

FINANCIAL MATURITY (RUSHD) AS A CULTURAL ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK: RECONSTRUCTING FINANCIAL EDUCATION THROUGH ARAB VALUES

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Abstract

Contemporary financial education is predominantly shaped by Western paradigms that prioritize individual achievement, consumption-driven behavior, and short-term optimization. While these approaches have advanced personal finance competencies, they often overlook ethical, communal, and spiritual dimensions that are salient in many Arab societies. This study introduces Financial Maturity (Rushd) as a culturally grounded framework that redefines financial literacy through Arab heritage, Islamic ethics, and contextual realities. Combining document analysis with practice-based case studies and field observations, the paper proposes a dual-level model: the MAP Pyramid—integrating Material, Associations, and Personal worlds—and the CREDIT framework, which translates ethical intention into disciplined action. Results suggest that when learners organize financial behavior through MAP and set goals using CREDIT, they report improved planning, reduced impulsive spending, stronger family cohesion, and higher alignment between values and decisions. The paper expands on the pedagogical implications for Arab education systems, outlining how Rushd can be embedded into curricula, teacher training, and assessment. While exploratory, the findings offer a culturally authentic evolution of financial education that complements technical competence with ethical accountability and identity coherence.

Keywords: Financial literacy, cultural values, Arab education, indigenous education, financial coaching, financial maturity, educational innovation, critical thinking, Middle East, inclusive education, lifelong learning, ethical finance, curriculum design.

1 INTRODUCTION

Financial education worldwide has been shaped by frameworks developed largely in Western contexts. These frameworks emphasize self-interest, rational choice, and efficiency, and they typically orient learners toward short-term goal attainment and consumption-driven success. Such approaches have yielded important gains in budgeting, saving, and credit management; however, they frequently under-specify the moral, relational, and spiritual dimensions of financial life that are central across many Arab societies. In these societies, financial decisions do not occur in a vacuum: they are embedded within webs of family obligations, community expectations, and ethical accountability.

This paper introduces Financial Maturity (Rushd) as a values-based, culturally embedded alternative that reframes financial literacy from a narrow technical skillset into a developmental process. Rooted in concepts drawn from Arab heritage and Islamic thought—such as justice (*'adl*), stewardship (*amanah*), and intergenerational responsibility—Rushd aims to align economic behavior with dignity, communal benefit, and long-horizon thinking. Rather than positioning Western and Arab approaches as monoliths, the paper adopts a nuanced lens that recognizes internal diversity within and across both contexts.

Empirically, the study synthesizes document analysis (OECD, UNDP, AMF, and scholarly literature) with field observations and qualitative case studies derived from more than eighteen years of professional practice in coaching and consulting across several Arab countries. Conceptually, the paper advances a dual-level model: the MAP Pyramid—an integrative worldview for organizing financial life—and the CREDIT framework—a goal-setting method that connects ethical intention with measurable outcomes. The aim is to demonstrate how culturally sensitive pedagogy can support sustainable financial behavior and learner wellbeing while remaining compatible with international standards of financial competence.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Document Analysis

A structured review of global financial literacy literature was conducted, including the OECD/INFE survey, World Bank and IMF resources, and influential academic works (e.g., Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014; Kahneman,

2011). Regional references such as the Arab Monetary Fund (2021) and UNDP (2022) were analyzed to contextualize financial inclusion gaps, youth indebtedness, and saving patterns across Arab settings.

2.2 Field Observations

The study draws on the author’s practice-based insights from coaching, auditing, and consulting engagements across multiple Arab countries. Systematic observation notes were recorded during training programs and organizational interventions to capture everyday financial decisions, barriers, and culturally informed strategies used by youth, households, and SMEs.

2.3 Case Studies and Data Coding

Three qualitative case studies were developed, focusing on (a) youth budgeting and impulsive spending, (b) family-level financial planning with extended obligations, and (c) SME cash management under income volatility. Data were analyzed using thematic coding (open and axial), identifying patterns related to intention-setting, delayed gratification, communal support, and spiritual accountability.

2.4 Cultural Analysis, Validity, and Reflexivity

Key ethical concepts—justice (‘adl) and stewardship (amanah)—were interpreted as behavioral principles rather than theological abstractions. Triangulation across sources (documents, cases, observations) enhanced credibility. Reflexivity was practiced to mitigate practitioner bias; interpretations were cross-checked against multiple data points and alternative explanations.

2.5 Limitations

The qualitative design prioritizes depth over breadth and limits generalization. Some insights derive from practice, raising the possibility of interpretive bias despite mitigation efforts. Future research should extend quantitative measurement to test the long-term effects of Rushd-based education on financial behavior across diverse populations.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Reframing Financial Balance through the MAP Pyramid

Findings suggest that the conventional “Wheel of Life” often presumes high individualism and compartmentalized domains. In contrast, the MAP Pyramid reframes balance as interaction among three interdependent worlds: Material (M), Associations (A), and Personal (P). This culturally coherent model links financial reasoning with social belonging and inner purpose.

Educationally, MAP offers instructors a conceptual tool to prompt learners to justify financial choices not only by numbers but also by relational and ethical consequences.

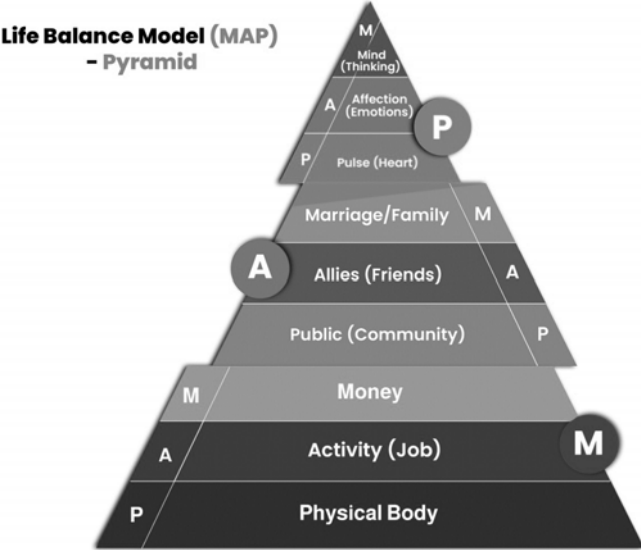


Figure 1. MAP Pyramid: Integration of Material, Associations, and Personal worlds

3.2 Dimensions of Financial Maturity (Rushd)

Four behavioral dimensions were observed consistently across cases. (1) Intentionality (niyyah): learners who wrote the reason before the numeric target showed higher adherence. (2) Delayed gratification: the 72-hour rule and sinking funds reduced impulsive purchases. (3) Communal benefit: allocating small, fixed contributions to family/community enhanced satisfaction and reduced intra-household tension. (4) Spiritual accountability: connecting decisions to justice and stewardship reduced reliance on high-cost debt.

Table 1. Examples of Rushd dimensions applied in daily financial behaviors

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Core Focus</i>	<i>Example Practices</i>	<i>Observed Outcomes</i>
Material	Income, expenditures, assets, liquidity thresholds	Budget envelopes; minimum cash buffers before major purchases	Improved control, fewer shocks, disciplined planning
Associations	Family and community commitments; social capital	Planned family support; community giving as fixed budget line	Reduced conflict, stronger cohesion, predictable cash flows
Personal	Values, identity, intention, spiritual meaning	Reason-before-number; reflection journals; gratitude reviews	Emotional balance, ethical choices, resilience under stress

3.3 Smart goal setting system

education. It frames goal setting around five criteria: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. The core premise of SMART is that clarity and measurability increase commitment, reduce ambiguity, and improves the likelihood of task completion. In financial coaching, SMART has proven useful for structuring short-term targets such as debt reduction, emergency funds, or saving milestones, particularly within individualistic and productivity-oriented environments.

However, despite its operational strengths, the SMART framework demonstrates several limitations when applied in Arab and relational financial settings. First, SMART is behaviorally procedural but ethically neutral; it focuses on what must be done without asking why it matters or for whom the benefit flows. This limitation makes it vulnerable to short-termism and self-centric decision-making. Second, SMART's emphasis on individual achievement aligns with Western, low-context cultural assumptions, which can conflict with Arab financial norms grounded in family interdependence, community obligations, and moral accountability. Third, SMART does not inherently incorporate spiritual, ethical, or intergenerational dimensions, which are central to Islamic conceptions of financial responsibility such as Amanah, 'adl, and legacy (athar). Fourth, SMART tends to optimize outputs over meaning, which can lead to compliance without conviction, thus weakening intrinsic motivation over time.

These gaps indicate that while SMART supports productivity, it does not sufficiently address the why, for whom, and the according to which moral compass. Consequently, the system requires a complementary framework that integrates ethical intentionality, relational accountability, and cultural coherence. To bridge this gap, this study proposes the CREDIT Framework, a values-based alternative rooted in the concept of Rushd, aiming to connect intention with disciplined execution while preserving moral depth and communal alignment

3.4 The CREDIT Framework: From Intention to Action

To translate values into action, the CREDIT framework structures goal-setting around six interrelated components.



Figure 2. CREDIT framework: Clarity, Relation, Evaluated, Measurable, Deadline, Inner Certainty, Tracking (Self-accountability)

Table 2. CREDIT framework structures goal-setting around six interrelated components

Component	Conceptual Definition	Pedagogical Implication
Clarity	Starting with sincere, transparent intention linked to purpose	Connects goals to values; improves relevance
Relation to Afterlife	Moral accountability, legacy, and stewardship	Centers ethics in decision-making
Evaluated / Measurable	Operationalizing intentions into measurable indicators	Enables reflection-based assessment
Deadline	Time-bounded commitments to prevent procrastination	Strengthens discipline and follow-through
Inner Certainty	Cultivating trust in God and resilience under uncertainty	Builds confidence in volatile contexts
Tracking (Self-accountability)	Continuous review of actions and intentions (muhasabah)	Fosters lifelong reflective habits

Participants using CREDIT reported better alignment between intentions and behavior, higher satisfaction, and more sustainable financial routines.

3.5 Comparison between SMART and CREDIT

Table 3. Comparison between SMART and CREDIT frameworks

Aspect	SMART Framework	CREDIT Framework
Core Focus	Operational precision and productivity	Ethical intentionality and cultural identity
Time Orientation	Short- to medium-term outputs	Long-term, value-based commitments
Ethical Dimension	Minimal or absent	Central: justice, stewardship, sincerity, accountability
Cultural Alignment	Generic and individualistic	Contextualized and collectivist
Outcome	Task completion	Financial maturity, resilience, and moral growth

The CREDIT framework thus shifts goal-setting from a purely technical routine to an ethical learning process.

3.6 Integrative Perspective: Linking MAP and CREDIT

MAP functions as the worldview that organizes financial life across material, social, and personal domains; CREDIT provides the actionable pathway that moves learners from intention to disciplined execution. When taught together, MAP and CREDIT bridge values and behavior, enabling culturally coherent and measurable progress.

3.7 Behavioral Mechanisms and Barriers

Three mechanisms were salient: (a) Meaning—framing goals around ethical and familial purposes; (b) Identity Congruence—aligning objectives with cultural identity to reduce motivational erosion; (c) Social Accountability—declaring goals to trusted partners to increase adherence. Barriers included peer pressure, income volatility, and low digital literacy. Coping strategies involved accountability partners, liquidity thresholds, seasonal envelopes, and simplified Arabic-language tools.

4 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: INTEGRATING RUSHD IN ARAB FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Embedding *Rushd* within financial education requires structured curricular and pedagogical innovation. Key recommendations include:

- 1 **Curriculum Integration:** introduce *Rushd* principles through ethics and citizenship education, linking financial choices with moral and community outcomes.
- 2 **Experiential Learning:** employ simulations, reflection journals, and family-based financial projects that foster accountability and meaning.
- 3 **Teacher Training:** equip educators to translate cultural ethics into financial pedagogy using localized examples and case studies.
- 4 **Assessment Tools:** develop culturally sensitive evaluation models emphasizing values, intentions, and behavioral reflection alongside technical competence.

Through these mechanisms, *Rushd* can bridge the gap between abstract moral education and applied financial literacy.

5 CONCLUSION

This exploratory study suggests that Financial Maturity (*Rushd*) represents a culturally rooted and ethically enriched evolution of financial education. The MAP Pyramid and CREDIT framework jointly provide a coherent model for organizing financial life and translating values into measurable action. While further quantitative research is needed, integrating *Rushd* into curricula, teacher training, and community education can cultivate financial competence alongside dignity, resilience, and cultural identity.

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