

Determinants of Financial Literacy among College Students in Assam

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ABSTRACT

Financial literacy presents a crucial skill that equips the youth with the ability to make rational financial decisions, resource management as well as attaining a sustained economic independence. This paper aims to analyze the major sources of financial literacy in Assam among college going students and the Sonitpur District particularly- a place that has both socio-economic diversity and under reaches in the institutional financial connections. With the aid of descriptive-analytical research method, the investigation obtained the results based on primary data acquired through the application of structured questionnaires to 100 students in five colleges. The survey was able to capture various demographic, socio-economic and institutional factors such as the age, gender, parental education, family income, academic discipline, and accessibility to financial education programs. A statistical test of multiple regression indicates that the variables with the strongest influences on predicting financial literacy are parental education ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$), family income ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$), and institutional exposure ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$). There is also significant interaction of gender ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$) and academic discipline ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$) where male students and students of commerce mostly

pass financial literacy test questions. The explanatory power of the regression model would be strong since it explains 62 percent of the winning across the scores of financial literacies ($R^2 = 0.62$). These results are indicative of the fact that serious interventions are urgently required particularly in the cases of students with low-income groups, non-commerce streams and female students. The research prescribes the implementation of financial training in academic field, improved institutional outreach and engagement of the family in learning. The findings are instructive to educators, policy-makers, and financial company leaders, hoping to foster financial literacy among rural and semi-urban schooling institutions.

Keywords: Financial literacy, determinants, regression analysis, socio-economic factors, college students.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

In this changing world financial environment, personal financial management and literacy is one of the most important and valuable life skills. Popularly known as financial literacy, this competence covers various areas of knowledge such as budgeting, savings, investment planning, credit and debt management and risk mitigation (OECD, 2016). Financial literacy

allows people to make good financial decisions, know the consequences of their financial decisions, and ensure stable economic future. It also strongly correlates with healthy financial habits that include saving over the long term, sound expenditure trends, avoidance of debts, and wealth creation (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). The trend of the expansion of financial markets, digitalization of the financial instruments and growing costs of living have provoked the necessity to increase the financial literacy of people, primarily the younger generation. This is an acute need, especially among college students. It is the time young adults enter the stage of starting to separate their financial reliance upon the families and embrace independence. They are usually faced with new obligations that include taking student loans, opening bank accounts, making use of digital wallets, paying rent and planning on the expenses of the day. Lack of basic knowledge and skills predisposes them to entering into debt traps, making blind financial choices, or abusing the credit facilities.

It has been believed that financially literate citizens plan more on their retirement, invest responsibly, and are less likely to be lured into using very expensive financial products like payday loans, as confirmed by research in many countries (Lusardi, 2015). Further, financial literacy is also the key to financial inclusion and fraud prevention especially in a fast-digitizing economy where fin - tech and cashless payments are becoming the new normal. All this awareness notwithstanding the level of financial literacy is horror like all over the world, including India. The report of Standard & Poor Global Financial Literacy Survey (2015) suggests that the percentage of the Indian adults financially literate is around 24, which indicates major education and awareness deficiencies. These gaps are especially sharp in rural and semi-urban areas, the access that is restricted due to economic, social, institutional constraints to learning financial education.

Financial literacy should be understood in such a way that it needs to be regarded as an individual attribute, but also a social necessity. Empowering youth, particularly, underrepresented, by improving their financial literacy has both economic and social consequences in the long run. It will help to decrease the inequality, enhance the quality of life and generate resilience to financial shocks. As a result, emphasis is increasing on the identification of the causes of financial literacy, especially among vulnerable categories like students in the rural or semi-urban regions.

1.2. Financial literacy in the context of Assam and Sonitpur

Assam is a state in the north eastern region of India and projects a peculiar social-economic picture. It has a mostly agrarian economy and most part of its population practice farming, minor trade, and unofficial work. Whereas Guwahati and Dibrugarh urban centers have been subject to a gentle modernization process, much of the state-including Sonitpur District- lags behind in terms of both financial infrastructure and educational outreach. The district of Sonitpur is one of the most geographically and population-wise biggest districts of Assam with its diverse economic and diverse cultures. It includes both urban, semi-urban and rural communities, who have different access to facilities in terms of education and finances. Most of the population of the district is either involved in agriculture, day labor or can be involved in small businesses. The service sector and government jobs as well as teaching professionals are the type of job a smaller proportion of the families' work in. It is this diversity that makes Sonitpur the perfect environment to conduct a study and find out the impact that socio-economic, and institutional disparities have on the financial literacy rates of students.

In Sonitpur, the college students belong to a new generation who are challenged with the additional burden of being able to break the era of personal finance management on the

one hand and be able to adjust to a very dynamic economic system on the other. As opposed to students living in big cities, they usually lack structured exposure to financial education or online financial services. They mostly learn about finance indirectly through family members or other leaders of the local communities or even through the media. Nevertheless, the quality, reliability, and thoroughness of such informal education are usually disadvantaged. Government sponsored schemes and financial institutions focused on financial inclusion, e.g. JAN DHAN YOJANA do not go deep enough into the rural enclaves of the district. In these regions, college students can have bank account, which does not necessarily mean that they know about such notions as compound interest, credit score, mutual funds, and insurance. There are few models, little curricular access, and few institutional engagements and therefore, the chances of financial mismanagement by these youngsters are high.

The digital divide is the other consideration that can be good in the case of Sonitpur. Although digital banking and mobile wallets are gaining momentum in urban Assam, students in rural areas usually have problems with Internet connectivity, limited access to the devices, and poor digital competencies. This gap is a major setback towards the realization of complete financial literacy as the digital financial service penetrates the financial transactions to a greater extent. Sonitpur district of Assam has given a microcosm of the bigger problem plaguing financial literacy in rural and semi-urban India. It allows investigators to analyze the interaction of demographic (age, gender), socio-economic (family income, parental education), and institutional (availability of financial education in schools or colleges) factors in the development of a knowledge of finance and behaviors of students.

1.3. Statement of Problem

The idea of financial education promotion witnessed increased interest in the last few

years, not just at the international level but also in India. There were some national policies, e.g. National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE), which recognized the role of early financial education and proposed financial literacy inclusion into the school and college curriculum. The practice is, however, incomplete, particularly the rural and semi-urban areas. Although there are some studies on the level of financial literacy in India, studies concerning the determinants of financial literacy level among college students in rural/semi urban districts are limited. Those who have delved into are even fewer in the northeastern states such as Assam due to cultural, linguistic, and structure reasons that make the financial education quite unlike in other states. In Sonitpur District case, there is no comprehensive research that had been carried out to know:

- (a) What determines financial knowledge by students?
- (b) Do the levels of parental education, income or access to training programs in institutions influence the financial behavior of the students?
- (c) Does the literacy level vary greatly according to gender or field of study?
- (d) What is the place of formal vs. informal sources of financial learning?

It is fundamental to appreciate responses to these questions because of many reasons:

- (a) It can assist teachers and curriculum makers to develop more pertinent and efficient financial education curriculum.
- (b) It can help policymakers and NGOs focus on certain groups, e.g. female students or people with lower-income families and target them with the financial literacy interventions.
- (c) It is capable of providing inputs to the financial institutions and local government on how to attract the youths into the use of financial services.

The strategies that are not so localized run the risk of being top-down and ineffective at the national level. What happens to intervention programs that are successful in urban centers may not translate to semi

urban or rural settings as the problems and learning environment are also different. Hence, the present study fills this salient research deficit, given that it tends to examine the causes of financial literacy amongst college students in Sonitpur. In this way, it also feeds into the broader concept of financial inclusion, reformation of education in India, and empowerment of youth.

1.4. Objective of the study

The general purpose of the research is to examine the determinants of financial literacy among the college students in Assam particularly, the Sonitpur District. Focusing on this socio-economic and educational background peculiar to the district, the study aims at comprehending how various variables influence each other to form students and their financial knowledge and abilities in decision-making. The specific objective of this paper is:

(a) To identify the key demographic, socio-economic, and institutional factors influencing financial literacy among college students in Sonitpur District.

In order to do this, the study takes into account a mixture of the following:

- (a) Demographic:** Factors Age, gender, academic discipline and year of study.
- (b) Socio-Economic Factors:** Parental occupation and the family income along with education.
- (c) Institutional Factor:** Receiving financial training, attending workshops or training sessions and having digital financial tools.

Isolating and analyze such variables by use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics like the use of regression analysis, the study seeks to:

- (a) Point out differences in financial literacy among the groups of students.
- (b) Determine what factors are the greatest predictors of financial literacy scores.
- (c) Propose potential solutions that can be embraced by colleges, NGOs and policymakers to ensure enhanced

financial literacy in the rural and semi urban contexts.

The research not only aims at answering the question of “who knows what” regarding the field of finance but also “why” these differences are in existence. It is believed that the results will provide realistic tips that can further help deliver the needed financial education and prevent any students being left behind in this financial empowerment journey.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Contributions to literature on financial literacy have increased in recent years to reflect on its importance in the financial well-being of the individual and the society. The literature available under four topical themes namely global understanding, Indian setting, gender and institutionalized exposure and regional gap specifically in the state of Assam and Sonitpur District.

2.1. Global Insights

Financial literacy is a topic of international interest because people are expected to make complicated decisions involving credit, insurance, retirement savings, and investment among others. The determinants of financial literacy have been widely studied across several countries and it is found that the number of factors influencing personal knowledge about finance as well as individual financial behavior is quite large. Among the most authoritative studies in this topic is the investigation conducted by Lusardi, Mitchell, and Curto (2010): the authors note the importance of the parental influence on the attitudes and behaviors of young adults toward finances. As their results show, the people whose parents talk about their finances at home and demonstrate healthy financial habits are more likely to have high financial literacy. This is in accordance with social learning theory that advises that people learn through observing the actions of people surrounding them, particularly those in the immediate circle. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016)

further adds that socio-economic status is a strong predictor of financial literacy across countries. Students from higher-income families are more likely to have access to financial products, receive guidance at home, and attend better-resourced schools where financial education may be embedded in the curriculum. In contrast, students from low-income backgrounds may lack both formal and informal avenues to learn about money management. Another global trend is the increasing role of digital finance, which introduces both opportunities and challenges. While technology offers tools to learn and manage finances more effectively, it also widens the digital divide in low-income or rural communities, where access to smartphones, internet, or digital banking is limited. These global results show that financial literacy is not just a feature of the individual but is deeply located in broader socio-economic and institutional context.

2.2. National Context

Financial literacy in India has particularly attracted a lot of concern in the modern times, because of the high rate of economic growth and financial services expansion in India which has been accompanied by the drive towards improving financial inclusion. Nevertheless, inequality remains at the level of literacy among socio-economic population, geographic locations, and levels of education. The research study by Agarwalla et al. (2015) ranks among the most detailed studies dealing with financial literacy levels of Indian young people. Based on a survey of more than 3,000 young people in urban India, they found that city dwelling students in upper-middle families were more financially knowledgeable. These university students were exposed more to financial services and products like credit card, online banking, and investment products. Conversely, semi-urban/ rustic students were not even well versed with the fundamental principles of finance such as interest computation, insurance or inflation.

Academic discipline also turned out to be a great predictor. A similar study conducted revealed that students enrolled in courses on commerce and management were always ahead of the science and arts groups owing to the exposure of the course to issues on accounting, economics and management of businesses. Such a conclusion was also made by Sinha and Choudhary (2014) in their research on college students in Bihar as a comparable tendency was observed there. The other big obstacle in the Indian scenario is that there is no formal education in regards to finances in school and college curriculums, particularly in non-commerce programs. Some of the private institutions have begun to incorporate the aspects of financial literacy in their programs but most public institutions are yet to have a structured program or faculty trained to teach the material effectively. The diversity of language and paucity of education among different states and regions provide additional complications. The concepts of financial language and instrumentations are usually taught either in English or Hindi that could restrict comprehension by the learners who are less proficient in regional languages.

2.3. Gender and Institutional Exposure

According to the research that has been done in various parts of the world, the difference in financial literacy is higher in developing nations such as India. According to a study conducted by Singh and Satpathy (2020), male students always achieve more on financial literacy tests in comparison to female students. Yet, this gap is not always caused by a lesser ability of females but it is usually a consequence of the diverse exposure, confidence, and societal expectations. In most Indian families, the sons in a family are more likely to be included in the financial conversations or decisions but the daughters are mostly left out because of cultural practices. This limits the pragmatic financial exposure of the female students hence reducing the level of confidence and capability to manage

financially related issues. Also, female role models of business or a finance-related occupation are much lesser, and this influences aspiration and the level of engagement with female students. Financial education at the institutional level is very important in addressing these disparities. A U.S-based research conducted by Mandell, (2008) indicated that students who underwent financial education programs in school had much higher financial literacy levels as compared to students who did not. His results indicate that apparently, even short-term treatments are capable of

producing long-term effects on the financial conduct of students; examples of such treatments are workshops or simulating credits.

In India, financial literacy campaigns have been launched to young people (students of schools and colleges) by SBI, RBI and NCFE (National Centre for Financial Education). Nonetheless, such programs tend to be clustered in the urban centers leaving the rural and semi-urban institutions with minimal coverage due to both infrastructural and logistical barriers.

Table 1: Summary of Key Determinants from Literature

Determinant	Key Findings
Parental Influence	Strong predictor of financial attitudes (Lusardi et al., 2010)
Socio-Economic Status	Higher income families → better access to knowledge/tools (OECD, 2016)
Academic Discipline	Commerce students outperform others (Agarwalla et al., 2015; Sinha & Choudhary)
Gender	Male students show higher literacy; gap due to exposure, not ability
Institutional Exposure	Financial education programs improve literacy (Mandell, 2008)

Source: Compiled by the researchers

2.4. Regional Gap

Even though a number of studies have been undertaken in the metropolitan and urban India, very few studies have been conducted on the rural and semi-urban regions especially in the Northeastern states. Assam is both culturally and geographically diverse as compared to most parts of mainland India, thus offering certain socio-economic and infrastructural issues that might affect financial behavior. The area targeted is Sonitpur District in central Assam, and it is highly agricultural and formal financial services have not penetrated well into this area. Despite the efforts of such national schemes as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) that have seen an extensive growth in the number of people with bank accounts, the financial literacy or knowing how to operate the accounts or avail a loan has very low. In addition, rural Assam is still affected by the digital divide so that students would not have access to online financial education resources or websites. There has previously been research related to understanding the level of the financial literacy among the college students in Sonitpur District and which

factors have a direct influence upon it. This lack of localized data leaves a vacuum in policy designing, as well as educational planning. Nationally derived data and the urban setting may not be applicable in serving the student unique need in this region, with the use of a one size fit all concept. This paper therefore attempts to plug this important research gap by availing empirical data of Sonitpur. The results may be used to educate local schools, administrative and non-governmental organizations operating to establish the financial inclusion and literacy in the Northeastern region.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

A descriptive-analytical, cross-sectional survey was used to include quantitative and qualitative aspects in the study. The descriptive component was employed to reflect the state of financial literacy and associated variables among the students and the analytical part aimed at linking the variables of demographic and socio-economic and institutional variables with the extent of financial literacy. The cross-

sectional type of the research suggests that the data were gathered at one point of the time and can be successfully used to evaluate the current level of literacy and become aware of correlational tendencies. By introducing closed questions (closed-ended questions) and following up with open questions (open-ended questions) based on the opinions, the presence of the premises and finances of the student got comprehended in a more holistic manner.

3.2. Sampling

The target population was made up of undergraduate students in five-degree colleges in the Sonitpur District of Assam. Stratified random sampling was used so that there should be good representation of different strata of the student body.

Table 2: Sampling Frame

College Name	Location	Type
Darrang College	Tezpur	Co-educational
Tezpur College	Tezpur	Co-educational
L.O.K.D. College	Dhekiajuli	Co-educational
Rangapara College	Rangapara	Co-educational
Chaiduar College	Gohpur	Co-educational

Source: Compiled by the researchers

The selection of 100 students was done, of whom 20 students were selected in each of the institutions. Stratification was done on basis of:

- (a) Gender (Male, Female)
- (b) Studies (Arts Science, Commerce)
- (c) Year of Studies (First, Second and Third year)

This approach made the study diverse and minimized sampling bias, thus increasing the generalizability of the results at the district level.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

The instrument (structured questionnaire) that was used to assist in the collection of

primary data was made specifically in this study. Questionnaire has also been pre-tested on a sample size of 10 students and shape-ed up to include clarity, reliability and relevance.

The survey was in four parts as follows:

(a) Demographic Information

Demographic and Socio-Economic Information: Age, Gender, Family income, Parental education, Family background (rural/urban)

(b) Financial literacy test:

- (i) 15 surveys with answer choices: 10 of simple financial ideas (e.g. savings, budgeting, inflation, interest). 5 on more complex ideas (e.g., credit scores, mutual funds, insurance, taxation)
- (ii) The questions were based on certified instruments applied in OECD and RBI financial literacy models.

(c) Institutional Exposure:

- (i) Whether the student has attended any formal financial education program and workshops.
- (ii) Financial education sources (curriculum, seminars, guest lectures, online tools).

(d) Student Perceptions: Open-ended questions concerning their self-rated confidence in managing money, where they get financial advice, and recommendations on how better to educate on financial literacy.

The answer detection was done face-to-face in the control of trained field investigators. Students were informed about the aim of the research and their absolute anonymity and confidentiality.

3.4. Scoring and Classification

The financial literacy exam was also in the form of 15 questions with each question worth 1 mark. There was no negative marking.

Table 3: Scoring Scale and Classification

Score (Out of 15)	Percentage	Literacy Category	Interpretation
11–15	≥75%	High	Strong financial understanding
8–10	50%–74%	Moderate	Basic understanding with minor gaps
0–7	<50%	Low	Poor financial knowledge; needs support

Source: Field survey

This categorization was useful in dividing the sample into specific groups which were to be followed up in terms of statistical analysis and determination of literacy patterns across the strata.

3.4. Statistical Tools and Analysis

To analyze the collected data, both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed. The following tools and software were used:

- (a) **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviations used to describe demographic profiles and overall literacy scores.
- (b) **Cross-tabulations:** Employed to compare financial literacy levels across

gender, academic disciplines, income groups, and years of study. It Helped identify patterns and disparities between subgroups

- (c) **Analysis of Multiple Linear Regression Report:** Employed to evaluate the connection between the levels of financial literacy (dependent variable) and the various independent variables - Parental education, Family income, Gender, Academic discipline, Institutional exposure

This method allowed the estimation of beta coefficients (β) and p-values to determine the statistical significance and strength of influence of each predictor.

Table 4: Summary of Methodological Approach

Component	Description
Research Design	Descriptive-analytical, cross-sectional, mixed-method
Sample Size	100 students from 5 colleges
Sampling Method	Stratified random sampling
Data Collection Tool	Structured questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative)
Test Format	15 MCQs (10 basic, 5 advanced)
Classification Criteria	High ($\geq 75\%$), Moderate (50–74%), Low ($< 50\%$)
Analytical Tools	Descriptive stats, cross-tabulation, multiple regression

Source: Compiled by the researchers

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Respondent Profile

Demographic characteristics of the participants put things into perspective in

regard to the factors of financial literacy in Sonitpur District.

Table 5: Demographic Distribution of College Student Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	56	56%
	Female	44	44%
Age Group	18–20 years	42	42%
	21–23 years	48	48%
	24+ years	10	10%
Discipline	Arts	46	46%
	Science	28	28%
	Commerce	26	26%

Source: Field survey

Sufficient imbalance in genders, such that conclusions can be drawn by category based on gender, is achieved by the demographic data since the ratio of the male and female respondents was quite equal, 56 and 44 percent accordingly. Most of them are between 21 and 23 years (48%), with 42%

between 18 and 20, which implies that most are undergraduates or early postgraduates a stage especially important in developing financial behaviors. In term of academic discipline of the Arts students are largest (46 %), Science (28 %) and commerce (26 %) are also the results. The above

distribution allows the investigating study to evaluate the impact of academic background on financial literacy especially since earlier studies find that commerce students are

often at an advantage because of access to financial matters in their coursework.

4.2. Literacy by Demographics

Table 6: Financial Literacy Levels by Gender and Academic Discipline

Characteristic	Category	High (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)
Gender	Male	59	29	12
	Female	41	38	21
Discipline	Commerce	68	24	8
	Science	54	32	14
	Arts	39	36	25

Source: Field survey

It is very evident based on the data that male students perform better than female students in terms of being financially literate since 59 percent of male students fall in high literacy category compared to mere 41 percent of female students. Equally, the commerce students have the most financial

literacy (68% high), and this is probably because of the curriculum correspondence to the finances. Arts students perform poorly where only 39 percent is proven to be good and 25 percent was low.

4.3. Literacy by Socio-Economic Status

Table 7: Financial Literacy Levels by Family Income and Parental Education

Variable	Category	High Literacy (%)
Family Income	> ₹40,000/month	72%
	₹20,000–40,000/month	55%
	< ₹20,000/month	37%
Parental Education	Postgraduate	75%
	Graduate	61%
	Secondary & below	40%

Source: Field survey

Table data points to a strong and firm relation between socio-economic and financial literacy amongst college students in the Sonitpur District. The financial literacy level of students is found to be much higher in the families that have higher monthly income where 72 percent of the students who are in the households that earn more than 40,000/month are ranked highly in the literacy level in finances. By contrast, 37 percent of students that live in households with an income below 20,000/month acquire high literacy. This implies that the increased schooling resources are expected to give the students exposure to financial products, services and the decision-making situations. Likewise, parent education also becomes a big factor

with 75 percent of students who have parents with post graduate education showing high financial literacy levels compared to only 40 percent of those with parents whose education is only secondary or below. Better educated parents will be more likely to shape the world of the child as far as finance is concerned. Comprehensively, the findings support that the financial background, as well as the education level of parents, plays a very important role in defining the financial potentials of students, which necessitates the need to provide specific interventions to students coming out of wealthy or low-literate homes.

4.4. Regression Analysis

Table 8: Multiple Regression Results: Predictors of Financial Literacy Score

Predictor	Beta Coefficient (β)	p-value
Parental Education	0.42	< 0.01 **
Family Income	0.36	< 0.01 **
Academic Discipline	0.29	< 0.05 *
Gender	0.21	< 0.05 *
Institutional Exposure	0.31	< 0.05 *

Source: Field survey

Note: ** Highly Significant; * Statistically Significant

Model Summary:

R = 0.79, R² = 0.62, Adjusted R² = 0.59

F (5, 94) = 25.13, p < 0.001

The regression model is significant (F (5,94) = 25.13, p < 0.001) and accounts 62 percent of all the variance in the financial literacy scores of the students surveyed (R² = 0.62). Parental education (β = 0.42, p < 0.01) turns out to be the most sensitive predictor of financial literacy among all five of them and, therefore, the educational background of the family is of critical importance. The second finding is the sound prediction that family income holds a significant influence on elevated literacy scores (β = 0.36, p < 0.01), which is congruent with the trend on social economic analysis. All three of them, namely, academic discipline (29), gender

(21), and exposure to financial education in institutional settings (31) are found to be statistically significant predictors (p < 0.05), i.e. students in commerce streams, male students, and those exposed to financial education at their institutions have higher scores. The combined findings tentatively indicate that not only the personal circumstances are relevant in the construction of financial literacy but also the institutional effort, which justifies the multidimensional approach to enhancing the financial education of students.

4.5. Perceived Influences

Table: Student-Perceived Influencers on Financial Literacy

Rank	Factor	% Citing as Significant
1	Parental financial guidance	78%
2	Family income	66%
3	Academic discipline	61%
4	Gender-related opportunities	52%
5	Institutional financial programs	48%

Source: Field Survey

The financial guidance of parents seems to be viewed as the most powerful contributing factor to the financial literacy as 78 percent of students rated it as significant. This is consistent to the previous results of the regression analysis at which parental education emerged as the best predictor. Very close behind are family income (66%) and academic discipline (61%), which further substantiates the role of such socio-economic and educational factors in building financial awareness. Interestingly, more than half of the respondents (52%) recognized the existence of gender-related opportunities in terms of obtaining access to

financial learning- implying that gender (un)availability and perceived gender norms may in fact mediate exposure to financial learning. Institutional financial programs, in turn, with statistically significant estimates in the regressions model, seemed to be less effective in the perception of respondents (48%) and formed the potential gap between the existence and the effectiveness of institutional programs. This sentiment demonstrates that there should be more effort and communicative aspects of enhancing the financial education at the educational institutions.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study are significant in terms of the determinants of financial literacy of college students in Sonitpur District, Assam, as the same is consistent with the worldwide and Indian literature. Parental education, family income, academic discipline, gender, and institutional exposure rate came out as important predictors, both statistically and in how they would be perceived, validating much of the trends described in previous research. Parental education, first and foremost, came out as the most significant predictor of financial literacy in the regression analysis (0.42, $p < .01$) and also students ranked it the highest in perceived influence (72.6). This supports Lusardi et al. (2010), who contend that financially literate parents vigorously convey the financial literacy to their children either directly or by actual behavioral demonstration. What this means is that the home setting of a student can be set as a framing area of learning about financial practices and principles, particularly in situations where institutional training is scarce. Family income was a very strong predictor ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$) as well as the second most significant influence (66 %). Higher-income households had students with improved financial literacy scores and also indicated that they had better access to financial products like bank accounts, credit facilities, and even investment opportunities. This corroborates the conclusion by OECD (2016) that more and varied financial experiences give individuals of a higher socio-economic status opportunities to learn.

The results showed that commerce students were strikingly better off with 68 percent in high or above literacy compared to 54 percent and 39 percent of science and arts. This agrees with a study by Chen and Volpe (2002) that established that financial literacy is interconnected with the subject matter and educational suitability. It can be shown that the commerce students are likely to be exposed to financial concepts in the classroom which is directly related to their

ability to make financial decisions including accounting, economics, or business studies. The gender disparity in the literacy scores and male students achieved higher numbers compared to the female ones (59 % of the high group and 41 % of the high group) which indicated a statistical significance ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$). This gap however should not be taken to mean that there was a difference in capability. Instead, it is more likely to be correlated with cultural and structural limitations especially in semi-urban and rural regions such as Sonitpur where the rigidity of traditional roles and the lack of experiences can limit financial experiences among female students. The accepted understanding also complies with Singh & Satpathy (2020) who state that socio-cultural norms may oppose women to have financial autonomy and involvement. The other interesting result is that of a positive influence of institutional exposure ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$). Although institutional financial programs were of lesser importance in only 48 percent of students, even the slightest amount of formal financial education turned out to have considerably better results based on the use of the regression analysis. Such a discrepancy between perceived and actual impact implies that students can lower or overlook the contributions and efforts of their academic institutions in promoting financial literacy. It also indicates a significant opportunity: educational establishments can also cause a revolution with interventions that are low in cost and scalable e.g., workshops, financial literacy modules, or be incorporated into general curricula.

The explanatory properties of the model ($R^2 = 0.62$) reaffirm the fact that all these 5 factors, the education of the parents, the family income, the discipline, the sex, and the exposure to institutions can explain a significant amount of the variations in the scores of financial literacies. Chi-square test also enhanced such relations particularly between academic discipline and literacy level ($p < 0.01$; 11.37), and this indicated

that discrete discipline experience and knowledge accretion are crucial in determining student success. The qualitative aspects of findings by students largely reverberated the quantitative findings. The results of parental directives on finances, income and discipline ranked top in Table 5, as the regression results did. Notably, there was the lowest perceived impact of institutional programs (48%), but they were important statistically in the model, provided an incongruity affecting institutions which needs to be alleviated in terms of enhancing the visibility, engagement and relevance, of financial literacy programs.

CONCLUSION

Parents' education, family income, academic discipline, gender, and institutional exposure are significant predictors of financial literacy and the results were statistically significant. Of these, parental education proved to be the most influential determinant implying that intergenerational transmission of financial values and practices are common occurrences. The children in higher income bracket families exhibited superior levels of financial knowledge probably since they encountered the financial instruments and services more often. In addition, the commerce students showed better performance than those in arts and science, a fact that depicts the relevance of curriculum in improving financial skills.

It was also revealed in the study that male students have better results compared to female students, but the difference is more on the aspect of accessibility to socio-cultural aspects more than the ability to those individual students. Notably, imbibing any amount of financial education in the institution level showed a significantly strong relationship with the literacy level, which reflects the revolutionary power of well-thought-out academic initiatives. In general, 62 percent ($R^2 = 0.62$) of the variation in financial literacy levels was captured by the model employed in the

research that attests to the synergistic influence of both individual, family, and institutional factors. The role of parental guidance, income, and academic discipline were identified by students themselves as the first, second, and third most likely perceived influencer, and they entirely coincide with the statistical ones. The study helps in bridging the knowledge gap in the region in context of financial literacy especially in the semi-urban rural setting of North-East India where the findings during this research have remained limited in number. It exposes how financial literacy is neither a personality nature nor a matter of pure educational, economic and socializing factors.

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