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AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF PERSONAL FINANCE AMONG STUDENTS OF THE UACYA- UAN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION: AN INVESTIGATION TO IMPROVE FINANCIAL EDUCATION

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Abstract: This research focuses on detecting opportunities for improvement in the knowledge of personal finance among students of the Bachelor's Degree in Administration of the Academic Unit of Accounting and Administration (UACyA) of the Autonomous University of Nayarit (UAN). A mixed methodological approach was used, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to achieve an in-depth understanding of the topic. The sample included 253 students, selected from a total of 736. The findings indicate that 60% of the respondents feel unsure or very unsure in the management of their personal finances. The areas where they have the most clarity are budgeting and expense control and saving and investing. In addition, students showed a notable interest in topics such as credit and savings. However, there is a notable discrepancy between theoretical knowledge and its practical application, as only 15% of the participants use a monthly budget on a regular basis. Interviews revealed concerns about lack of personal finance education and anxiety related to future debt. Significant opportunities for improving students' financial literacy are identified. The creation of more comprehensive and targeted educational programs that integrate online learning with hands-on experiences is suggested, thus fostering greater confidence and skill in managing their finances.

Keywords: Personal finance, financial education, debt, savings, investment.

INTRODUCTION

Financial education is an important aspect in the training of future professionals in the field of Management. In an increasingly complex and changing environment, having a solid personal financial knowledge becomes crucial for making the right decisions at the individual, family or organizational level. In this sense, it is essential to identify the possible areas of opportunity in the personal or family financial knowledge of university students of Management, with the objective of improving or maximizing their preparation in this area and promoting financial education, in order to create a solid and responsible financial culture.

The current research focuses on identifying the personal finance knowledge of the students of the Bachelor's Degree in Administration of the Academic Unit of Accounting and Administration (UAN), with the objective of developing effective methods and/or strategies to improve their financial education. Several sources and techniques were used to identify areas for improvement and suggest specific measures to solve these existing areas of opportunity.

With the above, reference is made to the words of Benjamin Franklin, who stated that investment in knowledge always generates the best benefits. According to Mungaray et al. (2021), financial education is an important factor to increase welfare levels in countries with a high degree of inequality, as it allows citizens to improve their participation in economic activities through financial decisions. On the other hand, Sánchez Puga et al. (2020), conclude that educating ourselves and others financially will be the best way to achieve success in our environment; it is necessary to have training from childhood so that the concepts are assimilated and applied from an early age or, as the case may be, from the first moment a person comes into contact with his or her first income.

DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL FINANCE

Personal finances are a fundamental part of any individual's life, since they directly influence the quality of life and economic stability. According to López, Y. C., & Dra, G. H. R. (2022), "Personal finances require time and dedication to be able to make correct and coherent decisions, which can help shape the desired life project to have a dignified and stable future. That is why it is essential to acquire tools that facilitate and allow us to keep track of our income, expenses, savings and investments.

A very important tool in personal finance is the preparation of a budget. The personal and/or family budget or, as we have called it, "Magic Wand" is a fundamental and essential tool, which helps us to reduce financial stress by facilitating decision making in our economy, thus achieving better financial health. Through a budget, it is possible to identify income and plan expenses, ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to cover essential needs while setting aside a portion for savings, investment and credit. "A family budget is a detailed plan that establishes a family's income and expenses for a given period of time, with the objective of maintaining financial balance and achieving specific goals" (Navarro, S. 2024).

Personal finances are extremely essential in our family or personal economy, since they improve our decision making about our income, expenses, debts, savings and investments. Having tools such as a family budget and financial education allows us to have an adequate control of our resources and to plan short, medium and long term financial goals. In addition to providing us with economic stability and financial well-being, proper management of our finances allows us to face unforeseen events and ensure a solid future for ourselves and our families.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION

To understand the importance of financial education, it is necessary to define it. The National Commission for the Protection and Defense of Financial Services Users (CONDUSEF) defines financial education as a set of actions necessary for the population to acquire aptitudes, skills and knowledge that allow them to manage and plan their personal finances, as well as to optimally use the products and services offered by the financial system for the benefit of their personal, family, work, professional and business interests.

Financial education is vital in making personal or family financial decisions, using our skills to create savings and investment goals. The Welfare Bank (2024) mentions that a lack of financial knowledge can lead to harmful decisions, such as excessive indebtedness or the use of informal financial services, which are often costly and unfavorable. Beginning to educate ourselves financially, it is indispensable to control debts and, based on a family and/or personal budget, as the case may be, make decisions about credit or leverage.

Financial education helps people to better manage their money, to understand debts and avoid over-indebtedness, to plan for the future, to manage risk and to achieve greater economic stability, which improves the quality of life. As mentioned by Jiménez, O. (2021) It is extremely important to make young people see the value and the way in which capital should be spent; due to their age, it is vital that they learn through simple and colloquial language what financial products are, how a bank account works, how many there are.

IMPACT OF FINANCIAL EDUCATION ON ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

Sánchez Puga et al. (2020), conclude that educating ourselves and others financially will be the best way to achieve success in our environment, it is necessary to have training from childhood so that the concepts are assimilated and applied from an early age or in their case from the first moment a person comes into contact with his or her first income.

METHODOLOGY

The following is a description of the proposed research methodology. In order to better understand the financial knowledge of undergraduate students in Management, this research uses a mixed approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of a mixed approach, according to Manzano, I. (2024), allows the use of multiple data sources, which increases the validity and reliability of the results. In addition, by combining different approaches, more accurate and detailed data can be obtained, and different perspectives and points of view can be explored.

In the quantitative section, for this research, a questionnaire that addresses fundamental concepts of personal finance will be carried out and a representative sample of students of the Bachelor's Degree in Management will be selected. With this questionnaire, we will measure, through numerical data on the financial knowledge of students through a structured survey design. As Sanchez & Murillo (2021) point out, "The quantitative approach is sequential and evidential. It starts from an idea, which is gradually delimited and, once delimited, research objectives and questions are derived, the literature is reviewed and a framework or theoretical perspective is constructed.

In the qualitative component, in-depth interviews will be conducted with a selected subgroup of students. According to Ramírez-Elías & Arbesú-García (2019), “The interest of qualitative research focuses on inquiring, understanding and interpreting what is observed from the meanings that others give to the actions they perform”. In this sense, in-depth interviews allow for a detailed and contextualized exploration of the participants’ points of view, resulting in an enriching understanding of various phenomena, such as the opportunities found in the financial knowledge

The combination of quantitative and qualitative results will allow for a complete understanding of the areas of opportunity in the financial literacy of undergraduate management students and will serve as a basis for the creation of effective educational strategies.

Currently, there is an enrollment of 736 administration students in the Academic Unit. These students are made up of three shifts, of which 346 are in the morning shift, 221 in the afternoon shift and 169 in the semi-school shift, which makes a universe. The following formula was used to calculate the sample size.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

To determine the sample size needed for a population of 736 students, first, some key factors must be considered, such as confidence level, margin of error, and variability in the population. Here are general steps to calculate the sample size:

$$n = \frac{(Z^2 * N * P * Q)}{(e^2 (N-1) + (Z^2 * P * Q))}$$

Formula: Uses the sample size formula for finite populations.

Where:

n= is the required sample size.

Z= is the Z value corresponding to the confidence level 95%=1.96

N= is the size of the population (736 in this case) students in administration.

P=success is the estimate of the population proportion 50% (0.5 if unknown).

Q= failure 50%= 0.50

e= estimation error 5%= 0.05

considering the universe of study to be the administration students as the population with a total of 736 students up to these dates of August-September 2023.

Calculation: Substitute the values in the formula and solve for n:

$$n = \frac{(1.96^2 * 736 * 0.50 * 0.50)}{(.05^2 (736-1) + (1.96^2 * 0.50 * 0.50))}$$

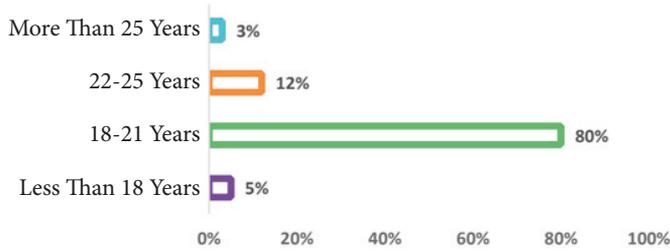
n ≈ 252.63 n ≈ 253 students.

Since you cannot have a fraction of a person in your sample, round up to the nearest whole number. Therefore, you would need a sample of at least 253 students to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error in a population of 736 students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results presented below are derived from an analysis based on the questionnaire designed for this research. The data collected reveal important areas of opportunity in the financial education of students, as well as their specific interests and needs in this field. The subsequent discussion explores the implications of these findings and proposes possible strategies for improving financial education at the institution.

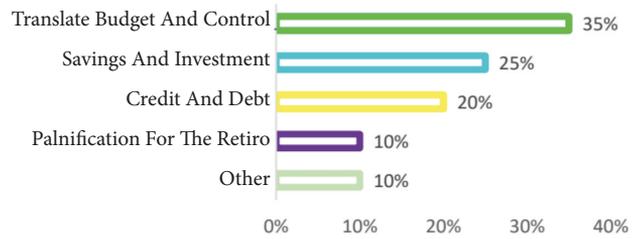
Age distribution of respondents



Source: own elaboration

Regarding the age distribution of the surveyed students of the Bachelor's Degree in Administration at UAN, there is a clear predominance of the 18-21 age range, which represents 80% of the sample. This indicates that most of the students are young adults who have just started their university education, which may influence their level of knowledge and experience in personal finance.

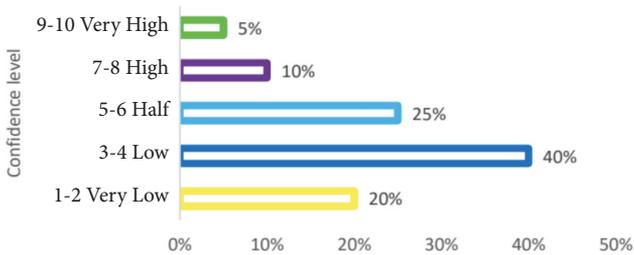
Financial areas better understood



Source: own elaboration

Regarding the financial areas that students feel they understand best, budgeting and expense control tops the list with 35%, followed by saving and investing with 25%. It is interesting to note that more complex areas such as retirement planning are the least understood. This data can guide the design of future educational programs, focusing on reinforcing the areas of least understanding.

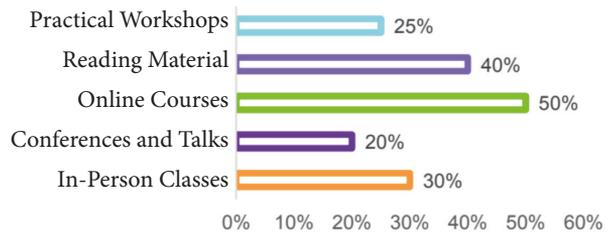
Personal financial management



Source: own elaboration

The graph above represents the level of confidence that students report having in managing their personal finances. It is notable that 60% of the respondents are in the low and very low levels of confidence (1-4 on the scale), while only 15% are in the high and very high levels (7-10). These results suggest an important area of opportunity to improve financial education and, consequently, students' confidence in this area.

Preferred teaching formats



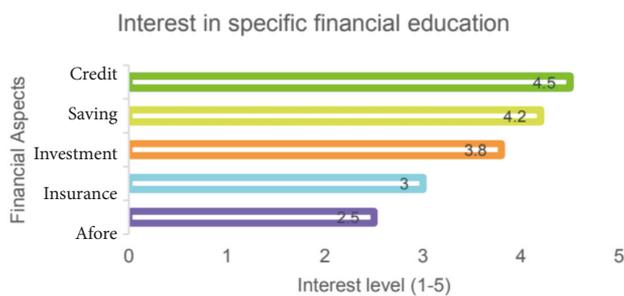
Source: own elaboration

When analyzing students' preferences regarding teaching formats for financial education online courses are the most popular option showing a 50% preference, followed by reading material (40%). It is notable that hands-on workshops, which are often effective for financial learning, are less preferred (25%). These results can inform the teaching strategies to be implemented, considering a balance between student preferences and the most effective methods of learning.

KEY QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

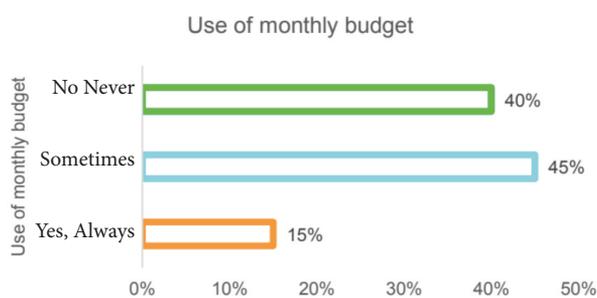
In-depth interviews with management students have revealed significant concerns about their personal finance education. First, it has been found that many of them have very limited experience in money management, restricted to basic operations, suggesting a lack of preparation to handle more complex financial situations. In addition, the formal training they have received on this subject is considered insufficient, as it is perceived as superficial and poorly adjusted to the students' real needs. The main challenges they face include difficulties in saving, little knowledge about investments, and growing anxiety related to managing future debts. In response to this situation, students express a notable interest in tools such as mobile applications to manage their finances, as well as interactive online courses and personalized counseling. Finally, it is perceived that academic training in Management does not sufficiently emphasize the relevance of personal finances, despite the clear connection between both areas, which generates anxiety regarding student debts and uncertainty about their financial future.

These results provide context and interpretation to the data presented, helping readers to understand the implications of the results and the areas of opportunity in students' financial education. In addition, they provide a guideline, with valuable information, to design more effective and relevant educational strategies to improve the financial literacy of management students.



Source: own elaboration

In terms of students' level of interest in various aspects of financial education, credit emerges as the topic of greatest interest (4.5/5), followed closely by savings (4.2/5). In contrast, topics such as insurance and Afore generate less interest. This information is valuable for prioritizing and adapting the content of financial education programs, ensuring that the topics of greatest interest are addressed without neglecting those that, although less popular, are equally important for comprehensive financial education.



Source: own elaboration.

The graph reveals that only 15% of the students consistently keep a monthly budget. Forty-five percent do so occasionally, while 40% never do so. These results suggest that there is a significant area of opportunity between theoretical knowledge (given that budgeting was one of the best understood areas) and practical application. Consideration should be given to the need for curricula that not only teach how to budget, but also motivate and facilitate its consistent use.

CONCLUSIONS

Important areas of opportunity are identified in the financial education of students in the Bachelor's Degree in Administration at UAN. Low confidence in managing personal finances and limited prior knowledge in this area suggest the need to implement broader and more specific educational programs. As Maldonado Bernal et al (2020) point out, "financial education is a skill in the development of attitudes and knowledge in the form of consumer and making correct decisions in a personal and social way". Therefore, strengthening these aspects could have a significant impact on students' future professional and personal lives.

The moderate interest of students in receiving more financial education, together with their preference for online teaching formats and reading materials, poses challenges and opportunities for the institution. In this sense, it is relevant to consider the development of innovative educational programs that combine online learning with hands-on experiences, taking advantage of digital technologies to increase student engagement and participation.

The predominance of interest in topics such as credit and savings over investments and long-term planning reflects students' immediate financial concerns. However, it is crucial to foster a broader view of personal finance. As Felix, Mellado & Navarro (2021) argue, "It is essential to intensify financial training from the school stage through educational and financial institutions, so that citizens make responsible decisions and improve their economic well-being" (p.36). There is an opportunity to broaden students' financial perspective, balancing attention to immediate needs with the promotion of comprehensive financial planning.

Students recognize the importance of financial education, which provides a strong motivational basis for future educational programs. The low understanding reported in key financial areas underscores the need for a more practical and applied approach to teaching finance. It is important to note that the implementation of practical workshops, case studies and financial simulations should be considered as an integral part of the curricula, better preparing their students for the financial challenges they will face in their professional and personal futures.

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