A Study of Financial Literacy Among Women in Delhi NCR

Sujal Acharya[1], Ayush Verma[2]

School of Commerce, Galgotias University

ABSTRACT :

This research study explores the financial literacy, behavior, and inclusion of women in the Delhi NCR region, aiming to assess their understanding, usage, and attitudes toward financial products and services. Using a combination of primary and secondary data sources, the study employed a structured questionnaire targeting working women across various age groups, professions, and localities such as Noida, Rohini, Ghaziabad, and Faridabad. The data was collected via Google Forms, mainly through WhatsApp, using purposive sampling to reach educated urban women. Key demographic parameters such as age, education, marital status, and income were analyzed along with financial behaviors like investment preferences, monthly expense tracking, confidence in decision-making, and awareness of interest rates. The results indicate that while most women demonstrate moderate to high levels of financial awareness and prefer secure financial instruments like mutual funds and fixed deposits, a significant number still avoid using digital banking tools or comparing financial products. A majority regularly track their expenses and exhibit confidence in managing their finances, although some still depend on male family members due to deep-rooted societal norms and gender roles. The study identifies that married women tend to be more financially literate and involved than their single or widowed counterparts, and that financial literacy correlates positively with higher income and education levels. However, it also reveals that many women still avoid formal credit systems, preferring informal borrowing from friends or moneylenders, and often lack familiarity with advanced financial products. Despite government efforts like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana to promote financial inclusion, especially among rural women, many urban slum-dwelling women remain underbanked or financially inactive. The study emphasizes the need for targeted financial literacy initiatives in regional languages through self-help groups, NGOs, and grassroots educators like Bank Mitras. It concludes that financial empowerment requires both educational and cultural shifts to reduce women's dependency and promote informed financial decision-making. However, limitations such as a small and region-specific sample, reliance on self-reported data, gender-specific focus, purposive sampling, and constraints of time and budget limit the generalizability of the findings.

Key words : Financial literacy, working women, Delhi NCR, financial inclusion, mutual funds, fixed deposits, savings behavior, financial confidence, digital banking, Jan Dhan Yojana, investment awareness, socio-economic barriers, gender roles, self-reported data, purposive sampling, inclusive finance, women empowerment, financial independence, financial education, financial decision-making.

Introduction

As financial activities become more complex and intertwined with personal lives, understanding and applying financial principles—referred to as financial literacy—has become crucial, especially for women. Financial literacy involves managing money wisely, including budgeting, saving, investing, and planning for short and long-term financial goals. This study focuses on evaluating the level of financial literacy among Indian women, particularly female employees, and highlights the importance of improving their financial knowledge to ensure financial independence and well-being. Women have traditionally been excluded from financial decision-making and are often unaware of financial products and concepts, leading to a lack of preparedness for financial emergencies or retirement. Despite government efforts such as the RBI's '5-Core Actions 'strategy and the National Strategy for Financial Education (2020-2025), there is still a significant gender gap in financial literacy. The study underscores the urgency of empowering women through education and targeted initiatives that focus on increasing financial awareness. It explores financial literacy in four domains—budgeting, saving, investment, and retirement planning—while examining how factors such as education, income, digital access, cultural norms, and age influence women's financial behaviours. The study also investigates how financial literacy affects broader life choices, including entrepreneurship, homeownership, and long-term savings, linking it to macro goals such as poverty reduction and gender-equitable economic growth. It compares urban and rural trends and evaluates the impact of educational interventions by universities, NGOs, and employers. The findings emphasize that increasing financial literacy among women not only improves their decision-making confidence but also contributes significantly to household and national economic stability. Given their increasing life expectancy and pivotal roles in households, women's financial empowerment through improved literacy is essential to ensure both individual and societal well-being. This research aims to fill the knowledge gap around gender disparities in financial knowledge in India and support strategies to enhance financial literacy among women.

Literature review

India ranks lowest among 28 nations in financial literacy, with poor financial education, budgeting, and money management practices. Despite notable efforts by the RBI and the government, outcomes remain inadequate, with salaried individuals—especially women—being most in need of financial

education. Various studies highlight gender disparities, with Indian women often lacking confidence and access to financial resources. While some global surveys, like those by Standard & Poor's and

OECD, reveal marginal literacy gains among women, Indian women still lag significantly in core financial concepts such as compound interest, inflation, and risk diversification. Research by scholars like Lusardi, Mitchell, and Bernheim emphasizes the role of education in improving saving behaviors and long-term financial planning. Others, such as Schreiner and Smits, stress the importance of culturally sensitive financial education, particularly in rural areas where women have little to no financial knowledge. Studies in Gujarat, Assam, Mysore, and Pune reflect low investment confidence, preference for low-risk assets, and dependence on male relatives for financial decisions. Though urban, educated women show better financial habits, deeper conceptual understanding is still lacking. Emotion, societal roles, and caregiving responsibilities affect women's financial choices, further widening the literacy gap. Digital and mobile platforms show promise in inclusion, especially in younger demographics and underserved regions, but only if combined with foundational financial education. Programs like Vodafone Smart Snehidi and global interventions by OECD/INFE and UNCDF promote personalized, gender-intentional strategies and public-private cooperation to boost female financial literacy. Recent studies, such as those by IJNRD (2023) and Bhattacharya et al. (2025), support community workshops, digital education, and peer mentoring, though time and household responsibilities hinder women's participation. Despite isolated progress in knowledge and attitudes, women still face major barriers such as limited digital fluency, socio-cultural norms, and lack of institutional support. The literature strongly advocates for scalable, inclusive, and continuous educational strategies tailored to different demographics to bridge India's persistent gender gap in financial literacy.

Research methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method research methodology, utilizing both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through a structured, closed-ended questionnaire administered via Google Forms, targeting working women across different regions of Delhi NCR, including Noida, Rohini, Ghaziabad, and Faridabad. The questionnaire focused on demographic details such as age, income, education, and marital status, and explored financial behaviors like use of net banking, awareness of financial instruments, and long-term financial goals. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure diversity, and responses were mainly collected online through platforms like WhatsApp. Secondary data was gathered from relevant books, journals, and research articles to support the study's findings. The key aim was to assess financial literacy through three major aspects—knowledge, behavior, and attitude—using a 16-question format adapted to suit women's financial understanding. Bar graphs and pie charts were used to represent responses and evaluate the popularity of financial instruments. Most respondents were urban, educated women between the ages of 18 and 50, with over 80% being graduates or postgraduates, suggesting a higherthan-average educational profile. The study focused on understanding how social, psychological, and cultural barriers restrict women's financial independence in Delhi. Many women still rely on male relatives for financial decision-making due to societal norms that prioritize caregiving roles over financial autonomy. This dependency is reinforced by discriminatory inheritance and divorce laws, as well as a general lack of accessible financial education. The study highlights the urgent need for targeted financial literacy initiatives tailored to various socioeconomic backgrounds. Women from lower-income groups or with less education face greater challenges in accessing and understanding financial resources. Policymakers and NGOs must work together to design inclusive programs covering legal rights, banking access, and core financial concepts. Such efforts can help reduce dependency, empower women economically, and contribute to broader societal change. The findings from Delhi serve as a potential framework for replication in other Indian regions facing similar challenges. Ultimately, the research underscores that bridging the gender gap in financial literacy requires both educational reforms and a shift in societal attitudes toward women's economic participation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis reveals several key insights into the financial literacy and behavior of working women in Delhi NCR. Age-wise, the majority of respondents (51.85%) fall in the 36–50 age group, indicating a middle-aged demographic likely at the peak of their professional and family responsibilities, followed by 25–35 years (20.37%), those above 50 (18.52%), and the least representation from those below 25 (9.26%). In terms of financial products used for long-term wealth creation, mutual funds are the most preferred (40.74%), reflecting a willingness to take calculated risks for higher returns, followed closely by fixed deposits (37.04%)—popular for their safety—and lastly, savings accounts (22.22%), which offer low returns and limited long-term growth. Regarding monthly expense tracking, a significant 48.15% of respondents monitor their spending regularly, indicating disciplined financial behavior, while 38.89% do so occasionally, 11.11% only when necessary, and 1.85% never—suggesting a largely budget-conscious sample. Investment habits also show encouraging signs, with 57.4% investing regularly in instruments like mutual funds, FDs, or PPFs, reflecting both financial awareness and future planning. About 29.6% invest occasionally, 7.4% rarely, and only 5.6% never invest—possibly due to lack of capital, access, or confidence. Comparison of interest rates before choosing financial products is another positive indicator, with 40.7% always comparing rates and 37% doing so sometimes, showing an active effort to make informed decisions. Only 20.4% compare rarely and 1.9% never, indicating that a small fraction may still follow blind brand loyalty or convenience over financial optimization. In terms of self-confidence in financial decision-making, 87% rated themselves 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, with 35 respondents selecting 4 and 12 selecting 5, suggesting that most women trust their financial judgment. Only a small fraction (13%) rated their confidence at 3 or below, pointing to either genuine lack of confidence or perhaps underexposure to practical decision-making scenarios. This could also imply a tendency to overestimate financial acumen. Collectively, these findings indicate a generally positive trend in financial behavior among working women, marked by moderate to high financial awareness, participation in investment activities, and decision-making confidence. However, gaps remain in consistent tracking, rate comparison, and use of high-return products, hinting at the need for tailored financial literacy initiatives. Educational efforts should especially target younger women and those who rarely invest or track their expenses, while confidence-building and product comparison training can further enhance overall financial empowerment. This analysis affirms that while the foundation of financial awareness exists among the surveyed women, strategic interventions in knowledge enhancement, risk comprehension, and long-term planning can ensure more inclusive and effective financial independence across diverse demographics in Delhi NCR.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Financial inclusion is a key priority of the Indian government, aiming to provide equitable, transparent, and affordable access to financial products and services across all segments of society. Financial literacy—defined as the public's ability to access and understand financial information— plays a crucial role in achieving this objective. However, the gender gap in financial literacy remains a concern. A 2015 S&P survey highlighted that 74.53% of people in Delhi NCR slums are financially literate, a figure attributed to the higher density of financial touchpoints such as banks, ATMs, and NGOs. Despite women comprising 58.17% of this population, their engagement with formal financial systems remains limited. Although many women opened bank accounts under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in 2014, only 7.43% use them to save money, preferring to keep their savings in cash. Digital financial tools are severely underutilized, with 79.73% of women not using online banking or ATM cards. Only 51.48% of the women are aware of available financial products, and those lacking awareness are less likely to view these products as relevant to their financial wellbeing. Compared to men, women are more risk-averse and prefer fixed deposits and pension plans, resulting in only 7.25% of investors in the financial sector being female. Furthermore, only 6.32% of women turned to banks for loans in emergencies, with most preferring to borrow from friends, family, or moneylenders due to the complexity of bank procedures. Financial literacy levels also vary with income, as higher household earnings are linked to increased awareness and willingness to explore investment options. Married women demonstrate better financial literacy than their single or widowed counterparts, particularly in areas such as household budgeting and planning for long-term financial goals. Alarmingly, only 19.14% of women compare terms and conditions before purchasing financial products, highlighting a lack of informed decision-making. Although urban centers have educational programs that promote financial awareness and people often learn informally through peers, these efforts have not been sufficient to close the knowledge gap. The study suggests that while financial literacy in Delhi NCR may be higher than the national average, much work remains to fully equip women with the knowledge and confidence to engage in the formal financial system. Organizations like self-help groups, NGOs, and financial advisors such as Bank Mitras play a pivotal role in spreading awareness. To ensure financial inclusion among marginalized women, particularly in rural and urban slum areas, initiatives like PMJDY must be strengthened. Digital platforms should be adapted to local languages to enhance accessibility. Since financial literacy is closely tied to general education, efforts must also focus on improving female educational attainment, especially in reducing the 39.4% dropout rate among girls aged 15 to 18. Lastly, the provision of easily accessible low-cost loans is crucial to support women living in slums and promote their participation in the financial and digital economy.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, it is geographically limited, focusing only on selected urban and rural areas within the Delhi NCR region. As a result, the findings may not be fully representative of the entire Delhi NCR population and are not necessarily generalizable to other regions in India. Second, the study is gender-specific, including only female participants to better understand women's financial perspectives. While this focus provides in-depth insights into women's experiences, it excludes individuals of other genders and thus limits the study's overall scope. Third, the sampling method used is purposive, targeting a specific group of respondents. This non-randomized approach may introduce selection bias, potentially skewing the results and reducing their applicability to a broader population. Additionally, the research heavily relies on self-reported data, which can be influenced by social desirability bias, memory lapses, and personal subjectivity. Participants may have reported behaviors or attitudes they believe are socially acceptable rather than their true experiences, leading to potential inaccuracies in the data. Finally, practical constraints such as limited time and financial resources also impacted the study. These limitations restricted the depth of data collection, preventing more robust methods like follow-up interviews or longitudinal studies, which could have enriched the findings and provided greater analytical clarity. As a result, while the study offers valuable insights into the financial literacy and behavior of women in select areas of Delhi NCR, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to the limitations in scope, sampling, methodology, and resources.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agarwalla, S.k. Barua, S.K., Jacob, J. & Varma, J.R. (October 2013). Financial literacy among working young in urban India.

- Arora, A. (2016). Assessment of financial literacy among Indian working women.

- Atkinson, A. and Messy, F. (2012). Measuring Financial Literacy Retrieved June 18,2020, from https://doi.org/10.1787/5k9csfs90fr4-en

- Baluja, G. (2016). Financial literacy among women in India: A review, pacific business review international,9(4).

- Bhushan, P., & Mudery, S. (2013). Socio-demographic determinants of financial literacy in India. *Indian Journal of Finance, 7*(5), 34–47.

- Bhattacharjee, M. (2014). Financial literacy and gender: A study of Assam. *Assam Journal of Commerce, 8*(2), 23–34.

- Bhattacharya, R., Patel, S., & Thompson, L. (2025). Digital literacy pilot among lowincome mothers: A mixed-methods evaluation. *Journal of Consumer Financial Education, 12*(1), 45–62.

- Devi, A. (2016) Financial Literacy among Women: A Sample Study in the Kamrup district in Assam, International Journal of Economic and Business Review, 4(2).

- Financial literacy is key to financial inclusion. (n.d.), Retrieved August 14, 2020, from https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/financial-literacy-is-key-to-financialinclusion/article25726991.

- Gupta, S (2017)To measure the levels of financial literacy among individuals of Delhi,

  • Indian journal of research,6(1), Retrieved from https://www.worldwidejournals.com/paripex/recent_issues_pdf/2017/January/January _2017_1484307835__115.pdf

- Hung, A.A., Parker, A.M., & Yoong, J.K. (2009) Defining and measuring financial literacy.

- Klasen, S. & Lamanna, F (2009). The impact of gender inequality in education and employment on economic growth: New evidence for a panel of countries, feminist economics,15(3).

- Mathivathani, V., Dr. Velumani, M. (2014). A study on financial literacy among Rural women in Tamil Naidu (December 2014, ISSN2249-555X)

- Murty, S. S.A.V.N. (2019). The impact of financial literacy on women in several districts of Andhra Pradesh, International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering, 8(1S4).

- OECD INFE (2011). Measuring Financial Literacy- Core Questionnaire in Measuring Financial Literacy. Paris: OECD.

- OECD. (2013) Financial literacy and women, Retrieved June 18, 2020, from, http://www.oecd.org/daf/fin/financialeducation/TrustFund2013_OECD_INFE_Wome n_and_Fin_Lit.pdf

- OECD/INFE. (2023). *2023 International survey of adult financial literacy competencies*. OECD Publishing.

- Women's World Banking & UNCDF. (2024). *Advancing women-led MSMEs: Digital financial inclusion enablers*. Women's World Banking & UNCDF.

- Roy, B. & Jain, R. (2018). Financial literacy among Indian women. IOSR Journal of Business and Management, 20(5)