



Digital Financial Empowerment for Rural Youth in Candimas Village, South Lampung

Muslimin¹, Mahatma Kufepaksi², Mudji Rachmat Ramelan³, Tiara Nirmala⁴

¹Jurusan Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia

^{2,3}Jurusan Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia

⁴Jurusan Ekonomi Pembangunan, Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia

muslimin.1975@feb.unila.ac.id¹, mahatma.kufepaksi@feb.unila.ac.id², muji@feb.unila.ac.id³, tiara.nirmala@feb.unila.ac.id⁴

Received: 10 November 2025

Accepted: 09 December 2025

*Correspondent Email:
author@email.ac.id



Abstract: Candimas Village, an agrarian village with the status of a Developed Village, still faces challenges related to low access to formal financial services and low digital financial literacy among its youth, which impacts the achievement of its Economic Resilience Index (IKE). This community service activity aimed to enhance the capacity of youth in digital financial literacy through a collaborative learning approach. The method involved 23 youth group participants in an interactive collaborative learning process, covering topics on digital financial products, cybersecurity, and practical financial management. Evaluation results showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding: 85.7% understood the importance of prudent financial management, 71.4% were able to identify modes of digital fraud, and 92.9% mastered the principle of data confidentiality. However, understanding of encryption and characteristics of illegal loans still needs improvement. The activity's conclusion emphasizes the importance of ongoing mentoring, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and replication of this empowerment model to strengthen economic resilience towards achieving a Self-Reliant Village status. **Keywords:** Digital Financial Literacy, Rural Youth, Collaborative Learning, Cybersecurity, Self-Reliant Village

1. INTRODUCTION

Candimas Village, located in the Natar District, South Lampung Regency, is an agrarian village with significant potential in the agricultural sector, particularly in corn, rice, and bio-pharmaceutical crops such as turmeric. Nevertheless, the village faces a major challenge in accessing formal financial services, which is a primary obstacle to strengthening community economic resilience, especially for the youth who possess great potential to become agents of change. The advancement of information technology and digital finance presents an opportunity to accelerate the achievement of Independent Village status, with young people acting as the primary agents in leveraging digital technology to enhance agricultural productivity and drive village economic growth. However, the low level of digital financial literacy among the youth constitutes a significant challenge that must be addressed to optimally realize this potential.

Based on the Village Development Index (Kemendesa, 2025), Candimas Village currently holds the status of an Advanced Village (Desa Maju) with a score of 0.7959. However, significant economic disparities persist, particularly regarding access to formal financial institutions. This is clearly evidenced by its Economic Resilience Index (Indeks Ketahanan Ekonomi/IKE) score of 0.833, indicating

that the village's economic sector still requires improvement, especially in the accessibility of financial services and more productive fund management.

Furthermore, the digital divide presents a major challenge, as access to technology and digital literacy in the rural area remains limited. This limitation hinders many young people from effectively leveraging digital technology for their financial needs. Compounding this issue are inadequate educational factors and constrained technological infrastructure, which collectively exacerbate the situation.

The digital gap in rural areas has become a global issue, particularly concerning access to technology and digital services. Kelly et al. (2023) emphasize that limited infrastructure in rural regions poses a significant barrier to implementing digital financial literacy programs, citing poor access to internet networks and adequate digital devices. A similar finding is reported by Sushma et al. (2024), whose research indicates that a majority of rural areas in India experience routine power outages and difficulties in accessing the technology required for digital financial transactions. These limitations exacerbate the inability of rural youth to utilize digital technology in their daily lives, including for financial purposes.

Furthermore, limited education is another primary challenge in enhancing digital financial literacy among rural youth. Gogoi et al. (2025) demonstrate that many young people in rural areas lack the necessary basic digital skills to effectively understand and use digital financial platforms. The absence of formal training and educational resources in rural schools also constitutes a significant obstacle to developing the essential digital skills required for accessing digital financial services. Murugiah et al. (2023) add that many rural schools lack an adequate curriculum for teaching basic digital skills, resulting in rural youth being ill-prepared to face technological advancements in the digital financial world.

To address this challenge, various strategies have been developed. One prominent approach involves digital literacy training programs that engage local community members and foster collaboration with village libraries and coding clubs (Vong et al., 2018). Furthermore, mobile applications have been utilized as a tool to enhance financial literacy in regions with limited access to physical banks and formal financial services (Sushma et al., 2024). This aligns with the recommendations of Pattnayak & Sahoo (2024), who advocate for partnerships between government and private organizations to provide subsidies or assistance programs. These initiatives enable rural communities to acquire digital devices and access more affordable internet services.

Beyond educational and infrastructural aspects, an understanding of cybersecurity risks is paramount to enhancing digital financial literacy among rural youth. Ogbemudia et al. (2021) found that many rural inhabitants tend to be skeptical of digital technology due to a limited understanding of its benefits and concerns over security issues, such as privacy and potential fraud. Digital scams, including phishing and fraudulent investment schemes, pose a significant threat to youth who are new to using digital financial services. Supporting this, Grover et al. (2025) demonstrate that education on data security and digital fraud is essential for building public trust in the use of digital technologies.

This community service initiative offers scientific novelty through an approach that integrates digital financial literacy and cybersecurity via a collaborative learning methodology. This approach enables rural youth to learn interactively, share experiences, and develop skills in managing digital finances wisely and securely. The program not only focuses on enhancing financial literacy but also provides practical training on digital financial products, fraud prevention, and fundamental cybersecurity principles essential for mitigating risks in digital transactions. Consequently, this initiative is expected to accelerate Candimas Village's progression toward Independent Village status and strengthen the community's sustainable economic resilience.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method employed is collaborative learning. This approach was selected for its ability to create an interactive and participatory learning environment, enabling participants to share knowledge and experiences collectively. Grounded in the theories of Vygotsky and Piaget, collaborative learning emphasizes the significance of social interaction in the learning process. This methodology allows participants to learn from one another, thereby deepening their comprehension of the subject matter. Furthermore, this method also emphasizes the use of contextually appropriate digital technology, ensuring participants acquire skills relevant to their needs in the digital era.

The primary objective of this method is to enhance participants' understanding of digital financial products, cybersecurity, and prudent financial management skills. The success of this initiative will be measured by the improvement in participants' digital financial literacy, gauged through their understanding of financial products, data security, and their ability to safely utilize digital financial platforms. In this context, digital financial literacy is paramount to ensuring that participants can leverage financial technology in a safe and productive manner, tailored to their specific needs.

The methodology employed in this initiative is grounded in the collaborative learning theory developed by Vygotsky and Piaget, which posits social interaction and group work as fundamental to successful learning processes. Within this framework, collaboration among participants enables them to share experiences, deepen their understanding, and collectively solve problems through discussions, simulations, and case studies. This approach has proven effective in enhancing practical skills, such as the use of digital technology, which are indispensable for digital financial literacy (Mancone et al., 2024; Vong et al., 2018). Furthermore, Cybersecurity Theory provides a foundation for instructing participants on the importance of personal data protection and vigilance against digital fraud threats. Given the prevalence of potential fraud in the digital world, data security education is crucial to ensure participants can use digital financial services safely and avoid potentially detrimental risks (Grover et al., 2025).

The primary beneficiaries of this program are the youth of Candimas Village, comprising members of the youth association and other young individuals with diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from high school graduates to university students. These young people were selected as the target group due to their significant potential to utilize digital finance in their daily lives and to act as agents of change within their village. In this context, they are expected to leverage technology to accelerate the village's economic development, particularly within the agricultural and small business sectors.

A total of 23 participants were involved in the initiative, 14 of whom were actively engaged in using their smartphones throughout the mentoring sessions. This group is regarded as a catalyst capable of harnessing digital technology to drive economic transformation in the village, especially in agriculture and small enterprises. To ensure the applied methods were precisely targeted and effective, the program adhered to a systematic sequence of stages, spanning from preparation to follow-up. These phases included identification of local needs and context, group formation, implementation of collaborative activities, monitoring and support, evaluation, and follow-up actions. Through this systematic approach, the mentoring program is anticipated to achieve its intended objectives: enhancing digital financial literacy and cybersecurity awareness among the youth of Candimas Village, thereby strengthening the village's economic resilience and advancing progress toward the status of a Self-Reliant Village.



In the domain of business knowledge, participants demonstrated a strong grasp of fundamental business elements (60% identified product, market, and pricing) as well as digital business models (93.3%). Furthermore, 80% of participants viewed digital technology as a catalyst for global market expansion. However, technical proficiency in calculating the Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) and establishing appropriate selling prices remained a persistent challenge, with only 33.3% of participants demonstrating mastery in this area. This finding corroborates the research by Giwu et al. (2024), which identified a gap between conceptual understanding and practical application among rural entrepreneurs.

A key indicator of this initiative's success was the marked improvement in participants' digital financial literacy. Evaluation results from pre-test and post-test comparisons demonstrated a significant enhancement in their understanding of digital financial products and overall financial management. Specifically, 85.7% of participants acknowledged the importance of digital financial literacy for wisely managing their income, prioritizing savings, and avoiding a consumptive lifestyle. This indicates that participants not only grasped the fundamentals of finance but also recognized the necessity of exercising caution when using digital financial platforms. Furthermore, a majority of participants (53.8%) demonstrated an increased awareness of the critical need to distinguish between legitimate and illegal financial applications, a crucial skill given the current prevalence of digital fraud. Collectively, this progress reflects a more profound comprehension of digital financial products and the core principles of sound financial management.

Furthermore, in the realm of cybersecurity, participants demonstrated a significant enhancement in their understanding of digital fraud and personal data protection. Specifically, 71.4% of participants were able to identify online scam tactics such as phishing and account hijacking, while 85.7% exhibited a clear understanding that robust password management and securing One-Time Passwords (OTPs) are crucial for safeguarding their digital financial accounts. These findings reflect a heightened awareness among participants regarding the importance of personal data protection and vigilance against digital fraud.

Nonetheless, despite the majority possessing a sound understanding, a small subset of participants still demonstrated difficulty in accurately identifying the hallmarks of online scams. Notably, 7.7% of



Figure 1. Method Framework (Du et al., 2008; Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2018; Homayouni, 2022)

3. Results and Discussions

The mentoring initiative conducted in Candimas Village was designed to enhance digital financial literacy among the youth, with particular emphasis on prudent financial management and understanding cybersecurity principles in digital financial services. The program successfully engaged 23 participants, predominantly comprising youth association members with diverse educational backgrounds ranging from high school graduates to university students. This participant profile indicates substantial potential for leveraging digital technology in daily life and serving as catalysts for community transformation.

participants erroneously believed that loan offers featuring low interest rates and minimal requirements were characteristic of legitimate lenders, indicating a potential vulnerability to highly enticing, offer-based fraud.

The integration of digital security into daily life constituted another critical component of the training. A significant majority of participants (78.6%) identified the use of strong, unique passwords as the most crucial safe habit in digital finance. This finding indicates a solid participant grasp of the fundamental principles for safeguarding their accounts. Furthermore, the curriculum emphasized the importance of activating two-factor authentication (2FA) to enhance account protection. This aspect of the education proved highly effective, as participants who were previously unfamiliar with the practice now recognize its value as an essential additional security layer.

Although this initiative has successfully established a solid foundational understanding of digital security, several challenges remain to be addressed. A primary obstacle is the constrained technological infrastructure within the village. As highlighted by Kelly et al. (2023), limited internet connectivity and inadequate access to digital devices in rural areas pose a significant barrier to implementing digital financial literacy programs. This situation further exacerbates the difficulties faced by youth in accessing existing digital financial services. Therefore, in addition to educational and training efforts, concerted actions to improve the village's technological infrastructure are imperative. Such improvements are essential to enable youth to access digital financial services more freely and effectively.

The collaborative learning method implemented in this initiative proved effective in enhancing participants' comprehension. This approach fostered a dynamic environment where learners could draw from one another's experiences, deepen their understanding, and strengthen the practical skills necessary for securely managing digital finances. This finding aligns with the work of Vong et al. (2018), which indicates that collaborative learning can significantly improve learner understanding, particularly in contexts requiring practical skills and technical knowledge. Through guided discussions and simulations, participants were able to collectively address challenges encountered in using digital financial services and develop joint solutions.

Therefore, this initiative has successfully enhanced digital financial literacy and cybersecurity awareness among the youth of Candimas Village. Nonetheless, persistent challenges require addressing, particularly concerning misconceptions about high-risk online loans and limitations in technological infrastructure. Consequently, it is imperative to continue this program through sustained educational initiatives and infrastructure enhancement efforts to achieve more optimal outcomes. Furthermore, the results of this initiative

can serve as a foundational framework for developing a replicable model of rural youth empowerment, adaptable to other regions with similar contexts.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the implementation of the digital financial capacity-building mentoring program for the youth of Candimas Village, it can be concluded that the initiative successfully and significantly enhanced digital financial literacy and awareness. The majority of participants, who were members of the youth association with educational backgrounds ranging from senior high school to university level, demonstrated adequate comprehension in financial management, the identification of digital scam tactics such as phishing and illegal lending, and a grasp of core cybersecurity principles including confidentiality, integrity, and non-repudiation. The applied collaborative learning approach proved effective in fostering a participatory and contextual learning environment. Nevertheless, certain challenges persist, particularly regarding the understanding of encryption and the characteristics of illegal loans, which require more in-depth coverage.

To ensure the sustainability and scalability of the program's impact, several strategic recommendations are proposed. For the participants, a sustained commitment is required to consistently apply digital security principles and continuously self-educate on the latest financial products and emerging fraud schemes. For the program organizers and village government, it is recommended to conduct more advanced, in-depth mentoring sessions, particularly focusing on encryption, digital investment, and simulations for handling cyber threats.

At the community level, establishing discussion forums or digital finance awareness groups can serve as a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences. Concurrently, financial institutions and relevant authorities are encouraged to intensify the dissemination of information regarding official financial products and to provide easily accessible complaint channels.

Through multi-stakeholder collaboration and a sustained approach, this empowerment model is expected to not only strengthen the economic resilience of Candimas Village but also be replicated in other villages as a collective endeavor towards building an inclusive, secure, and self-reliant digital society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This initiative was successfully executed thanks to the funding support from the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of the University of Lampung through the PKM Unggulan program scheme. Our gratitude is also extended to the Lampung Provincial Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KADIN), the Candimas Village

Government, Karang Taruna Candimas, KSPM FEB Unila, and all parties who contributed to the successful execution of this program.

REFERENCES

- Du, J., Havard, B., & Adams, J. (2008). A Project-Based Learning Approach: Online Group Collaborative Learning. In *Information Communication Technologies: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications: Volume 1* (Vol. 1). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-949-6.ch077>
- Gánem-Gutiérrez, G. A. (2018). Collaborative activity in the digital world. In *The Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Development*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315624747>
- Gogoi, A., Manoranjini, M., & Gupta, M. (2025). Design and implementation of digital literacy training programme: Findings of a quasi-experimental study from rural India. In *PLOS Digital Health* (Vol. 4, Issue 4 April). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pdig.0000617>
- Grover, P., Phutela, N., & Guess, W. (2025). Role of Financial and Digital Literacy in Inclusive Finance and Sustainable Development. In *FinTech and Financial Inclusion: Leveraging Digital Finance for Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Growth*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003514114-1>
- Homayouni, M. (2022). Peer assessment in group-oriented classroom contexts: On the effectiveness of peer assessment coupled with scaffolding and group work on speaking skills and vocabulary learning. In *Language Testing in Asia* (Vol. 12, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-022-00211-3>
- Kelly, W., McGrath, B., & Hubbard, D. (2023). Starting from 'scratch': Building young people's digital skills through a coding club collaboration with rural public libraries. In *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* (Vol. 55, Issue 2, pp. 487–499). <https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006221090953>
- Kemendesa. (2025). IDM. *Hasil Rekomendasi IDM*. <https://idm.kemendesa.go.id/rekomendasi>
- Mancone, S., Tosti, B., Corrado, S., Spica, G., Zanon, A., & Diotaiuti, P. (2024). Youth, money, and behavior: The impact of financial literacy programs. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 9). <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1397060>
- Murugiah, L., Ismail, R., Taib, H. M., Applanaidu, S. D., & Long, M. N. H. B. Hj. (2023). Children's understanding of financial literacy and parents' choice of financial knowledge learning methods in Malaysia. In *MethodsX* (Vol. 11). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2023.102383>
- Ogbemudia, I. B., Ozioma, O.-A. H., Nkiru, O. C., & Nneka, I. R. (2021). Potential for indigenous communication systems to improve financial literacy: Evidence from Nigeria. In *Enterprise Development and Microfinance* (Vol. 32, Issues 1–2, pp. 123–139). <https://doi.org/10.3362/1755-1986.20-00014>
- Pattnayak, N. C., & Sahoo, R. (2024). A Study on Socio-Demographic Determinants of Digital Financial Literacy in India. In *Theoretical and Practical Research in the Economic Fields* (Vol. 15, Issue 4, pp. 1012–1022). [https://doi.org/10.14505/tpref.v15.4\(32\).17](https://doi.org/10.14505/tpref.v15.4(32).17)
- Sushma, Arora, N., Kumar, J., & Ahuja, A. (2024). Digital Financial Inclusion: Evidence from India. In *Sustainable Finance: Vol. Part F4265* (pp. 317–337). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-67523-2_19
- Vong, W.-T., Then, P. H. H., & Teo, T.-H. (2018). Empowering rural youth for socio-economic benefits: A case study of knowledge management practices in Sarawak. In *Journal of Integrated Design and Process Science* (Vol. 21, Issue 4, pp. 57–77). <https://doi.org/10.3233/jid-2017-0019>