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SAVINGS EDUCATION AS AN EFFORT TO FOSTER FRUGAL BEHAVIOR AMONG CHILDREN AT SDN 091416 AFDELING 1

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Abstract

Saving is a positive habit that should be introduced to children from an early age to promote frugal behavior and basic financial management skills. However, some elementary school students have limited awareness of the importance of setting aside money for future needs. This community service program aimed to strengthen students' understanding of saving and encourage responsible financial habits at SDN 091416 Afdeling 1. The program involved approximately 50 students from grades III to VI and was implemented through interactive presentations, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and practical examples of managing pocket money. Program evaluation was conducted through direct observation of student participation, informal questions assessing their understanding, and feedback from teachers. The observations indicated that students actively engaged in the activities and demonstrated an emerging understanding of the benefits of saving, particularly in distinguishing between needs and wants and recognizing the importance of setting aside pocket money. These findings suggest that the educational program contributed to raising students' awareness of basic financial management concepts. However, changes in students' understanding and saving behavior could not be quantitatively established because no pre-test, post-test, or follow-up assessment was conducted. Therefore, the program represents an initial educational effort to promote financial awareness, responsibility, and frugal behavior among elementary school students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Saving money is an essential financial habit that should be introduced during childhood to develop financial awareness, responsible spending, and basic money management skills (Dalimunthe et al., 2024; Hasanah, 2026). Early financial education enables children to understand the value of money, distinguish between needs and wants, and recognize the importance of setting aside resources for future purposes (Soroko, 2023; Suhendar et al., 2024). Financial literacy encompasses not only financial knowledge but also the attitudes, skills, and behaviors required to make responsible financial decisions. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Barkat et al., 2025; Bousquet et al., 2024), financial literacy is closely associated with responsible financial behavior, highlighting the importance of providing financial education during the formative years. Furthermore, Shi et al. (2025) emphasized that financial education programs for children and adolescents can strengthen financial knowledge and attitudes, although evidence regarding sustained changes in actual financial behavior remains limited.

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Families and schools play complementary roles in developing children's financial awareness and encouraging responsible money management practices (Algarni et al., 2024; Suhendar et al., 2023). Families provide opportunities for children to observe and practice financial decision-making in everyday life, while schools offer structured educational experiences that reinforce financial knowledge and positive habits. A meta-analysis conducted by Netemeyer et al. (2024) demonstrated that financial education interventions generally have positive effects on financial knowledge and subsequent financial behaviors. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of educational activities depends on how financial concepts are communicated and connected to learners' experiences. Therefore, financial literacy education at the elementary school level should employ accessible language, practical examples, and participatory learning activities that encourage students to reflect on their spending choices and understand the benefits of saving.

Previous community-based financial literacy initiatives in Indonesia have introduced various educational approaches to encourage saving habits among elementary school students (Kesuma et al., 2025; Lantow, 2026). For example, Apriani et al. (2025) implemented a savings education activity involving the creation of piggy banks from recycled materials to promote children's saving interests and creativity. Similarly, Majumder et al. (2023) conducted the Smart Money Kids program, which incorporated interactive financial education, educational games, and simple economic simulations to strengthen children's understanding of money management. These initiatives demonstrate the relevance of combining financial literacy education with practical and engaging learning experiences. However, financial education activities must also consider the specific needs, existing financial habits, and learning characteristics of students in different school environments (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Senduk et al., 2024). Consequently, contextually adapted educational programs remain important for addressing financial awareness and saving practices among elementary school students.

Preliminary observations conducted by students participating in the Community Service Program (Kuliah Kerja Nyata, KKN) at SDN 091416 Afdeling 1 indicated that several students tended to spend most of their pocket money on snacks rather than setting aside a portion for savings. Although some students were familiar with the concept of saving, others demonstrated limited understanding of its benefits and the practical steps required to develop consistent saving habits. These observations suggested a need for educational activities that could introduce basic financial management concepts through examples closely related to students' everyday experiences. In particular, helping students distinguish between essential needs and unnecessary spending was considered important for encouraging greater financial awareness and responsible decision-making.

In response to these conditions, KKN students from Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara organized a Savings Awareness Education Program at SDN 091416 Afdeling 1 on August 24, 2026. The activity involved approximately 50 students from grades III, IV, V, and VI. The program was designed using an educational and participatory approach, incorporating interactive presentations, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and practical examples of managing pocket money. The learning materials covered the definition and benefits of saving, accessible saving methods such as piggy banks and bank accounts, strategies for setting savings goals, and the importance of distinguishing between needs and wants. Through these activities, students were encouraged to recognize that saving does not necessarily require substantial financial resources but can begin with regularly setting aside small amounts of their daily allowances.

The specific contribution of this community service program lies in its context-responsive implementation, which was informed by preliminary observations of students' spending practices and adapted to participants across four elementary school grade levels. While previous initiatives have incorporated creative piggy-bank activities, educational games, and financial simulations, this program emphasized direct communication, interactive discussions, and practical explanations of everyday pocket-money management. In addition, students' participation and understanding were explored through direct observation, informal question-and-answer activities, and feedback from teachers. Rather than claiming to introduce an entirely new financial education model, the program provides an example of how basic financial literacy concepts can be communicated through accessible and participatory activities within a specific elementary school setting.

Accordingly, this community service program aimed to strengthen students' awareness of the importance of saving, introduce practical strategies for managing pocket money, and encourage positive attitudes toward frugal spending. The program was also expected to provide an initial foundation for developing discipline, responsibility, and financial awareness among elementary school students. By

documenting its implementation and participants' immediate responses, this activity contributes practical insights into the delivery of contextually relevant financial literacy education. However, its immediate educational outcomes should be distinguished from long-term behavioral changes, which require further assessment to establish whether students consistently apply saving habits in their daily lives.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This community service activity was conducted as part of the Community Service Program (Kuliah Kerja Nyata, KKN) organized by Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara (UINSU) at SDN 091416 Afdeling 1 on August 24, 2026. The program involved approximately 50 students from grades III, IV, V, and VI. Its primary objective was to introduce basic financial literacy concepts, strengthen students' awareness of the importance of saving money, and encourage responsible pocket-money management. The activity employed an educational and participatory approach that emphasized interactive learning, practical examples, and direct student involvement (Creswell, 2021). The educational materials and communication strategies were adapted to the students' ages and levels of understanding to facilitate meaningful participation.

Implementation Stages

The savings education program was organized into three main stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

Preparation Stage. The preparation stage involved coordination between the KKN students, the school principal, and teachers to determine the activity schedule, venue, participants, and technical arrangements. The KKN students also developed educational materials and visual presentations using simple language and examples relevant to elementary school students' daily experiences. The materials focused on the meaning and benefits of saving, different saving methods, the distinction between needs and wants, and practical strategies for managing pocket money. Furthermore, responsibilities were distributed among KKN students, including delivering educational materials, facilitating discussions, assisting participants, documenting the activities, and maintaining an organized learning environment.

Implementation Stage. The implementation began with an introductory session, followed by interactive presentations covering basic financial literacy and the importance of developing saving habits from an early age. Students were introduced to simple saving practices, including using piggy banks, setting personal savings goals, and setting aside a portion of their daily allowances. The presenters also explained the differences between saving money at home and through formal financial institutions. Practical examples related to purchasing snacks, prioritizing essential needs, and reducing unnecessary spending were incorporated to make the educational materials relevant to students' everyday experiences.

Following the presentations, students participated in interactive discussions and question-and-answer sessions. They were encouraged to express their opinions, respond to questions, and share personal experiences related to spending and saving their pocket money. This participatory approach provided opportunities for students to connect the educational content with their daily financial decisions while allowing the facilitators to observe their engagement and immediate understanding of the materials.

Evaluation Stage. The evaluation was conducted qualitatively through direct observation of students' participation, informal question-and-answer activities, and feedback from teachers. The evaluation focused on students' immediate understanding of the educational materials rather than measuring long-term changes in financial behavior. Observations considered students' active participation in discussions, willingness to answer questions, ability to explain basic saving concepts, and capacity to relate the educational materials to everyday spending decisions.

The informal questions addressed several key aspects of financial literacy, including students' understanding of the meaning and benefits of saving, their ability to identify accessible saving methods, their recognition of differences between needs and wants, and their awareness of practical strategies for setting aside pocket money. Students' verbal responses and explanations were used as qualitative indications of their immediate comprehension. In addition, feedback from teachers provided supplementary information regarding students' engagement, the accessibility of the educational materials, and the overall implementation of the activity.

The evaluation was descriptive and did not involve standardized assessment instruments, reported numerical scores, or a pre-test and post-test comparison. Consequently, the observations and students' responses were interpreted as indicators of immediate engagement and understanding rather than conclusive evidence of measurable improvements or sustained changes in saving behavior. This evaluation approach provided an initial description of the program's educational outcomes and potential areas for further development.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The Savings Education Program at SDN 091416 Afdeling 1 was implemented on August 24, 2026, involving approximately 50 students from grades III, IV, V, and VI. Based on observations conducted throughout the activity, the program received positive responses from the students and the school. Students demonstrated enthusiasm through their participation in interactive presentations, question-and-answer sessions, and discussions concerning basic financial management. Their willingness to respond to questions and share personal experiences provided observable indications of engagement with the educational materials. These observations suggest that the participatory approach created opportunities for students to explore financial concepts in relation to their everyday experiences. Nevertheless, the observed enthusiasm should be interpreted as evidence of immediate learning engagement rather than confirmation of improvements in financial literacy or long-term saving behavior.

The educational activity began with an introduction to the meaning and benefits of saving money, emphasizing the importance of setting aside a portion of available money for future needs. Students were introduced to several practical saving methods, including using piggy banks at home and depositing money in financial institutions. The presenters also explained that saving could begin with small amounts of pocket money and did not require substantial financial resources. As illustrated in Figure 1, the educational materials were delivered through visual presentations designed to make financial concepts accessible to elementary school students. The combination of simple explanations and familiar examples provided a context for introducing responsible financial decision-making, particularly regarding the allocation of pocket money between immediate consumption and future needs.

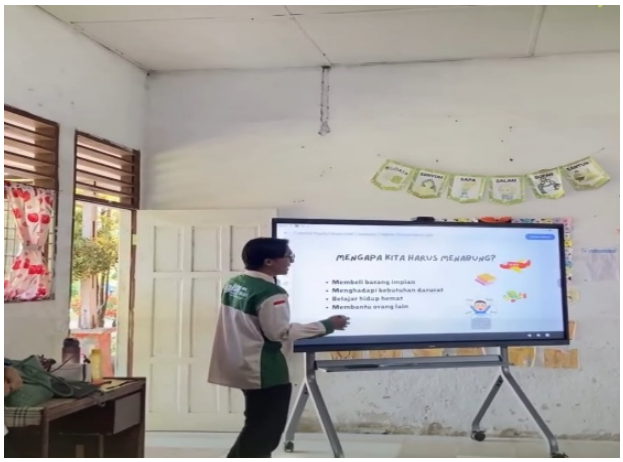


Figure 1. Education on Saving

During the question-and-answer sessions, several students demonstrated their understanding of basic saving concepts by responding to questions concerning the purposes and benefits of saving money. Some students also shared their experiences of using piggy banks at home, indicating that the concept of saving was already familiar to certain participants. However, the discussions suggested that familiarity with saving did not necessarily imply consistent saving practices. This observation is important because it highlights a distinction between knowing the meaning of saving and applying that knowledge regularly. The students' responses provided qualitative evidence of their immediate engagement with the educational content, although the absence of systematic baseline assessments prevented the facilitators from determining whether their understanding had improved compared with their knowledge before participating in the program.

Another important aspect of the program was the introduction of practical strategies for managing pocket money. Students were encouraged to set personal savings goals, save leftover change, allocate part of their allowances to savings, and reduce unnecessary purchases. As shown in Figure 2, students participated in the educational activity and were photographed holding piggy banks, which served as tangible examples of a simple saving method introduced during the program. The use of familiar saving tools helped connect the educational messages with financial practices that children could potentially perform at home. However, the availability of piggy banks should be understood as providing an opportunity to practice saving rather than demonstrating that students subsequently developed consistent saving habits.



Figure 2. Students attending a presentation on saving and receiving piggy banks.

The discussion sessions also provided specific indications of students' immediate understanding of responsible spending. Several participants were able to explain the benefits of saving in their own words, including the idea that pocket money did not have to be spent entirely on snacks and that a portion could be reserved for future needs. These responses reflected an initial recognition of the importance of prioritizing expenditures and considering the consequences of everyday financial decisions. The examples were particularly relevant because preliminary observations had indicated that some students tended to spend most of their allowances on snacks. By relating saving practices to familiar spending situations, the educational program encouraged students to reflect on the distinction between needs and wants. However, these verbal responses were not systematically scored and therefore cannot establish the magnitude of students' understanding or demonstrate measurable changes in their financial behavior.

From an educational perspective, the students' engagement with practical examples and interactive discussions is consistent with the findings of Hermansyah et al. (2024), who emphasized that financial literacy education in elementary schools should incorporate everyday financial activities, including saving and purchasing goods according to needs. Similarly, Yip et al. (2023), through the Smart Money Kids program, highlighted the relevance of participatory financial education that introduces children to the value of money, spending priorities, and saving practices. The observations from SDN 091416 Afdeling 1 support the practical relevance of these approaches, particularly in making financial education more accessible through familiar experiences. However, the present program differed in its emphasis on direct presentations, interactive discussions, and simple saving examples rather than structured financial games or economic simulations. This distinction illustrates that participatory financial education can be adapted to the available resources and characteristics of different school environments.

The findings can also be interpreted in relation to the broader literature on financial education for children and adolescents. Ghosh & Mohapatra (2026), through a systematic review, reported that school-based financial education programs can positively influence financial knowledge and attitudes, while evidence concerning actual and sustained behavioral changes remains relatively limited. Their findings also identify experiential learning as a promising approach for developing financial understanding among younger learners. In the present program, students' responses to practical examples concerning pocket money and their participation in discussions suggest that connecting educational materials to everyday experiences may facilitate immediate conceptual engagement. Nevertheless, this interpretation should not be equated with a demonstrated intervention effect because

the program did not employ experimental measurements or standardized assessments. Instead, the observed responses provide descriptive evidence of how students engaged with introductory financial concepts during a community-based educational activity.

Furthermore, Salas-Velasco (2022), in a meta-analysis of randomized financial education interventions, demonstrated that financial education can positively affect financial knowledge and subsequent financial behaviors under systematically evaluated conditions. This finding provides a broader empirical justification for introducing financial education at an early stage. However, the outcomes of the present program must be interpreted within its methodological limitations. Students' ability to explain the benefits of saving and their active participation during educational sessions reflect immediate responses to the activity, whereas the development of discipline, frugality, and consistent saving habits requires repeated practice and reinforcement over time. Consequently, the program should be understood as an initial educational intervention that introduced relevant financial concepts rather than an activity that conclusively established behavioral changes among participants.

The distinction between immediate understanding and sustained financial behavior has important implications for developing subsequent educational programs. Although the students showed interest in saving practices and demonstrated awareness of the importance of allocating pocket money responsibly, the activity was implemented as a single educational session without a pre-test, post-test, or longitudinal follow-up. Therefore, the available evidence does not establish whether students consistently saved money after the program or reduced unnecessary spending in their daily lives. Future activities could incorporate simple savings records, periodic classroom discussions, teacher observations, and parental involvement to assess the extent to which students apply financial knowledge beyond the educational setting. Such approaches would provide more comprehensive evidence regarding the relationship between financial literacy education and the gradual development of responsible financial behavior.

Overall, the Savings Education Program at SDN 091416 Afdeling 1 provided a positive initial learning experience by introducing basic saving concepts, encouraging student participation, and connecting financial education with everyday pocket-money management. The students' responses indicated an immediate awareness of the benefits of saving and an understanding that financial resources could be allocated between present and future needs. As documented in Figure 3, the activity concluded with a group photograph involving the participants and facilitators, illustrating their collective participation in the community service program. This documentation supports the description of program implementation but does not independently establish learning outcomes. The principal contribution of the activity lies in demonstrating a contextually appropriate and participatory approach to introductory financial literacy education, while recognizing that the development of consistent saving habits requires continuous educational support and further evaluation.



Figure 3. Group photo following the "Love for Saving" education activity at SDN 091416 Afdeling 1.

4. CONCLUSION

The educational activity on saving aimed at fostering frugal habits among students at SDN 091416 Afdeling 1 and held on August 24, 2026 was successful and received a positive response from both the students and the school. The activity featured interactive presentations, discussions, and

question-and-answer sessions with the students. Through this initiative, students gained an understanding of the concept and benefits of saving, practical saving methods, and the importance of distinguishing between needs and wants when managing their pocket money.

The activity demonstrated that education on saving helps raise student awareness regarding the importance of money management from an early age. Students were encouraged not only to set aside a portion of their money but also to learn how to use it wisely and avoid excessive spending. Furthermore, the habit of saving fosters discipline and responsibility, encouraging students to adopt frugal behaviors in their daily lives.

Consequently, it is hoped that such educational activities will not be limited to a single event but will be continued and further developed by the school with parental support. Through this collaboration, it is expected that the habit of saving and frugal behavior will be integrated into the children's daily lives, becoming a positive habit established from an early age.

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