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The influence of financial literacy on personal financial behavior: The moderating role of sociodemographic factors

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ABSTRACT

In the era of digital finance and increasing economic complexity, financial literacy has become a crucial determinant of individuals' financial well-being. Despite growing access to financial products and services, many people, including educated individuals, still face challenges in managing their finances effectively due to limited knowledge and poor behavioral discipline. This study aims to examine the effect of financial literacy on personal financial behavior, with sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, income, and marital status serving as moderating variables. The research adopts a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire distributed to 92 postgraduate management students enrolled in public universities in Surabaya, Indonesia. The sampling method applied was proportionate stratified random sampling, selected from a population of 1,117 students. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM) to evaluate both the measurement and structural models. The results show that financial literacy has a significant and positive effect on personal financial behavior, confirming that individuals with stronger financial knowledge tend to make more responsible financial decisions, including better budgeting, saving, and investment practices. However, sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, income, and marital status do not significantly moderate this relationship, indicating that demographic differences have minimal impact once sufficient financial literacy is achieved. These findings are consistent with behavioral finance theory, which suggests that financial behavior is largely influenced by cognitive and psychological factors rather than demographic characteristics. The study concludes that financial literacy functions as an equalizing factor across demographic groups, emphasizing the importance of enhancing financial education through experiential and digital learning initiatives to promote responsible financial behavior and improve long-term financial resilience among educated populations.

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, every person has had life goals they wish to achieve. While these goals differ among individuals, the common ultimate aim is usually happiness. In this context, happiness can be seen as the state where people feel successful in reaching their desires. Success might be reflected in various aspects such as wealth accumulation, career achievements, educational levels, and social contributions. In particular, in the financial area, someone may be considered successful when they attain financial freedom a state where money no longer dominates life goals but becomes a tool for more meaningful pursuits. In this situation, individuals control their finances rather than being controlled by them.

Today, managing personal finances has become increasingly vital. Financial management encompasses not only immediate concerns like saving and debt repayment but also long-term planning for retirement, children's education, housing, and investments. People frequently make critical

decisions about sourcing and allocating their financial resources (Ibrahim & Alqaydi, 2013). Consequently, personal financial behavior is a significant topic discussed widely in both academic and practical conversations. Poor financial habits often indicate an inability to plan and control finances efficiently, while positive behaviors include managing cash flow, debt, savings, and investments effectively. However, many focus mainly on short-term spending or impulse purchases without considering long-term financial goals, potentially leading to ongoing financial issues. Perry and Morris (2005) point out that neglecting financial management can lead to serious long-term difficulties, social problems, and broader societal concerns.

Limited financial knowledge and unawareness of its importance frequently cause inadequate financial planning. In fact, individuals who want to make investment decisions need sufficient financial literacy to make informed choices. Numerous studies show that financial literacy greatly impacts financial decision-making and planning. For example, Yulianti and Silvy (2013) found that financial knowledge and experience directly influence family investment behaviors. Conversely, experts like Novita (2017) highlight that many millennials make basic mistakes, such as not budgeting monthly expenses, mishandling multiple bank accounts, neglecting retirement savings, and lacking debt management strategies. Moreover, ignorance about credit scoring systems like Indonesia's BI Checking often results in loan rejections or credit issues, underscoring the importance of financial literacy.

Building on these findings, this study aims to extend prior research by focusing on a different group active postgraduate students enrolled in Master of Management programs at public universities in Surabaya. These students come from diverse backgrounds, employment statuses, and financial responsibilities, which can influence their financial behaviors. According to Walgito (2003), attitudes and behaviors are shaped by one's level of knowledge; thus, differences in financial literacy are likely to lead to different financial behaviors.

Master of Management students, who are expected to have greater exposure to economics and finance, should, in theory, demonstrate stronger financial literacy than students from other fields. However, the group's diversity including age, gender, marital status, income, and work experience creates sociodemographic differences that might affect how financial literacy influences personal financial behavior. Therefore, this study investigates how financial literacy affects financial behavior, with sociodemographic factors acting as moderating variables among postgraduate management students at public universities in Surabaya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personal Financial Behavior

Personal financial behavior refers to how individuals manage, plan, and allocate their financial resources to meet both short- and long-term goals. Individuals with responsible financial behavior are generally more consistent in budgeting, saving, and investing, while also avoiding excessive debt (Nababan & Sadalia, 2012). According to Hira and Mugenda (1999), personal financial behavior is reflected through daily financial decisions such as spending, saving, and credit use, all of which mirror one's financial attitudes and discipline. Chinen and Hideki (2012) argue that good financial behavior represents an individual's ability to differentiate between needs and desires, demonstrating rationality in decision-making. The study of financial behavior thus not only examines outcomes but also explores the cognitive and emotional factors influencing those decisions.

In recent years, the study of personal financial behavior has expanded to include digital and

psychological determinants. Silinskas et al. (2021) found that psychological stress and emotional regulation significantly shape how individuals make financial decisions, especially in uncertain economic situations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals with higher financial resilience and planning capabilities were more successful in maintaining positive financial behavior, such as saving regularly and reducing unnecessary expenses (Xu et al., 2022). Furthermore, the growing influence of financial technology has altered spending and saving habits, encouraging consumers to rely on mobile banking, e-wallets, and automated saving systems (Robb et al., 2023; Rodríguez-Correa et al., 2025). Recent research suggests that financial self-control and digital financial management skills have become critical predictors of sound financial behavior in the modern economy (Liu & Sari, 2024).

The emergence of behavioral finance frameworks provides further insight into how biases and heuristics affect personal financial actions. Behavioral theories indicate that individuals often make irrational decisions driven by emotional impulses rather than logical reasoning (Pompian, 2021). Factors such as overconfidence, loss aversion, and short-term gratification can negatively influence saving and investment decisions (Baker et al., 2019). Moreover, cultural context and peer influence also play a substantial role in shaping personal financial norms (Kumar & Sharma, 2020). Therefore, understanding financial behavior requires a multidimensional approach that integrates psychological, social, and technological aspects to build a comprehensive model of how individuals manage their finances in complex and dynamic environments.

Financial Literacy

Financial literacy is defined as an individual's knowledge, understanding, and confidence in making effective decisions to manage financial resources. Lusardi and Mitchell (2007) emphasized that individuals with higher levels of financial literacy are more likely to plan for retirement, avoid debt traps, and build long-term financial security. Similarly, Robb and Woodyard (2011) found that financial literacy significantly contributes to positive budgeting and saving behaviors. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2012), financial literacy includes competencies related to money and transactions, planning and management, risk and reward, and understanding the financial system. The Financial Services Authority (Otoritas Jasa Keuangan, OJK) in Indonesia reinforces that literacy involves continuous development of skills and confidence to make responsible financial decisions.

Recent evidence highlights the transformative impact of digital financial literacy as financial systems become increasingly technology-based. Kaiser et al. (2020) found that financial education programs focusing on both theoretical knowledge and behavioral training improve literacy outcomes more effectively than knowledge-only interventions. Moreover, Kaiser and Lusardi (2024) emphasize that consistent, long-term education programs have the strongest influence on behavioral change. Liu (2024) argues that digital financial literacy, encompassing the ability to safely use mobile payment systems, assess online financial information, and protect against cyber risk, has become a key determinant of modern financial competence. Chhillar et al. (2025) add that the ability to discern credible financial content online directly influences investment decisions and debt management among young adults.

The integration of behavioral economics into financial literacy research has also deepened understanding of how knowledge translates into behavior. Studies show that literacy alone is insufficient without supportive behavioral and contextual factors (Henager & Cude, 2019). Factors such as social learning, family financial socialization, and peer influence significantly reinforce the application of financial knowledge (Goyal & Kumar, 2021). Additionally, the rise of fintech-based

financial education tools—such as gamified budgeting applications—has been shown to improve motivation and retention in literacy programs (Agarwal et al., 2023). Therefore, financial literacy in the modern era must be seen as a dynamic construct integrating cognitive knowledge, digital capability, and behavioral application to achieve holistic financial well-being.

Sociodemographic Factors

Sociodemographic factors encompass the combination of demographic and social characteristics such as age, gender, income, education, and marital status that define population structures and behavioral variations (Desa, 2008). The Multilingual Demographic Dictionary describes sociodemography as the scientific study of human populations with respect to their size, composition, and development. Mahdzan and Tabiani (2013) identified that demographic differences strongly influence individuals' financial behaviors, such as saving, borrowing, and investment tendencies. Similarly, Lusardi and Tufano (2015) found that lower-income and less-educated groups tend to have limited financial literacy, reducing their ability to make sound financial decisions. These variables are therefore critical in analyzing disparities in financial outcomes across social segments.

Empirical studies increasingly recognize sociodemographic factors as moderators between financial literacy and financial behavior. Dewi (2022) and Mireku (2023) demonstrate that age and income moderate the relationship between literacy and saving behavior—older individuals or those with higher income tend to apply financial knowledge more effectively. The Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center (GFLEC) report (Kaiser & Lusardi, 2024) also reveals persistent gender gaps in literacy levels, though when given equal access to information, women often outperform men in long-term financial planning (Robb, 2023). Moreover, digital access and social status are found to mediate how individuals perceive and apply financial knowledge, particularly in developing economies (Rodríguez-Correa et al., 2025). These findings underscore that demographic realities must be accounted for when designing inclusive financial education and policy programs.

Contemporary research further explores how cultural norms and generational identities intersect with sociodemographic structures to influence financial decision-making. For instance, younger generations, especially Generation Z, exhibit higher adoption of digital finance tools but also greater susceptibility to impulsive spending (Awanis & Chi, 2023). Meanwhile, education level and family background significantly shape individuals' attitudes toward saving and risk-taking (Nguyen et al., 2022). In multicultural societies, sociocultural values such as collectivism or family support systems also moderate the relationship between literacy and financial behavior (Rahim & Mutalib, 2024). Hence, the inclusion of sociodemographic factors in financial behavior studies enriches the understanding of how individual, social, and cultural dimensions converge to shape real-world financial outcomes.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Based on the literature discussed, the conceptual framework proposes that financial literacy directly influences personal financial behavior, while sociodemographic factors—including age, gender, income, and marital status—moderate this relationship. Individuals with higher financial literacy are expected to demonstrate more responsible and rational financial behaviors, but this effect may vary depending on sociodemographic characteristics.

Hypotheses:

H1: Financial literacy has a positive and significant influence on personal financial behavior.

H2: Age moderates the relationship between financial literacy and personal financial behavior.

H3: Gender moderates the relationship between financial literacy and personal financial behavior.

H4: Income moderates the relationship between financial literacy and personal financial behavior.

H5: Marital status moderates the relationship between financial literacy and personal financial behavior.

This framework emphasizes that financial literacy is essential in shaping responsible financial actions, yet sociodemographic diversity introduces behavioral variations among individuals. Thus, understanding these moderating effects provides a more nuanced view of how knowledge interacts with demographic realities in influencing financial decision-making.

METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research design that seeks to examine the influence of financial literacy on personal financial behavior with sociodemographic factors as moderating variables. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents who met the inclusion criteria. The population of this research consists of active students enrolled in the Master of Management (S-2 Management) programs at public universities (PTN) in Surabaya, totaling 1,117 students based on official enrollment reports from the Directorate General of Higher Education (Forlap Dikti, 2021).

Table 1. Number of Master of Management Students in Surabaya's Public Universities (Academic Year 2020/2021)

Public University (PTN)	Number of Students
Master of Management, UPN "Veteran" East Java	246
Master of Management, Universitas Airlangga	352
Master of Management Technology (MMT), Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (ITS)	484
Master of Management, Universitas Negeri Surabaya	35
Total	1,117

Source: *https://forlap.ristekdikti.go.id/perguruantinggi*

The sampling technique employed was probability sampling with the proportionate stratified random sampling approach to ensure equal representation from each institution. Based on the total population and referring to the sampling adequacy guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2021), a sample size of 92 students was deemed sufficient for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis. This technique allows for proportional distribution across strata, improving the generalizability of the results within heterogeneous groups (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

The research instrument employed a Likert scale to measure key constructs, including financial literacy and personal financial behavior. Respondents rated their agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire items were developed based on validated constructs from prior studies in financial literacy and behavior (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014; Kaiser & Lusardi, 2024), ensuring content validity and contextual relevance for graduate students in Indonesia.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares (PLS), a variance-based structural equation modeling technique suitable for predictive and exploratory research (Hair et al., 2021). PLS is preferred in behavioral finance studies because it does not impose strict assumptions of multivariate normality and can efficiently handle complex models with moderating or mediating effects (Sarstedt et al., 2020). The analysis included outer model evaluation to assess the reliability and validity of indicators, and inner model evaluation to examine the relationships between latent variables. Hypothesis testing was performed using bootstrapping procedures to determine the statistical significance of each path coefficient (Henseler, 2021).

According to Ghozali (2015), PLS is considered a soft modeling technique as it eliminates the

restrictive assumptions commonly found in traditional regression models, such as Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), including multivariate normality and absence of multicollinearity among exogenous variables. This flexibility has led to the widespread application of PLS in financial behavior research, where data distributions and sample sizes often vary (Hair et al., 2021; Memon et al., 2023). Therefore, the use of PLS in this study aligns with recent methodological recommendations for examining complex causal relationships involving latent variables and moderators in behavioral finance and management research (Ali et al., 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model

The analytical technique employed in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), a multivariate statistical approach capable of analyzing complex relationships between latent constructs and their observed indicators, as well as among the latent constructs themselves (Hair et al., 2019). SEM enables the simultaneous estimation of multiple dependence relationships, thus offering a comprehensive understanding of both direct and indirect effects within a theoretical framework (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Technically, SEM is divided into two main types: covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and variance-based SEM or Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM). CB-SEM, typically implemented using LISREL or AMOS, is confirmatory in nature and requires a well-established theoretical foundation with normally distributed data. Conversely, PLS-SEM—often conducted with SmartPLS—is primarily predictive and exploratory, emphasizing variance explanation rather than model fit confirmation (Hair et al., 2021; Henseler, 2020). Due to its robustness with small sample sizes and non-normal data, PLS-SEM has become increasingly popular in management and behavioral research (Sarstedt et al., 2022).

Indicator Validity

The relationship model between indicators and latent constructs in this study, namely Financial Literacy, Age, Gender, Income, Marital Status, and Personal Financial Behavior, is reflective. The validity of reflective indicators is assessed by examining their factor loadings presented in Table 2. Outer Loadings (Factor Loading).

Table 2. Outer Loadings (Factor Loading)

Indicator	Financial Literacy	Financial Behavior	Age	Gender	Income	Marital Status	Type (a)	SE	P-value
X1.1	0.637	0.217	-0.155	-0.060	0.233	-0.263	Reflect	0.087	<0.001
X1.2	0.551	0.015	0.183	0.115	-0.282	-0.152	Reflect	0.092	<0.001
X1.3	0.717	-0.172	-0.035	0.138	0.063	0.022	Reflect	0.085	<0.001
X1.4	0.765	-0.035	0.170	-0.058	-0.230	-0.025	Reflect	0.084	<0.001
X1.5	0.766	-0.019	-0.134	-0.089	-0.109	-0.049	Reflect	0.084	<0.001
Y1	-0.109	0.782	0.031	0.046	-0.142	0.132	Reflect	0.084	<0.001
Y2	0.113	0.755	0.116	-0.166	-0.106	-0.012	Reflect	0.084	<0.001
Y3	-0.317	0.432	0.470	-0.538	0.195	0.237	Reflect	0.084	<0.001
Y4	0.225	0.607	0.519	0.236	0.175	-0.324	Reflect	0.088	<0.001
Age	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Gender	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Income	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	Reflect	0.079	<0.001
Marital Status	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	Reflect	0.079	<0.001

Source: Primary data processed, 2021

A factor loading represents the correlation between an indicator and its latent variable. Indicators with loadings greater than 0.50 and significant p-values ($p < 0.05$) are considered valid and reliable

measures of the construct (Hair et al., 2019). Based on the results in Table 2, the loadings for the Financial Literacy construct (e.g., X1.1 = 0.637; X1.2 = 0.551; X1.3 = 0.717; X1.4 = 0.765; X1.5 = 0.766) all exceed the minimum threshold of 0.50, indicating acceptable convergent validity. The significance of each loading ($p < 0.001$) further supports this conclusion.

These results suggest that all indicators of Financial Literacy, Age, Gender, Income, Marital Status, and Personal Financial Behavior demonstrate satisfactory convergent validity, confirming that each indicator accurately measures its corresponding latent construct (Henseler et al., 2021).

Discriminant Validity

The next step in the measurement model assessment involves evaluating discriminant validity. This is typically examined by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with its inter-construct correlations. The relevant data are displayed in Table 3. Correlations Among Constructs vs. Square Roots of AVEs.

Table 3. Correlations Among Constructs vs. Square Roots of AVEs

Variable	Financial Literacy	Financial Behavior	Age	Gender	Income	Marital Status
Financial Literacy	0.677	0.458	0.128	-0.098	0.185	-0.023
Financial Behavior	0.458	0.659	0.043	0.116	-0.043	-0.057
Age	0.128	0.043	1.000	0.182	0.561	-0.290
Gender	-0.098	0.116	0.182	1.000	0.145	0.025
Income	0.185	-0.043	0.561	0.145	1.000	-0.242
Marital Status	-0.023	-0.057	-0.290	0.025	-0.242	1.000

Source: Primary data processed, 2021

If the square root of a construct's AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs, discriminant validity is established (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2021). For instance, the Financial Literacy construct, with an AVE square root of 0.677, exceeds its correlations with other constructs (0.458, 0.128, –0.098, 0.185, –0.023), indicating adequate discriminant validity. Similar results are observed for all other constructs, confirming that the constructs in this study are empirically distinct.

Construct Validity (Average Variance Extracted)

Construct validity is further confirmed by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which indicates the proportion of variance captured by the construct relative to measurement error. An AVE value greater than 0.50 suggests sufficient convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). The results are summarized in Table 4. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**.**

Table 4. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	AVE
Financial Literacy	0.559
Financial Behavior	0.534
Age	1.000
Gender	1.000
Income	1.000
Marital Status	1.000

Source: Primary data processed, 2021

All constructs, Financial Literacy, Age, Gender, Income, Marital Status, and Personal Financial Behavior demonstrate AVE values above 0.50, signifying strong convergent validity and reliable measurement quality (Sarstedt et al., 2022).

Reliability

Construct reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability (CR). A CR value above 0.70 indicates that the indicators consistently measure the intended latent construct (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). The results are shown in Table 5. Composite Reliability Coefficients**.**

Table 5. Composite Reliability Coefficients

Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Financial Literacy	0.804	0.694
Financial Behavior	0.746	0.648
Age	1.000	1.000
Gender	1.000	1.000
Income	1.000	1.000
Marital Status	1.000	1.000

Source: Primary data processed, 2021

All constructs exhibit CR values exceeding 0.70, confirming that the indicators are internally consistent and reliable (Hair et al., 2021).

Structural Model

The structural model (inner model) was evaluated by examining the R-squared (R^2) values, which indicate the explanatory power of the exogenous constructs for the endogenous variable. Table 6. R-Square Coefficients presents the corresponding results.

Table 6. R-Square Coefficients

Variable	R^2
Financial Literacy	–
Financial Behavior	0.219
Age	–
Gender	–
Income	–
Marital Status	–

Source: Primary data processed, 2021

The model yields an $R^2 = 0.219$, meaning that approximately 21.9% of the variance in Personal Financial Behavior is explained by Financial Literacy, Age, Gender, Income, and Marital Status. The remaining 78.1% is attributed to other factors not included in the model. Thus, while the explanatory power is moderate, the model successfully captures meaningful determinants of individual financial behavior (Henseler, 2020).

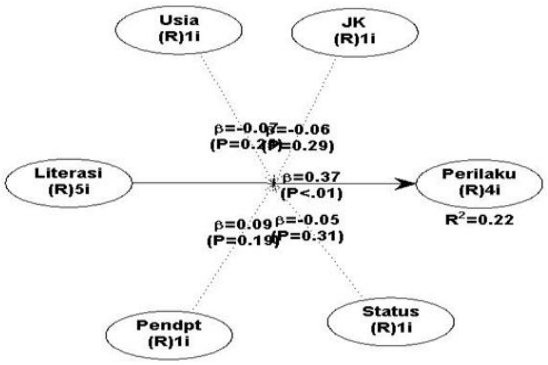

Figure 2. SEM–PLS Model Results

Source: Primary data processed, 2021

Table 7. Results for Inner Weights

Relationship	Path Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Financial Literacy → Financial Behavior	0.368	0.094	<0.001
Gender × Financial Literacy → Financial Behavior	-0.058	0.103	0.287
Age × Financial Literacy → Financial Behavior	-0.068	0.102	0.253
Income × Financial Literacy → Financial Behavior	0.090	0.102	0.190
Marital Status × Financial Literacy → Financial Behavior	-0.050	0.103	0.314

Source: Primary data processed, 2021

Hypothesis Testing

After meeting all model assumptions, hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping method to obtain standard errors and t-statistics for each path coefficient. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Hypothesis 1

Financial Literacy has a significant positive effect on Personal Financial Behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.368 and p-value < 0.001. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2

Age (Moderator 1) has an insignificant effect on the relationship between Financial Literacy and Personal Financial Behavior ($\beta = –0.068$, $p = 0.253 > 0.05$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

Hypothesis 3

Gender (Moderator 2) shows an insignificant moderating effect ($\beta = 0.058$, $p = 0.287 > 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is not supported.

Hypothesis 4

Income (Moderator 3) also does not significantly moderate the relationship ($\beta = 0.090$, $p = 0.190 > 0.05$). Hence, Hypothesis 4 is rejected.

Hypothesis 5

Marital Status (Moderator 4) demonstrates no significant moderating effect ($\beta = 0.050$, $p = 0.314 > 0.05$). Thus, Hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight that financial literacy has a significant and positive effect on personal financial behavior, confirming Hypothesis 1. This indicates that individuals with higher financial knowledge tend to demonstrate more responsible financial management behaviors, such as budgeting, saving, controlling expenses, and making informed investment decisions. This result supports the theoretical premise that financial literacy serves as the foundation for sound financial decision-making (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014; Kaiser & Lusardi, 2024). Recent studies have also emphasized that financial literacy contributes to improved individual well-being by reducing financial stress and enhancing long-term planning capabilities (Potrich et al., 2020; Aydin & Akben-Selcuk, 2023). In the context of graduate students, higher financial knowledge appears to translate into practical competence in managing limited income and educational expenses efficiently.

However, the results also reveal that sociodemographic variables age, gender, income, and marital status do not significantly moderate the relationship between financial literacy and personal financial behavior. This outcome suggests that while demographic characteristics may influence financial preferences, their moderating effect is relatively weak compared to the dominant influence of cognitive financial understanding. Several studies have similarly found that demographic attributes

often explain variance at the descriptive level but fail to provide substantial moderating effects in behavioral models (Riitsalu & Murakas, 2019; Sabri et al., 2021). For instance, gender-based financial behavior differences tend to diminish among highly educated groups where access to financial knowledge and digital resources is more equal (Tang & Baker, 2016; Hira et al., 2022).

The insignificant moderating role of age may indicate that generational differences in financial behavior are narrowing among postgraduate students. Younger and older students may share similar exposure to digital banking, financial technology, and formal financial education, resulting in comparable financial practices (Bongini et al., 2021). Similarly, income and marital status fail to strengthen the main relationship, suggesting that these factors may no longer act as decisive behavioral determinants in relatively homogeneous academic populations (Kadoya & Khan, 2020). This aligns with recent findings that cognitive and psychological factors—such as self-control, future orientation, and perceived financial self-efficacy—have a greater impact on financial behavior than demographic traits (Strömbäck et al., 2021; Aydin & Akben-Selcuk, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, these results reinforce the relevance of the Behavioral Finance Theory and Planned Behavior Model in explaining individual financial actions. Financial literacy shapes behavior through attitude and perceived behavioral control, providing the cognitive foundation for rational choices even under demographic diversity (Ajzen, 1991; Dewi et al., 2022). The absence of significant moderation by sociodemographic variables further supports the argument that financial knowledge operates as an equalizer, minimizing demographic disparities in financial conduct. Therefore, enhancing financial education programs across universities and professional settings remains a critical policy direction to foster financial inclusion and resilience (OECD, 2023).

In practical terms, this study contributes to understanding how financial literacy can directly improve personal financial management among educated populations. Universities and policymakers should strengthen applied financial training through simulation-based and experiential learning methods to internalize prudent financial behavior (Lusardi, 2020; Potrich et al., 2020). Future research may expand this model by integrating psychological capital and digital financial literacy as mediating constructs, particularly as digital transformation continues to reshape how individuals interact with financial systems (Kaiser et al., 2023; Aydin & Akben-Selcuk, 2023).

Overall, these findings emphasize that while sociodemographic variables still describe certain financial tendencies, financial literacy remains the strongest and most consistent predictor of healthy personal financial behavior. It highlights the transformative power of education in shaping sustainable financial decision-making in modern society.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that financial literacy plays a significant role in shaping the personal financial behavior of postgraduate management students in public universities in Surabaya, indicating that individuals with greater financial knowledge and capability are more prudent in making financial decisions. This aligns with the theory of financial literacy, which posits that a higher understanding of financial concepts enhances one's ability to make informed and responsible financial choices (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2020; Potrich et al., 2021). Conversely, demographic factors such as age, gender, income level, and marital status were found not to moderate the relationship between financial literacy and financial behavior. Younger and older students, as well as male and female respondents, exhibited similar financial attitudes and decision-making tendencies, suggesting that financial behavior is more influenced by knowledge and education than by demographic attributes (Hasler & Lusardi, 2022; OECD, 2022). Likewise, income and marital status did not affect the strength of the relationship, confirming the premise of behavioral finance theory that financial behavior is not purely rational but shaped by cognitive and psychological factors (Barberis, 2021; Ali et al., 2022). Overall, these results

highlight that strengthening financial literacy through higher education is essential for promoting sound financial management behavior regardless of demographic differences.

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