitchell (2011), women's financial literacy was found to be lower than men's; people in middle age were found to have higher financial literacy than those in both the younger and older age groups; and higher educational levels were associated with greater financial understanding.

According to Riitsalu and Põder (2016), the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and the availability of financial education accounts for differences in financial literacy in many nations, although not universally. Dewi (2022) found that socioeconomic status influenced the connections between different components of financial literacy whereby those better off economically showed greater financial management proficiency as compared to those worse off.

Further, higher levels of financial literacy are associated with significantly greater financial inclusion (Morgan and Long, 2020). A financial society with a high degree of inclusivity is one in which the majority of its participants use formal financial systems to access financial services and maintain capital stability (Kim et al., 2018). Grohmann et al. (2018) reported that financial literacy is significantly and positively correlated with four key indicators of financial inclusion—access to financial services, utilization of financial services, overall country characteristics, and a country's financial infrastructure. Sarma (2012) suggested that financial inclusion ensures universal access to the formal financial system, which enhances well-being and productivity by decreasing reliance on exploitative informal lending sources and enabling secure savings and efficient financial services.

In a study on the relationship between demographic factors and financial literacy levels among Saudi citizens, Al Rahahleh (2022) found both notable similarities and significant differences between groups. For example, Saudis of both genders showed adequate financial literacy related to budgeting, debt management, and saving, indicating that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is having some success educating both men and women—a promising development given the country's traditional views on women's roles. Additionally, compared with other age groups, older respondents evinced higher levels of financial literacy in investment and insurance, likely due to increased financial responsibilities and resources associated with career progression and approaching retirement. In contrast, younger respondents evinced greater literacy in debt management, possibly due to their more frequent need to handle debt for purposes such as starting a business or purchasing a home. Married people, those with a bachelor's and/or postgraduate degree, and those who had studied finance-related subjects generally demonstrated higher levels of financial literacy.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Survey Design, Data Collection, and Analysis Procedures

Following the descriptive approach using quantitative data collected through a questionnaire survey instrument, this study examines financial literacy levels among a sample of young and middle-aged adults in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, and investigates the influence of social cultural factors on financial literacy. In terms of the sample used, the study addresses a gap in the literature by focusing primarily on young adults while also including middle-aged adults, thereby providing insights into financial literacy during key stages of adulthood. Given that early adulthood is a critical period for developing financial knowledge and establishing lifelong financial behaviors, the study examines both basic and advanced dimensions of financial literacy. Accordingly, data were collected via a self-administered questionnaire made available online, which were then subjected to analysis using a quantitative descriptive approach.

The questionnaire construct consisted of three sections. Focused on the socio-cultural background of the respondents, the first section comprised questions on gender, age (young adults aged 18–39, middle-aged adults aged 40–59, and old adults aged 60 and above); ethnicity (Bruneian Malay, Bruneian Chinese, Bruneian Dusun, Bruneian Kedayan, and Other); religious belief (Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu); first language (Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese); marital status (single, married, and divorced); monthly income (BND500 and below, BND501–1500, BND1501–3000, and BND3000 and above); highest level of education (high school, diploma, undergraduate degree and graduate degree); and employment status (employed, unemployed, homemaker, student).

The second section of the questionnaire focused on financial inclusion. The respondents were first asked whether or not they had a bank account. For those who answered yes, follow-up questions asked about the type of account and the amount held. The extent of the respondents' familiarity with the services offered by commercial banks in Brunei both physically and digitally was also tested.

The last section of the questionnaire, which consisted of three subsections, focused on financial literacy. The first subsection consisted of a Likert-type scale to measure the respondents' familiarity with specific concepts and terms (interest payment, compound interest, depreciation, shares/stocks, return on investment, dividend, diversification, budget, and annual percentage yield). The second subsection focused on financial-related questions to test the financial literacy of the respondents. A total of 7 questions focused on a broad range of financial related topics such as interest and compound interest, inflation, risk diversification and management, loans, and bond prices. The third subsection focused on collecting qualitative data by asking open-ended questions about the respondents' short-term and long-term financial goals as well as whether they used any tools or apps to manage their finances.

Conducted in February and March 2025, the self-administered survey was distributed through email, social media platforms (Whatsapp and Instagram), and a QR code. The target respondents were Bruneian residents aged 18 and older. Out of a total of 120 responses received, 34 were excluded from the sample because of missing data. The remaining 86 responses were found to be complete, free of inconsistent assessments, and satisfied the criteria of the target sample based on using a banking account. These 86 responses were, therefore, considered valid such that they comprised the sample subjected to data analysis. The responses were coded into SPSS.

The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS v27), which provides multiple tools and tests to assist in analyzing data and identifying patterns, was used to process the data and apply the statistical tests. The data analysis consisted of descriptive analysis, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the Independent Samples T-Test, and the Chi-square test.

3.2 Demographics and Characteristics of the Surveyed Sample

Frequencies and percentages were collected to describe the characteristics of the sample overall (Table 1). Almost two thirds of the respondents were female [$n = 53$, 61.6%] and the rest were male [$n = 33$, 38.4%]. The majority of the respondents were young adults aged 18–39 [$n = 68$, 79.1%] with a fifth were middle-aged adults aged 40–59 [$n = 18$, 20.9%]. In terms of ethnicity, the sample consisted of the following groups: Bruneian Malay [$n = 41$, 47.7%], Chinese [$n = 38$, 44.2%], Dusun [$n = 5$, 5.8%], and Other [$n = 2$, 2.3%]. For the first language of the respondents, more than half reported Malay [$n = 45$, 52.3%] with the rest reporting other languages [$n = 41$, 47.7%].

In terms of monthly income, more than half the respondents [$n = 47$, 54.7%] were in the lowest income category of BND500 or below, with the rest [$n = 39$, 45.3%] receiving BND501 or above. For highest level of education, almost two thirds [$n = 52$, 60.5%] had attended university at the undergraduate and/or graduate level, whereas the rest had ended their education at an earlier point [$n = 34$, 39.5%]. Finally, for employment status, there was a close to even split between students [$n = 44$, 51.2%] and those in employment [$n = 42$, 48.8%]. Overall, the profile of the respondents' characteristics demonstrated diversity; the data collected were, therefore, appropriate for the topic of interest.

Table 1: Characteristics profile (n = 86)

Sub-group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	33	38.4
Female	53	61.6
<i>Age</i>		
18–39 (Young adults)	68	79.1
40–59 (Middle-aged adults)	18	20.9
60 and above (Old adults)	0.0	0.0
<i>Ethnic group</i>		
Bruneian Malay	41	47.7
Chinese	38	44.2
Dusun	5	5.8
Kedayan	0.0	0.0
Other	2	2.3
<i>First language</i>		
Malay	45	52.3
Other	41	47.7
<i>Monthly income</i>		
BND500 and below	47	54.7
BND501 and above	39	45.3
<i>Highest level of education</i>		
Below university education	34	39.5
University education (undergraduate and/or graduate)	52	60.5
<i>Employment status</i>		
Employed	42	48.8
Unemployed	0.0	0.0
Homemaker	0.0	0.0
Student	44	51.2
Other	0.0	0.0

Source: Authors' survey data

3.3 Validation of Data Suitability and Normality Testing

A preliminary check established that missing data was not an issue. Further the dataset was found to be suitable for parametric analysis based on the sample size of above $n = 30$. This is the cutoff between small and large samples, as a large sample is considered normally distributed based on variance that is close to the variance of its population (Pallant, 2026). The normality of data was checked for the items measuring financial literacy: both groups of items were found to be normally distributed following the skewness/kurtosis coefficients seen within the range of ± 2.2 (George and Mallery, 2016): first group of items $[-1.217/1.354]$ and second group $[-0.110/-0.759]$. Given that the first group was designed to measure financial literacy using a 3-item Likert-type scale, Cronbach's alpha supported the reliability of the items with its coefficient value $[0.937]$ exceeding the 0.70 cutoff proposed for determining statistical reliability (Bougie and Sekaran, 2019).

4. Results and Main Findings

4.1 Financial inclusion indicators for surveyed sample

To determine the extent and nature of financial inclusion among the surveyed respondents, a set of indicators was identified and data pertaining to them collected and analyzed. The sample was found to be appropriate given that an examination of actual financial literacy requires some level of financial inclusion for at least some of the respondents (Table 2).

In Al-Hanawi and Al Rahahleh's (2024) definition of financial inclusion, multiple indicators should be referenced to determine the extent to which given individuals and also entire populations are financially included in a country's formal financial system. These indicators of financial inclusiveness pertain to the proportion of citizens who participate in the system by, for example, holding a checking and/or a savings account with a financial institution, having taken out a loan from a financial institution, and owning an ATM or debit card linked to these accounts. Building on this definition, the present study also includes the usage of various financial services. This expansion acknowledges the essential role that utilizing financial services plays in improving individuals' access to financial resources and strengthening their engagement with the formal financial sector.

Regarding banking account ownership, close to half the respondents [$n = 40$, 46.5%] had two accounts and a third [$n = 26$, 30.2%] had one account. The sample size then declined with each additional account: three accounts [$n = 13$, 15.1%], four accounts [$n = 6$, 7.0%], and five accounts [$n = 1$, 1.2%]. The types of accounts held by the respondents were reported as follows: savings [$n = 85$, 70.2%], checking [$n = 17$, 14.0%], fixed deposit [$n = 14$, 11.6%], recurring deposit [$n = 1$, 0.8%], and other [$n = 4$, 3.3%]. Concerning the respondents' awareness of given financial products and services, almost a quarter [$n = 40$, 24.5%] reported awareness of investment products such as certificates of deposit, exchange traded funds (ETFs), bonds, unit trusts, and investment-linked life insurance. Close to a fifth of the respondents reported being aware of the other financial products and services specified in the survey: Zakat counter [$n = 31$, 19.0%], remittance service [$n = 30$, 18.4%], safe deposit box [$n = 29$, 17.8%], and [$n = 33$, 20.3%]. However, it is also the case that a fifth of the respondents were not familiar with any of these products and services. Finally, in reference to digital financial services, more respondents [$n = 83$, 58.9%] reported using online banking such as viewing account balances and transaction history, using fund transfer and bill payment services, than any other digital tool. Close to a third [$n = 44$, 31.2%] of the respondents reported using a digital wallet such as contactless payments, with far fewer [$n = 10$, 7.1%] using digital remittances such as international money transfers. These results demonstrate adequate financial inclusion among the surveyed sample for the purpose of the present study.

Table 2: Financial inclusion characteristics of the surveyed sample

Sub-group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bank account count		
1 account	26	30.2%
2 accounts	40	46.5%
3 accounts	13	15.1%
4 accounts	6	7.0%
5 accounts	1	1.2%
Other	0	0
Account type†		
Savings account	85	70.2%
Current account	17	14.0%
Fixed deposit account	14	11.6%
Recurring deposit account	1	0.8%
Other	4	3.3%
Financial Products/services used†		
Zakat counter (Zakat payment services)	31	19.0%
Remittances services	30	18.4%
Safe deposit box services	29	17.8%
Investment products such as certificate of deposits, exchange traded funds (ETFs), bonds, unit trusts, and investment-linked life insurance	40	24.5%
Not familiar with financial products/services	33	20.3%
Digital financial services used†		
Online banking such as viewing account balances and transaction history, making funds transfer, and making bill payments	83	58.9%
Digital wallet such as contactless payments	44	31.2%
Digital remittances such as international money transfers	10	7.1%
Don't know	4	2.8%
Other	0	0

Note: †:Multi select is allowed (i.e., Multiple responses were permitted; therefore, percentages may not sum to 100%). Source: Authors' survey data.

4.2 Levels of financial literacy among respondents

Two types of measures were used to determine the levels of financial literacy among the respondents. The first measure, which assesses familiarity with key financial terms and concepts, evaluates basic financial literacy using a 3-point Likert-type scale. The second measure evaluates advanced financial literacy by testing the ability to apply financial knowledge to practical situations. This measure is based on factual answers related to three aspects of financial literacy: the time value of money, bond valuation, and investment risks.

Basic financial literacy was measured based on the respondents' familiarity with

foundational financial concepts. Nine items were used with options available on a 3-point Likert-type scale based on Bougie and Sekaran (2019) and as used in additional previous research (e.g., Al Rahahleh, 2023). The aggregate level of agreement was based on the following scale categories: low familiarity [1–1.66], moderate familiarity [1.67–2.33], and high familiarity [2.34–3.00]. A descriptive analysis based on the Mean and Standard deviation [STD] was performed to determine aggregate levels of basic financial literacy among the respondents (Table 3).

Table 3: Aggregate Levels of Basic Financial Literacy Among Respondents (n = 86)

No.	Rank order	Item	Mean†	Std.	Rank
1	2	Interest payment	2.66	0.59	High
2	7	Compound interest	2.41	0.68	High
3	5	Depreciation	2.52	0.65	High
4	1	Shares/stocks	2.66	0.57	High
5	4	Return on investment	2.59	0.58	High
6	6	Dividend	2.47	0.66	High
7	9	Diversification	2.30	0.70	Moderate
8	3	Budget	2.66	0.61	High
9	8	Annual percentage yield	2.35	0.66	High
Overall mean			2.51		High

Note: †: The aggregate level of basic financial literacy familiarity was interpreted using equal interval categories derived from the three-point scale (Al Rahahleh et al., 2023). The mean scores were categorized as low familiarity (1.00–1.66), moderate familiarity (1.67–2.33), and high familiarity (2.34–3.00).

Source: Authors' survey data.

The results of the general financial literacy analysis (Table 3) demonstrate a high level of basic financial literacy among the respondents overall [Mean= 2.51]. Further, each of the financial concepts showed a high level of familiarity with the exception of Diversification, for which the sample indicated a moderate level of familiarity [Mean = 2.30]. The respondents were most familiar with Shares/Stocks [Mean = 2.66], followed by Interest Payment [Mean = 2.66], Budget [Mean = 2.66], Return on Investment [Mean = 2.59], Depreciation [Mean = 2.52], Dividend [Mean = 2.47], Compound Interest [Mean = 2.41], and Annual percentage yield [Mean = 2.35]. Agreement and homogeneity in assessments were evident, as all but one of the STD values were below the 0.70 cutoff. The exception was Diversification, which showed a moderate level of agreement and STD at the level of 0.70.

The advanced financial literacy results based on factual knowledge are presented in Table 4. Each correct answer was assigned a value of 1, whereas each incorrect answer was assigned a value of 0. The total score indicated the overall knowledge of the respondents.

Table 4: Aggregate Levels of Applied Financial Literacy Knowledge Among Respondents (n = 86)

No.	Order	Question		Score†
1	1	Q1	Compound interest	69/86 (80.2%)
2	3	Q2	Real vs. nominal interest rates	60/86 (69.8%)
3	6	Q3	Bond valuation	54/86 (62.8%)
4	2	Q4	Risk-return tradeoff	50/86 (58.1%)
5	4	Q5	Mortgage payments	44/86 (51.2%)
6	5	Q6	Investment risk	29/86 (33.7%)
7	7	Q7	Time value of money	28/86 (32.6%)
Total score				334/602 (55.5%)

Note: †: The Score column reports the number of correct responses/total respondents, with the corresponding percentage shown in parentheses. Source: Authors' survey data.

Overall, the respondents were found to have average familiarity with advanced financial literacy concepts based on the total score of 334 out of a possible 602. Further, the majority of the questions returned average scores. The highest level of knowledge was seen for Q1 with 69 out of 86, whereas lower financial literacy was seen for the remaining questions. The lowest level of financial literacy was found for Q7 (28 out of 86).

4.3 The intersection of social-cultural factors and financial literacy

In this section, results pertaining to the intersection of social-cultural factors and general financial literacy are reported. The general measure of financial literacy was based on a 3-point Likert-type scale to provide data about the mean values. Testing for significant differences between the mean values relative to the subset of characteristics was performed based on ANOVA and the Independent Samples T-Test. With the exception of highest level of education [$F = -2.877$, $P = 0.005$], the tests for each of the characteristics showed significance above the proposed level [0.05] (Table 5). Compared with respondents with a lower level of education, those with a university education scored higher on general financial literacy.

Table 5: Results of ANOVA and Independent Samples T-Test for differences in testing levels of financial literacy according to respondents' demographics (n = 86)

Subset	N	Mean	Std.	[Test] value	Sig.	Source of differences
Gender†						
Male	33	2.59	0.45	1.109	0.271	--
Female	53	2.46	0.55			
Age‡‡						
18–39 (Young Adults)	68	2.53	0.54	0.282	0.755	--
40–59 (Middle-Aged Adults)	18	2.43	0.43			
Ethnic group‡‡						
Bruneian Malay	41	2.52	0.45	1.002	0.396	--
Chinese	38	2.56	0.58			
Dusun	5	2.15	0.44			
Others	2	2.33	0.47			
First language†						
Malay language	45	2.47	0.46	-0.798	0.427	--
Other	41	2.56	0.57			
Monthly income†						
BND500 and below	47	2.49	0.53	-0.347	0.729	--
BND501 and above	39	2.53	0.50			
Highest level of education†						
Below university education	34	2.32	0.57	-2.877	0.005**	University education
University education	52	2.63	0.43			
Employment status†						
Employed	42	2.43	0.54	-1.462	0.148	--
Student	44	2.59	0.48			

Notes: [†]Result by Independent Samples T-Test. ^{‡‡} Result by ANOVA test. *, **, and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively. Source: Authors' analysis of survey data.

The results of the Chi-square Tests for differences in advanced financial literacy levels (factual knowledge) in relation to the respondents' demographics are reported in Table 6. Significance was determined based on 90% of significance, and even for non-significant tests cross-tabulation results were considered in order to identify indicators that might contribute to the study goals. The results were as follows:

- Gender: The Pearson Chi-square results [11.547, $P = 0.116$] showed a non-significant association between gender and advanced financial literacy level. The cross-tabulation indicated that the female respondents generally scored higher than the male respondents for advanced financial literacy.
- Age: The Pearson Chi-square results [19.430, $P = 0.149$] showed a non-significant association between age and advanced financial literacy level. The cross-tabulation indicated that young adults generally scored higher on advanced financial literacy than middle-aged adults.

- Ethnic group: The Pearson Chi-square results [30.859, $P = 0.076$] showed a significant association between ethnic group and advanced financial literacy level. The cross-tabulation indicated that high advanced financial literacy levels were more common among the Chinese respondents than among the respondents of any of the other ethnic groups.
- First language: The Pearson Chi-square results [14.868, $P = 0.038$] showed a significant association between first language and advanced financial literacy level. The cross-tabulation indicated that high advanced financial literacy levels were more common respondents reporting a first language other than Malay.
- Monthly income: The Pearson Chi-square results [10.404, $P = 0.167$] showed a non-significant association between monthly income and advanced financial literacy level. The cross-tabulation indicated that high advanced financial literacy levels were more common among the respondents reporting income of BND501 and above than among those at the lower income level.
- Highest level of education: The Pearson Chi-square results [13.957, $P = 0.052$] showed a significant association between highest educational level and advanced financial literacy levels. The cross-tabulation indicated that high advanced financial literacy levels were more common among respondents who had attended university than among those who had not done so.
- Employment status: The Pearson Chi-square results [2.615 $P = 0.918$] showed a non-significant association between employment status and advanced financial literacy levels. No patterns of association were identified from the cross-tabulation.

Table 6: Results of the Chi-square Test (χ^2) for differences in testing levels of advanced financial literacy (factual knowledge) relative to the respondents' demographics (n = 86)

Variable	χ^2	Sig.	Cross-tabulation				Group Diff.	
Gender	11.547	0.116	Score	Male	Female		Female	
			0.00	0	7			
			1.00	0	2			
			2.00	7	5			
			3.00	10	9			
			4.00	3	10			
			5.00	4	7			
			6.00	3	7			
			7.00	6	6			
Age	19.430	0.149	Score	18–39	40–59		18-39	
			0.00	7	0			
			1.00	2	0			
			2.00	11	1			
			3.00	13	6			
			4.00	10	3			
			5.00	8	3			
			6.00	6	4			
			7.00	11	1			
Ethnic group	30.859	0.076*	Score	Brun. Malay	Chinese	Dusun	Other	Chinese
			0.00	2	4	0	1	
			1.00	1	1	0	0	
			2.00	10	1	0	1	
			3.00	11	5	3	0	
			4.00	6	5	2	0	
			5.00	4	7	0	0	
			6.00	3	7	0	0	
			7.00	4	8	0	0	
First language	14.868	0.038*	Score	Malay	Other		Other	
			0.00	4	3			
			1.00	1	1			
			2.00	10	2			
			3.00	14	5			
			4.00	6	7			
			5.00	3	8			
			6.00	3	7			
			7.00	4	8			
Monthly income	10.404	0.167	Score	≤BND500	≥ BND501		≥ BND501	
			0.00	6	1			
			1.00	1	1			
			2.00	10	2			
			3.00	10	9			
			4.00	7	6			
			5.00	5	6			
			6.00	3	7			
			7.00	5	7			

Highest level of education	13.957	0.052**	Score	Below Univ.	University education	University education
			0.00	3	4	
			1.00	0	2	
			2.00	7	5	
			3.00	12	7	
			4.00	3	10	
			5.00	4	7	
			6.00	4	6	
			7.00	1	11	
Employment status	2.615	0.918	Score	Employed	Student	--
			0.00	2	5	
			1.00	1	1	
			2.00	5	7	
			3.00	11	8	
			4.00	6	7	
			5.00	5	6	
			6.00	6	4	
			7.00	6	6	

Note: *, **, and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

Source: Authors' analysis of survey data.

In order to establish whether or not there is an intersection between social cultural factors and advanced financial literacy levels, a more in-depth analysis was performed. The three variables—ethnic group, first language, and highest educational level—that were significant in earlier cross-tabulation tests were entered into the univariate model. The results of the univariate model showed a non-significant influence for the interaction of the subgroups of Ethnic * Language * Education [$F = 0.771$, $P = 0.573$] (Table 7).

Table 7: Results of the univariate model for the interaction influence of Ethnic * Language * Education (n = 86)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	80.248 [†]	10	8.025	2.192	0.027
Intercept	154.049	1	154.049	42.076	0.000
Ethnic	19.348	3	6.449	1.761	0.162
Language	17.945	1	17.945	4.901	0.030**
Edu ²	0.032	1	0.032	.009	0.925
Ethnic * Language * Education	14.119	5	2.824	0.771	0.573
Error	274.590	75	3.661		
Total	1652.000	86			
Corrected total	354.837	85			

Notes: [†]: $R^2 = 0.226$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.123$). *, **, and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively. Source: Authors' analysis of survey data.

5. Discussion

This study investigated the Bruneian context, specifically young educated people, in order to establish whether or not there is an intersection between social-cultural factors and financial literacy levels. The study was based on a quantitative approach using a survey through which demographic information was collected together with data pertinent to financial inclusion indicators and financial literacy levels.

Overall, based on the general financial literacy indicators, the respondents were found to have high levels of basic financial literacy. However, when more in-depth knowledge was tested used to measure advanced financial literacy, average levels of literacy were seen. These results indicated the need to place greater emphasis on promoting advanced financial literacy among Bruneian citizens. Although age was not significantly associated with advanced financial literacy, the descriptive analysis revealed that young adults generally outperformed middle-aged adults. Accordingly, financial literacy initiatives may place greater emphasis on strengthening advanced financial literacy among middle-aged adults.

Further, the study results indicated that with the exception of highest educational level none of the social-cultural factors has a crucial role in determining basic financial literacy levels. These results clearly point to the need to conduct studies that integrate other variables into the model in order to determine significant factors shaping financial literacy among Bruneian citizens. Educational level was found to be a predictor of basic financial literacy level, with respondents who had a university education showing a higher level than those with lower educational achievement.

In regard to the relationship between social cultural factors and advanced financial literacy levels, it was found that ethnic group, first language, and highest level of education were significant predictors. This result indicates that being from another culture based on speaking another language or being from another non-main ethnic group in the country are characteristics associated with higher levels of advanced financial literacy. According to Mokhtar et al. (2018), financial literacy, financial management, and financial aptitude are influenced by race or ethnic background. Angrisani et al. (2021) identified individual characteristics and the socioeconomic status of an area as the main elements contributing to racial/ethnic disparities in relation financial literacy.

The study results demonstrated that ethnicity exerts a substantial influence on the financial literacy of Brunei citizens. Based on the findings, Bruneians of Chinese ethnicity demonstrated a higher average score, suggesting a superior level of financial literacy as compared to that of other ethnic groups. Similar results have been reported for Malaysia (Wee and Goy, 2022). And, Chinese respondents have been found to exhibit markedly superior financial literacy in comparison to those of other ethnicities (Jeyaram and Mustapha, 2015). A reasonable explanation for the impact of ethnicity on financial literacy is the distinct cultural attitudes and norms of respective ethnic groups—differences that can shape the way people perceive and engage with money management including saving and investing.

First language is another socio-cultural factor that affects the financial literacy of Bruneians. It is likely that a person's native language affects financial literacy level because language is closely tied to culture, and financial concepts and practices can vary significantly across cultures and languages. People who primarily speak a language associated with and expressing a given cultural context may encounter challenges in understanding or relating to financial information presented in another cultural context. In studies examining the impact of language on thoughts and behavior, linguists and psychology researchers (Boroditsky et al., 2011; Wolff and Holmes, 2010) have found that how people think is influenced by the language they speak. Differences in financial literacy levels across people who differ from each other in terms of native language may, therefore, be attributable to differences in thinking arising from those languages.

Further, although other social cultural factors were found to be non-significant in predicting advanced financial literacy levels, indicators were identified through cross-tabulation results. In the present study, in regard to gender, the female respondents were found to have higher levels of advanced financial literacy as compared to male respondents, suggesting that in Brunei, girls and women are at least as educated as boys and men. In addition, as young adults were found to have a higher level of advanced financial literacy, age is another influence. This also provides another good indicator as the young generation that the country invest in their education are more financially educated. Finally, in reference to monthly income, a higher income level was found to be associated with higher financial literacy levels. This shows an indicator for better financial management as the income of an individual rises, showing a sound of rationality among surveyed individuals.

Future studies are recommended in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of all the variables involved in determining financial literacy. In particular, it would be worthwhile for researchers to use a triangulation methodology to enrich the field's understanding of this subject.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of financial literacy—i.e., comprehension of financial concepts and terminology—among Brunei citizens including by taking into account possible correlations between socio-cultural factors and financial literacy. The financial literacy level of Bruneians is influenced by socio-cultural variables, including ethnicity, first language, and education. This finding is consistent with findings reported in several research studies conducted globally. Conversely, social-cultural attributes such as gender and age have been found to be unrelated to the financial literacy level of people in Brunei. Hence, in order to improve financial literacy in Brunei, it is crucial to consider the diverse backgrounds and requirements of individuals. This involves recognizing the influence of cultural norms, language barriers, and economic inequities on financial knowledge and behaviors. In order to enable the citizens of Brunei to make

informed financial choices, improve their financial welfare, and contribute to the broader economic advancement and prosperity of the country, policymakers and stakeholders would be well-advised to focus on these elements and advocate for an inclusive approach to financial education. In summary, this study establishes a foundation for future research to further investigate how socio-cultural factors influence the financial attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes of individuals in Brunei. Ultimately, this will aid in the development of more efficient approaches to improve financial literacy and well-being.

The study's findings clearly highlight the necessity of persisting in public education efforts across various contexts, including from an early age, to ensure that all citizens achieve and sustain financial literacy throughout their lives (Al Rahahleh, 2022). Although there are differences across demographic categories and other characteristics, increased support is needed for all age groups in the financial dimensions examined. It is also important to note that most of the survey items assessed very basic knowledge such that correct answers may be considered as indicating only a minimum level of financial literacy. The results of this study confirm the results reported by Al Rahahleh (2022, 2023).

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