



The Conceptualization of Financial Freedom Can Be Interpreted in the Context of Early childhood education

Ira Anggraeni, Vina Febrisani, Lyra Yuniar, Esi Pebriani, Dina Aura*

Institut Agama Islam Tasikmalaya, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia

Correspondence: E-mail: iraanggraeni643@gmail.com

ABSTRACTS

This study aims to analyze the meaning of financial freedom in the context of early childhood education, learning models that are appropriate for children's developmental characteristics, and the role of teachers and parents in building positive financial habits from an early age. The study was conducted at the Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City using a descriptive qualitative approach through observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The results showed that financial freedom in early childhood is not interpreted as economic independence, but rather as a process of character building and basic financial habits, including an introduction to the function of money, the ability to distinguish between needs and wants, the habit of saving, a responsible attitude towards the use of resources, and the instilling of the values of sharing and living simply. The learning model is integrated contextually into play activities and school routines through role-playing, saving habits, the use of concrete media, and thematic activities that are close to children's lives, emphasizing a learning-by-doing approach. The role of teachers and parents is an important factor in the success of forming positive financial habits, although collaboration between schools and families is not yet systematically structured. This study confirms that financial freedom education is an integral part of character education and life skills for early childhood.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 09 Jan 2025

Revised 13 Feb 2025

Accepted 03 Mar 2025

Available online 02 Apr 2025

Publication Date 01 Jun 2025

Keyword:

*Character education,
Early childhood education,
Financial freedom,
Financial literacy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly complex global social and economic changes require every individual to have financial literacy from an early age. Recent studies show that financial literacy significantly influences financial decision-making, financial behavior, and long-term financial well-being in adulthood (Zaimovic et al., 2023). Financial literacy education is no longer seen as a necessity for adults alone, but as an important part of character education that must begin in Early childhood education (ECE).

In the context of Early childhood education, according to Anggraeni (2022), the concept of financial freedom is not interpreted as financial freedom in the sense of productive economics, but rather as the basic ability of children to recognize the value of money, distinguish between needs and wants, develop saving habits, be responsible in the use of resources, and have an attitude of sharing and living simply. These values are in line with the objectives of Early childhood education in shaping children's character to be independent, disciplined, and responsible (Levy & Wasmuth, 2025).

However, preliminary findings from the researchers' initial observations and interviews with Early Childhood teachers indicate that financial education has not been systematically integrated into the learning process. Early childhood education still focuses on basic cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills, while financial literacy is only taught incidentally through weekly savings activities or thematic stories without structured lesson planning. Teachers tend to view financial concepts as abstract material that is difficult for young children to understand, so they have not been developed into clear and sustainable learning objectives.

Although some recent studies have explored financial literacy for young children, there is still no learning model specifically designed to teach the concept of financial freedom that aligns with early childhood developmental characteristics through play. Several studies have examined financial literacy activities for early childhood using various approaches, such as project-based learning to improve basic financial skills and exploratory learning media to introduce simple money concepts to preschoolers, while other research has investigated parental perceptions and the socialization of financial literacy to children (Gustriansyah & Azzahra, 2025; Julaihah et al., 2023; Kalsum et al., 2025).

However, most of this research focuses on introducing basic financial concepts (like saving, needs vs wants, and simple money handling) rather than on *financial freedom*, autonomy, or long-term financial thinking. Additionally, although play and game-based strategies are mentioned (e.g., game-based and project-based methods in kindergarten), these approaches are not formally structured into a validated play-based model designed for early childhood learning principles (Nababan & Jang, 2025). Many studies also rely on descriptive or qualitative designs with small samples and do not measure long-term outcomes or conceptual depth. As a result, there is a gap in the literature: no empirically tested play-based learning model has been developed that integrates early childhood pedagogical theories with the concept of financial freedom in a way that is developmentally appropriate for ages 3–6. In fact, contemporary early childhood development research emphasizes that young children learn best through concrete experiences, social interactions, and meaningful activities. Therefore, financial education in Early childhood education should be packaged in the form of role-playing activities, simple buying and selling simulations, class piggy bank management, and contextual stories that are close to children's lives (Anggarani et al., 2022; Gustriansyah & Azzahra, 2025; Kalsum et al., 2025).

The preliminary study also revealed that the role of parents in their children's financial education is still sporadic and not coordinated with school programs. Some parents give their

children pocket money without educating them on how to use it, while others teach them to save money informally at home without any continuity with what they learn at school. This situation shows that there is no systematic collaboration between teachers and parents in instilling positive financial habits from an early age; in fact, research indicates that active parental involvement and collaboration with teachers plays a crucial role in shaping children's learning and habits, including financial behaviors, as family and school partnerships provide consistent learning environments that support children's development (Fajarrini & Adwiah, 2025; Otero-Mayer et al., 2025).

The gap between the urgency of early childhood financial education and learning practices in the field shows the need for a clear conceptual framework regarding the meaning of financial freedom in the context of early childhood education. To date, most research on financial freedom and financial literacy has focused on adolescents and adults, while studies that specifically construct the concept of financial freedom for early childhood are still very limited. This raises the need for research that not only describes the factual conditions but also formulates learning models that are in line with children's developmental characteristics and involve the integrated roles of teachers and parents.

Therefore, this study is important to examine in depth how the concept of financial freedom can be interpreted in the context of early childhood education, how learning models that are appropriate to children's developmental characteristics can be designed and implemented, and how teachers and parents can play a role in building positive financial habits from an early age. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions in the form of developing the concept of financial freedom in Early childhood education and practical contributions in the form of applicable learning models for early childhood education institutions and guidelines for collaboration between schools and families.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design that aims to examine in depth the conceptualization of financial freedom in the context of early childhood education, learning models that are appropriate to the characteristics of child development, and the role of teachers and parents in building positive financial habits from an early age. The research was conducted at the Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City as the research location because this institution has character building programs and savings activities that are relevant to the focus of the research. The research subjects included the principal, classroom teachers, and parents of students, while early Childhood Children were the subjects of observation of behaviors and learning activities related to financial literacy. The case study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena holistically and contextually within their real-life settings, enabling in-depth exploration of complex social and educational processes (Annamalah, 2024).

Data collection was conducted through participatory observation of learning processes and children's play activities that contained elements of financial literacy, in-depth interviews with school principals, teachers, and parents to explore the meaning of financial freedom, the learning strategies applied, and the forms of family involvement in children's financial education, as well as a documentation study of learning tools such as lesson plans, school programs, and archives of related activities. The data obtained were then analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions, which were carried out continuously throughout the research process (Lungu, 2022). Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of meaning and main categories

related to the concepts of financial freedom, learning models, and the roles of teachers and parents.

To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation by comparing information obtained from school principals, teachers, and parents, as well as technique triangulation through the use of observation, interviews, and documentation (Vivek et al., 2023). In addition, member checks were conducted with informants to ensure the findings were consistent with empirical conditions in the field, and peer debriefing was conducted to strengthen the validity of data interpretation (Stahl & King, 2020). This study also paid attention to the principles of educational research ethics, including obtaining informed consent from informants, maintaining the confidentiality of research subjects' identities, and ensuring that all observation activities did not interfere with the children's learning and development processes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Meaning of Financial Freedom in Early Childhood Education

The results of the study show that the concept of financial freedom in the context of early childhood education at the Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City is not interpreted as economic independence in the sense of financial productivity, but rather as a process of character building and basic financial habits in accordance with the child's stage of development. These findings were obtained from observations of learning activities, interviews with teachers and parents, and analysis of learning planning documents. In practice, teachers do not teach children to make money, but instill basic values such as understanding the function of money, saving regularly, and using goods responsibly in everyday life.

Based on the interview results, teachers and parents interpret financial freedom as the ability of children to understand the difference between needs and wants, to have a habit of saving, and to demonstrate discipline and responsibility in using money and goods. This concept is also associated with the values of sharing and living simply, for example through class charity activities and the economical use of stationery. The documentation results show that these values are reflected in school habit-forming programs such as "savings day," simple role-playing activities involving buying and selling, and thematic stories about markets or families. These findings indicate that financial freedom is positioned as part of character education and life skills, rather than as a formal economic competency.

Theoretically, this interpretation is consistent with recent early childhood education research emphasizing that Early childhood education should be oriented toward shaping attitudes, habits, and foundational values through concrete and experiential learning processes. Sidabutar (2025) stated that early childhood is in the preoperational stage, so that understanding abstract concepts such as money and economic value must be provided through concrete and symbolic activities. This is evident in the learning practices at the Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City, where children learn about money through role-playing, pictures, and real objects, rather than through abstract conceptual explanations.

In addition, the findings of this study reinforce Vygotsky theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's learning (Remorosa et al., 2024). In saving and playing buying and selling games, teachers act as mediators who guide children to understand the meaning of money and its use in stages. Interaction between children and teachers and peers helps children build a social understanding of the values of responsibility and sharing. Thus, children learn the concept of financial freedom not only as knowledge, but as a social practice that is formed through habits and role models (Manolakou, 2024).

The results of this study are also in line with the views of Anggraeni (2022), who emphasize that financial literacy encompasses not only knowledge, but also financial attitudes and behaviors. In the context of early childhood, attitudes such as saving discipline, not being wasteful, and caring for others are the initial foundations of financial literacy that will influence children's economic behavior in adulthood. Therefore, financial freedom in early childhood education can be understood as the readiness of children's financial character to manage resources wisely in the future, not as a financial achievement at the present time (Sipila, 2020).

Thus, the results of observation, interviews, and documentation analysis show that the meaning of financial freedom at Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City is contextual and oriented towards character building and positive habits. This conceptualization is relevant to child development and financial literacy theories, and emphasizes that financial freedom education for early childhood should be placed as part of character education and life skills. These findings also strengthen the argument that the concept of financial freedom needs to be redefined within the framework of early childhood education to suit children's developmental needs and national educational goals.

3.2 Financial Freedom Learning Model Suitable for Children's Developmental Characteristics

The results of the study show that financial freedom education in Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City is carried out through a play-based approach and thematic learning that is integrated into children's daily activities. Based on the results of observations, teachers introduce financial concepts through simple role-playing activities involving buying and selling, class savings programs, the use of pictures of money and everyday objects, and thematic stories related to children's lives. Learning is not delivered in the form of lectures or formal instructions, but rather through direct experiences that actively involve children. This pattern shows that the learning model applied is contextual and child-centered, allowing children to build understanding naturally through interaction with the learning environment.

Interviews with teachers revealed that this learning strategy was chosen because it is in line with the cognitive development characteristics of early childhood, which is still in the concrete thinking stage. Teachers believe that children find it easier to understand the concepts of money, needs, and saving when they are involved in symbolic play rather than through abstract explanations. Analysis of the lesson plan documents shows that activities containing elements of financial literacy have not been formulated as specific learning objectives, but are integrated into themes such as "daily activities," "the surrounding environment," and "work." This shows that financial freedom learning is still implicit and not yet systematically structured in the curriculum, even though it is present in learning practices.

These findings are in line with Piaget's cognitive development, which states that young children are in the preoperational stage, so that understanding abstract concepts such as money and economic value needs to be presented through concrete and symbolic activities (Maulida, 2025). Playing buying and selling games and using toy money provides children with the opportunity to construct an understanding of the function of money through direct experience. In addition, this approach is also in line with the principle of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), which emphasizes that learning must be tailored to the developmental level, interests, and social context of children (Cade et al., 2022). Thus, the learning model found in the Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City reflects learning principles that are relevant to the developmental needs of early childhood.

Furthermore, the results of the study also reinforce view on the importance of social interaction in children's learning processes (Maisarah, 2024). In saving and playing buying and selling activities, teachers act as mediators who provide guidance, provocative questions, and

concrete examples in the use of money and goods. Through these interactions, children gradually internalize the values of responsibility, discipline, and simple resource management. This process shows that learning financial freedom not only develops children's cognitive aspects but also their social and moral aspects, which are part of character education (Koyuncu et al., 2024).

However, the results of the study also found that the learning model applied does not yet have a standard conceptual framework and is still highly dependent on the creativity of each teacher. There are no specific modules or learning guides explicitly designed to develop the concept of financial freedom in early childhood. This condition indicates a need to develop a more structured, systematic, and sustainable learning model, with clear learning objectives and measurable indicators of child development. This model is expected to integrate play activities, thematic learning, and character education into a single, comprehensive framework.

Thus, the results of this study indicate that the financial freedom learning model that is appropriate for children's developmental characteristics is a model that is play-based, contextual, and oriented towards children's direct experiences. This type of learning allows children to build an understanding of the value of money and responsibility naturally through everyday activities. These findings reinforce the view that financial freedom education for young children should not be positioned as a separate subject, but rather as an integral part of thematic learning and holistic character education.

3.3 The Role of Teachers and Parents in Building Positive Financial Habits from an Early Age

The results of the study show that teachers and parents have a strategic role in teaching young children at the Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City good financial habits. The results show that teachers not only convey financial concepts symbolically through role-playing and class savings activities, but they also set an example in the use of goods and resource management at school. By teaching children to save money, use stationery sparingly, and take care of shared belongings, teachers instill discipline and responsibility. This practice shows that the role of teachers is not limited to teaching; they also serve as direct examples for children to behave in their daily lives at school.

Interviews with teachers and parents show that children's financial education can only be successful at school if there is family support. Through providing guidance and pocket money, saving habits at home, and examples of simple and moderate consumption, parents play an important role in reinforcing the habits instilled at school. However, the results of the study also show that financial instruction at home is still informal and lacks a structured pattern. Some parents said they did not really understand the concept of financial freedom in early childhood, so teaching children about finance depended more on family habits without clear instructions from school.

These results are consistent with Evans (2021) ecological theory of development, which emphasizes that interactions between various environments influence child development. This theory emphasizes that interactions between various environments, especially the family and school as the primary microsystems. The inconsistency between the methods used to teach children about finance at school and at home shows the importance of regular cooperation between teachers and parents (Nur et al., 2024; Ullah et al., 2024; Vesely et al., 2024). In this situation, teachers not only educate children but also assist parents with their children's financial education through communication, program socialization, and parenting activities. This collaboration is essential to instill positive financial values in children's daily lives.

In addition, the research findings show that communication between schools and parents about financial freedom is still limited to general information about school activities and is not yet directed towards the formation of common goals. There are no specific programs that explicitly regulate the role of parents in educating their children about finance. This is not found in school records. This condition shows that there is room for more organized cooperation initiatives. Examples include guidelines on how to save money at home, classroom activities involving parents, and forums discussing early childhood financial education. Parents and teachers can work together to build good financial habits in a sustainable manner through planned programs.

Therefore, the results of this study indicate that cooperation between teachers and parents is very important for the success of financial independence education in early childhood. Teachers act as regulators and implementers of learning at school, and parents act as reinforcers and role models at home. These results reinforce the idea that early childhood financial education is part of character education, which must be built through cross-environmental cooperation. Therefore, a financial independence education model is needed that not only focuses on classroom lessons but also involves the role of the family as a key partner in building good financial habits from an early age.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted at Pembina State Kindergarten in Tasikmalaya City through observation, interviews, and documentation, it can be concluded that the concept of financial freedom in the context of early childhood education is not interpreted as economic independence, but rather as a process of character building and basic financial habits that are realized through an introduction to the function of money, the ability to distinguish between needs and wants, the habit of saving, a responsible attitude towards the use of resources, and the instilling of the values of sharing and living simply.

Financial freedom education is positioned as an integral part of character education and life skills that are in line with the developmental characteristics of early childhood, which is learning through concrete experiences and daily activities. The learning model applied shows that financial freedom education is integrated contextually into play and school routines through role-playing, saving habits, the use of concrete media, and thematic activities that are close to children's lives, emphasizing a learning-by-doing approach and direct experience-based learning. so that children not only gain cognitive understanding of financial concepts, but also internalize the values of responsibility, discipline, and self-control. In addition, the roles of teachers and parents have proven to be important factors in the successful formation of positive financial habits from an early age, where teachers act as designers and implementers of learning through exemplary behavior and habit formation in the school environment, while parents act as reinforcers of these practices in their children's lives at home. However, collaboration between schools and families has not been systematically structured, so the consistency of financial freedom education still depends on the initiative of each party. This condition represents one of the limitations of the present study, as it has not explored in depth the mechanisms and effectiveness of structured collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting children's financial freedom education. Therefore, future research is recommended to develop and evaluate collaborative models involving schools and families to ensure that positive financial values can be instilled in a sustainable, integrated, and consistent manner. Despite these limitations, the findings indicate that financial freedom education in early childhood is an important component of character education and life skills,

with significant potential to serve as a foundation for fostering positive financial behavior in children's future lives.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that the entire process of writing and publishing this article was conducted objectively and professionally without any conflict of interest with any party. The authors also affirm that this article is an original scientific work compiled based on the principles of academic honesty and has undergone a careful source tracing process, so that it is free from any form of plagiarism. Thus, this manuscript meets scientific publication ethics standards and is academically accountable.

6. REFERENCES

- Anggarani, F. K., Setyowati, R., Satwika, P. A., dan Andayani, T. R. (2022). Pengaruh pendidikan literasi keuangan dengan pendekatan bermain peran pada anak usia dini. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(5), 3836–3845. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i5.1920>
- Anggraeni, I. (2022). Identifikasi pembelajaran literasi finansial pada pendidikan anak usia dini. *Al-Marifah: Journal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 1(1), 18–38.
- Annamalah, S. (2024). The value of case study research in practice: A methodological review with practical insights from organisational studies. *Journal of Applied Economic Sciences (JAES)*, 19(4), 485–498.
- Cade, J., Wardle, F., and Otter, J. (2022). Toddler and preschool teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the use of developmentally appropriate practice. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), 2018908.
- Evans, G. W. (2021). The physical context of child development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 30(1), 41–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721420980719>
- Fajarrini, A., dan Adwiah, A. R. (2025). Peran orang tua dalam mengajarkan literasi keuangan pada anak usia dini. *EDUCHILD (Journal of Early childhood education)*, 6(1), 50–62. <https://doi.org/10.30863/educhild.v6i1.5906>
- Gustriansyah, E., and Azzahra, N. A. (2025). Exploring the use of learning media to introduce financial literacy in early childhood education. *AlBanna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 5(2), 87–94. <https://doi.org/10.24260/albanna.v5i2.5136>
- Julaihah, U., Fitriah, N., and Firdiansyah, Y. (2023). Financial literacy for early childhood: Parental financial perception and socialization. *Al Hikmah Indonesian Journal of Early Childhood Islamic Education*, 7(2), 207–219. <https://doi.org/10.35896/ijecie.v7i2.647>
- Kalsum, S., Rusmayadi, R., Musi, M. A., and Halik, A. (2025). The use of project-based learning on early childhood financial literacy skills. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach Research and Science*, 3(1), 273–282. <https://doi.org/10.59653/ijmars.v3i01.1401>
- Koyuncu, S., Kumpulainen, K., and Kuusisto, A. (2024). Scaffolding children's participation during teacher–child interaction in second language classrooms. *Scandinavian Journal*

of *Educational Research*, 68(4), 750–764.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2023.2183430>

- Levy, R. V., and Wasmuth, H. (2025). Developmentally appropriate practice and its impact on the field of early child education and care in the United States1. *International Perspectives on the History of Early childhood education: Institution–Family–Profession*, 109.
- Lungu, M. (2022). The coding manual for qualitative researchers. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 6(1), 232–237.
- Maisarah, M. (2024). Enhancing children's learning motivation through positive reinforcement: A classroom communication strategy. *Jurnal Smart*, 10(1), 81-95.
- Maulida, S. (2025). Implementasi tahap praoperasional dalam pembelajaran anak usia 4–6 tahun berdasarkan teori Jean Piaget. *ipauid*, 2(1).
- Manolakou, G. (2024). Financial and tax literacy: A child's early exposure to financial concepts during the educational process. *Journal of Economics, Management and Trade*, 30(10), 15–27.
- Nababan, S. P., and Jang, J. (2025). Implementation of financial literacy education for early childhood: Multicases study at Bekasi Utara kindergarten. *EDUTECH*, 24(3), 1773–1785. <https://doi.org/10.17509/e.v24i3.88627>
- Nur, M., Anggraeni, I., dan Risna, I. (2024). Persepsi orang tua PAUD dalam mempersiapkan anak memasuki jenjang pendidikan dasar. *Jurnal Inovasi dan Teknologi Pendidikan*, 3(1), 199–207. <https://doi.org/10.46306/jurintep.v3i1.86>
- Otero-Mayer, A., González-Benito, A., Gutiérrez-de-Rozas, B., and Expósito-Casas, E. (2025). Family involvement in early childhood education: A systematic review of its measurement. *Early childhood education Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-025-02024-4>
- Remorosa, M. M. R., Capili, S. R., Decir, E. G. B., Delacruz, J. B., Balase, M. M. H., and Escarlos, G. S. (2024). Vygotsky's social development theory: The role of social interaction and language in cognitive development. *International Journal of All Research Writings*, 6(6), 10-13.
- Sandstrom, H. (2024). Early educators' reflections on the dc early childhood educator pay equity fund.
- Sidabutar, H. (2025). Application of Piaget's theory in early childhood education curriculum development. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning (INJO TEL)*, 3(1), 126–134.
- Sipilä, J. (2020). For all, for free! Why do parents have to pay for early childhood education but not for primary education? Dalam K. Repo, M. Alasuutari, K. Karila, & J. Lammi-Taskula (Ed.), *The Policies of Childcare and Early childhood education*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788117753.00008>
- Stahl, N. A., and King, J. R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of developmental education*, 44(1), 26–28.

- Ullah, S., Tahir, M. S., and Farooq, M. (2024). Financial self-efficacy as a mediator between financial socialization, early childhood consumer experiences, and financial well-being. *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*, 35(1), 123–136. <https://doi.org/10.1891/JFCP-2022-0087>
- Vesely, C. K., Brown, E. L., Mehta, S., and Horner, C. G. (2024). ‘Staying Afloat’: A mixed methods study of the financial and psychological well-being of early childhood educators. *Early childhood education Journal*, 52(2), 293–304. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-022-01429-9>
- Vivek, R., Nanthagopan, Y., and Piriyaatharshan, S. (2023). Beyond methods: Theoretical underpinnings of triangulation in qualitative and multi-method studies”. *SEEU Review*, 18(2), 105–122. <https://doi.org/10.2478/seeur-2023-0088>
- Zaimovic, A., Torlakovic, A., Arnaut-Berilo, A., Zaimovic, T., Dedovic, L., and Nuhic Meskovic, M. (2023). Mapping financial literacy: A systematic literature review of determinants and recent trends. *Sustainability*, 15(12), 9358.