

Awareness and Barriers to the Adoption of Financial Inclusion Schemes, Products and Services among Rural Women: Evidence from Mysuru District, Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

Financial inclusion has emerged as a critical instrument for promoting inclusive growth and empowering marginalized sections, particularly rural women. Despite several government-led initiatives such as PMJDY, APY, PMMY, SHG-Bank Linkage Programme and digital financial services, the effective adoption of these services among rural women remains uneven. The present study examines the level of awareness and identifies the barriers influencing the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women in Mysuru District. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted, using primary data collected from 45 rural women across selected nine villages in nine taluks of Mysuru District through a structured questionnaire. The study employed descriptive statistics and Multiple Linear Regression analysis to assess the relationship between availability, affordability and ease of access barriers and the adoption of financial inclusion services. The findings reveal that while bank account ownership is universal and awareness of basic financial inclusion schemes is moderately high, awareness of advanced financial products and digital services remains limited. Among the identified barriers, ease of access-related issues such as KYC procedures, documentation requirements and eligibility norms emerged as the most significant constraints, followed by affordability and availability barriers. The regression results confirm that all three categories of barriers significantly and negatively influence the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives, explaining 53.4% of the variation in adoption behaviour. The study concludes that improving financial literacy, simplifying procedures and enhancing service accessibility are essential for strengthening meaningful financial inclusion and promoting the economic empowerment of rural women.

Keywords: Financial Inclusion, Rural Women, Awareness, Adoption Barriers and Mysuru District.

1. INTRODUCTION

Financial inclusion has emerged as a key policy objective for promoting inclusive economic growth, reducing poverty and enhancing the socio-economic well-being of marginalized sections of society. It refers to the process of ensuring affordable and timely access to a wide range of formal financial services such as savings, credit, insurance, pension and payment systems for all individuals, particularly those who are excluded from the mainstream financial system. In India, several initiatives including the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY), Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), Self-Help Group (SHG)-Bank Linkage Programme and digital payment platforms have been introduced to expand financial access and strengthen financial inclusion.

Women constitute a significant segment of the rural population and play a crucial role in household financial management, income generation and community development. Financial inclusion has the potential to empower rural women by improving their access to savings, credit, insurance and other financial services, thereby enhancing their economic independence and decision-making capacity. However, despite substantial efforts by the government and financial institutions, many rural women continue to face challenges in effectively accessing and utilizing financial inclusion services. The adoption of financial inclusion initiatives is often constrained by several factors such as low awareness, limited financial literacy, inadequate availability of services, affordability concerns, procedural complexities and socio-economic disadvantages. While access to bank accounts has improved considerably, meaningful participation in the formal financial system remains

uneven. Understanding the extent of awareness and identifying the barriers that hinder adoption are therefore essential for designing effective policy interventions and improving financial inclusion outcomes. Mysuru District, with its diverse rural population and agricultural economy, provides an important context for examining the effectiveness of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women. Although various schemes and services are available, empirical evidence regarding their awareness and adoption among rural women in the district remains limited. In this context, the present study seeks to assess the level of awareness of financial inclusion initiatives, identify the major barriers affecting their adoption and suggest measures to enhance the participation of rural women in the formal financial system. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to the existing literature and provide useful insights for policymakers, financial institutions and development agencies working towards women's economic empowerment and inclusive rural development.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rakesh and Ashish (2019) examined the impact of financial inclusion initiatives on the empowerment of rural women in Lodhipur village, Uttar Pradesh. The study found a significant gap between awareness and utilization of financial services, indicating that awareness alone does not ensure active participation in the formal financial system. Further, socio-economic factors such as income, education and occupation were identified as key determinants of financial empowerment. The findings highlight that effective financial inclusion requires not only access to financial services but also their meaningful usage and socio-economic benefits.

Maruti Rao (2020) examined the challenges of financial inclusion in Vijayapura Taluk, Karnataka. The study found low awareness of financial inclusion initiatives, with only 31% of the rural population being aware of such services. Awareness was higher in villages located closer to urban centres, indicating the influence of infrastructure and accessibility. The study identified inadequate financial infrastructure and geographical isolation as major barriers to financial inclusion. It recommended integrating financial inclusion efforts with welfare schemes and utilizing mobile technology to improve outreach in rural areas.

Salihah et al. (2021) examined the barriers to financial inclusion in rural Malaysia from the perspectives of financial institutions and rural households. Using semi-structured interviews, the study identified supply-side challenges such as high operational costs, inadequate

digital infrastructure and low financial literacy, along with demand-side barriers including limited confidence, insufficient documentation and ineffective utilization of financial resources. The findings highlight the role of systemic and infrastructural constraints in limiting financial inclusion and emphasize the need for context-specific strategies, particularly within Islamic banking, to enhance access to financial services and promote rural economic empowerment.

Showkat et al. (2022) examined financial inclusion as a key instrument for empowering the rural poor in India and promoting inclusive economic growth. The study highlighted persistent barriers to financial inclusion, including geographical isolation, inadequate technological infrastructure and low levels of awareness, which particularly affect rural populations and women. The authors emphasized that overcoming systemic challenges such as corruption and income inequality is essential for achieving effective and comprehensive financial inclusion.

Omika et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review of barriers and interventions related to women's financial inclusion. The study identified major barriers, including gender-based discrimination, psychological constraints, low income, inadequate financial literacy, limited access to financial services and cultural exclusion. It also highlighted effective interventions such as policy reforms, microfinance programs, access to formal savings, cash and asset transfers, self-help group participation and digital financial services. The authors emphasized that sustainable financial empowerment requires an integrated approach combining policy support, technological innovation and culturally sensitive outreach, particularly in rural areas.

Sonika and Rachna (2024) examined the role of financial inclusion in promoting economic empowerment and social development among underserved communities in India. The study highlighted that access to savings, credit and investment services enhances financial literacy, encourages prudent financial behaviour and strengthens financial resilience. While significant progress has been achieved through the expansion of bank accounts and digital banking services, challenges such as regional disparities, low awareness and inadequate infrastructure continue to impede inclusive access. The authors emphasized the need for innovative strategies, targeted policy interventions and continuous evaluation to ensure equitable financial inclusion, particularly for women and rural populations.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Although prior studies have examined financial inclusion, awareness, barriers and women's empowerment, limited empirical evidence is available on the awareness and adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women at the district level. Existing research has primarily focused on broader populations, national contexts or specific barriers with insufficient attention to rural women in Mysuru District. Moreover, the relationship between socio-economic characteristics, awareness and adoption of financial inclusion initiatives remains underexplored. This gap necessitates a focused study to assess awareness levels, identify adoption barriers and suggest measures to enhance the participation of rural women in financial inclusion initiatives in Mysuru District.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the socio-economic characteristics of rural women in Mysuru District?
2. To what extent are rural women aware of financial inclusion initiatives?
3. What are the key barriers affecting the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women?
4. Which interventions can effectively promote greater awareness and adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women?

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the socio-economic characteristics of rural women in Mysuru District.
2. To assess the level of awareness of financial inclusion schemes, products and services among rural women.
3. To identify the barriers affecting the adoption of financial inclusion schemes, products and services among rural women.
4. To suggest measures for improving awareness and adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women.

6. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₀: Availability, affordability and ease of access barriers do not have a significant influence on the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women.

H₁: Availability, affordability and ease of access barriers have a significant influence on the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the awareness and barriers associated with the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women in Mysuru District. The study was based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to rural women, while secondary data were gathered from research articles, journals and other relevant literature on financial inclusion and women empowerment. The study covered selected nine villages representing nine taluks of Mysuru District, namely Suttur, Bilikere, Antharasanthe, Hullahalli, Bannur, Bettadapura, Bherya, Chunchanakatte and Hanchipura. Given the exploratory nature of the study, a pilot sample of 45 respondents was considered adequate to identify preliminary relationships and patterns for future large-scale studies. Therefore, a total of 45 rural women respondents were selected, with five respondents drawn from each village to ensure balanced geographical representation. The respondents were selected using a convenience sampling method based on accessibility and willingness to participate.

The questionnaire was designed to collect information relating to the socio-economic profile of respondents, awareness of financial inclusion schemes and services, and barriers affecting their adoption. The barriers were classified into three dimensions, namely availability-related barriers, affordability-related barriers and ease of access-related barriers. Responses were measured using appropriate scales and coded for statistical analysis.

For data analysis, descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distributions and percentages were employed to examine the socio-economic characteristics, awareness levels and barriers faced by rural women. To test the research hypothesis and assess the influence of identified barriers on the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used. Statistical analysis was carried out using appropriate software, and the significance of the regression model was evaluated through R², F-statistic, t-values and p-values at a 5 percent level of significance. The study tested the hypothesis that availability, affordability and ease of access barriers significantly influence the adoption of financial inclusion services among rural women.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

8.1 Financial Inclusion in India

Financial inclusion in India refers to the process of ensuring that all individuals, particularly those from rural, low-income and marginalized sections of society, have

access to affordable and appropriate financial services such as savings accounts, credit, insurance, pensions and digital payment systems. The main aim is to integrate the unbanked population into the formal financial system and promote equitable economic growth. In India, financial inclusion has been strongly driven by government initiatives and regulatory support from the Reserve Bank of India and other institutions. Major programmes such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Aadhaar-enabled banking and the expansion of digital payments through the Unified Payments Interface have significantly improved access to banking services. Over the years, India has witnessed remarkable progress in opening bank accounts and promoting digital financial transactions. However, challenges such as low financial literacy, limited awareness and unequal access especially among rural women continue to hinder the effective use of financial services.

8.2 Dimensions of Financial Inclusion

- 1. Availability:** It refers to the physical presence and formal availability of financial services in a particular area. It focuses on whether financial institutions such as banks, ATMs and banking correspondents are reachable in rural and remote regions. It also includes how easily individuals can open bank accounts and complete Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements. In essence, access ensures that financial infrastructure is present and geographically within reach of the population.
- 2. Accessibility:** It is closely related to access but emphasizes the ease with which financial services can be reached and used. It includes the physical distance to financial institutions, availability of digital banking infrastructure and challenges related to language or digital literacy. Even when services exist, poor accessibility can prevent effective usage, especially among rural populations.
- 3. Affordability:** It refers to the cost of accessing and using financial services. Financial inclusion is strengthened when services are offered at low or no cost, such as zero-balance accounts under government schemes like PMJDY. It also includes affordable interest rates on loans and minimal charges for banking transactions and remittances. High costs can act as a major barrier, especially for low-income households.
- 4. Awareness:** It represents the level of knowledge and understanding individuals have about financial products and services. It includes awareness of banking facilities, government schemes, savings

options, credit facilities and insurance products. More importantly, it reflects the ability of individuals to make informed financial decisions, which is crucial for the effective use of available services.

5. Adequacy: Financial products must actually meet the specific needs of the consumer. This means loans and savings schemes should be designed with the appropriate limits, terms, and structures tailored to the unique economic realities of vulnerable or underserved demographics.

8.3 Goals of Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion aims to ensure that all sections of society, especially low-income, rural and marginalized groups, have access to appropriate financial services. The key goals of financial inclusion are as follows:

- 1. Universal Access to Financial Services:** The primary objective is to provide every individual with access to basic financial services such as savings accounts, credit facilities, insurance and pension schemes through formal financial institutions.
- 2. Financial Empowerment of the Poor and Marginalized:** Financial inclusion seeks to empower economically weaker sections by integrating them into the formal financial system, enabling them to manage money effectively and improve their standard of living.
- 3. Reduction of Dependence on Informal Credit Sources:** Another important objective is to reduce reliance on informal and often exploitative moneylenders by providing affordable and timely credit through banks and microfinance institutions.
- 4. Promotion of Savings Habits:** Financial inclusion encourages individuals to develop regular savings behavior through secure banking channels, which helps in building financial stability and long-term security.
- 5. Easy Access to Credit and Capital Formation:** It aims to facilitate access to credit for income-generating activities such as agriculture, self-employment and small businesses, thereby promoting entrepreneurship and capital formation.
- 6. Promotion of Digital Financial Services:** With the advancement of technology, financial inclusion also focuses on increasing the use of digital platforms such as the Unified Payments Interface for safe, fast and transparent transactions.
- 7. Reduction of Income Inequality and Poverty:** By integrating underserved populations into the financial system, financial inclusion contributes to

reducing income disparities and supporting poverty alleviation.

8. Strengthening Economic Development: Financial inclusion supports overall economic growth by mobilizing savings, improving resource allocation and increasing participation in formal economic activities.

8.4 Importance of Financial Inclusion for Rural Women

1. Enhances Economic Independence and Decision-Making Power: Access to formal financial services enables rural women to manage their own financial resources and participate actively in economic activities. Ownership of bank accounts and access to credit reduce financial dependence on family members and allow women to make informed decisions regarding savings, investments, consumption and business activities. As a result, women gain greater autonomy and influence in household and community-level decision-making processes.

2. Promotes Savings Habits and Financial Security: Financial inclusion encourages rural women to save money through secure and accessible banking channels. Regular savings help women build financial resilience, manage emergencies and plan for future needs such as education, healthcare and old age. Formal savings mechanisms also protect their money from theft, misuse and unnecessary expenditures, thereby contributing to long-term financial security.

3. Facilitates Access to Credit for Entrepreneurship, Agriculture and Self-Employment: Access to institutional credit is one of the most significant benefits of financial inclusion. Rural women can obtain loans for starting small businesses, engaging in income-generating activities, purchasing agricultural inputs, investing in livestock or expanding existing enterprises. Availability of affordable credit supports entrepreneurship, increases

productivity and creates opportunities for sustainable livelihood development, ultimately enhancing women's economic empowerment.

4. Reduces Dependence on Informal Moneylenders: Traditionally, many rural women rely on informal moneylenders who often charge exorbitant interest rates and impose exploitative repayment conditions. Financial inclusion provides access to affordable credit through banks, cooperative institutions, microfinance organizations and Self-Help Groups (SHGs). This reduces vulnerability to debt traps and financial exploitation, enabling women to meet their financial requirements through safer and more reliable sources.

5. Improves Household Welfare, Education and Healthcare Outcomes: Research indicates that women tend to allocate financial resources more effectively toward family welfare. When women gain access to financial services, household spending on children's education, nutrition, healthcare and overall well-being often improves. Financial inclusion also enables families to cope better with unexpected expenses and economic shocks, thereby contributing to improved living standards and human development outcomes.

6. Strengthens Women's Participation in Economic and Social Development: Financial inclusion enhances women's integration into the formal economy and strengthens their participation in community development activities. Through involvement in financial institutions, Self-Help Groups and government welfare schemes, women develop social networks, leadership skills and financial awareness. Increased participation in economic activities contributes to poverty reduction, gender equality and inclusive rural development, making women active contributors to local and national economic growth.

8.5 Socio - Economic Profile Analysis

Table No. 1: Place-wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	District	Taluk	Village	Frequency	(%)
1	Mysuru	Mysuru	Suttur	5	11.11
2		Hunsur	Bilikere	5	11.11
3		Heggadadevankote	Antharasanthe	5	11.11
4		Nanjangudu	Hullahalli	5	11.11
5		Tirumakudalu Narasipura	Bannur	5	11.11
6		Periyapatna	Bettadapura	5	11.11
7		Krishnarajanagara	Bherya	5	11.11
8		Saligrama	Chunchanakatte	5	11.11

9		Saraguru	Hanchipura	5	11.11
Total				45	100.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: A total of 45 respondents were surveyed from nine different locations in Mysuru district, with five respondents selected from each place contributing 11.11% of the total sample. This indicates a balanced geographical representation and minimizes location-based bias in the study findings.

Table No. 2: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	Age Group (In Years)	Frequency	(%)
1	20-30	9	20.00
2	31-40	18	40.00
3	41-50	11	24.44
4	51-60	4	8.89
5	61 and above	3	6.67
Total		45	100.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The majority of the respondents (64.44%) belong to the economically active age groups of 31-50 years, indicating that the study primarily captures the views and experiences of middle-aged rural women who are likely to be actively involved in household financial decisions and financial inclusion initiatives.

Table No. 3: Educational Background of Respondents

Sl. No.	Educational Qualification	Frequency	(%)
1	No Education	13	28.89
2	Primary School (3 rd -7 th Standard)	10	22.22
3	Middle School (8 th -9 th Standard)	5	11.11
4	10 th Standard / SSLC	4	8.89
5	12 th Standard / II PUC	6	13.33
6	Degree	6	13.33
7	Postgraduate	1	2.22
Total		45	100.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: This suggests relatively low educational attainment among the majority of the respondents, which

may influence their awareness, access and utilization of financial inclusion initiatives. However, the presence of respondents with higher secondary, degree and postgraduate qualifications reflects a certain level of educational diversity within the sample.

Table No. 4: Marital Status of Respondents

Sl. No.	Marital Status	Frequency	(%)
1	Married	41	91.11
2	Widow	3	6.67
3	Divorcee	1	2.22
Total		45	100.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The results indicate that the study is predominantly represented by married rural women, accounting for more than nine-tenths of the sample. This suggests that the findings regarding financial inclusion and economic empowerment largely reflect the experiences and perspectives of married women.

Table No. 5: Occupation of Respondents

Sl. No.	Occupation	Frequency	(%)
1	Cultivator	12	26.67
2	Self Employed	8	17.78
3	Agricultural Labour	7	15.56
4	Others	7	15.56
5	Daily Labour	6	13.33
6	Salaried Employee - Private	4	8.89
7	Salaried Employee - Government	1	2.22
Total		45	100.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The occupational structure of the respondents reveals a strong dependence on the agricultural and informal sectors. More than half of the respondents are engaged as cultivators, agricultural labourers or daily labourers, indicating that agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood among rural women in the study area. The relatively low participation in salaried employment suggests limited access to formal employment opportunities.

Table No. 6: Monthly Personal Income of Respondents

Sl. No.	Monthly Personal Income	Frequency	(%)
1	Less than Rs. 5,000	12	26.67
2	Rs. 5,000 - Rs. 10,000	16	35.56
3	Rs. 10,001 - Rs. 15,000	11	24.44
4	Rs. 15,001 - Rs. 20,000	5	11.11
5	Rs. 20,000 and above	1	2.22
Total		45	100.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The findings indicate that the majority of respondents belong to the lower-income category, with 62.23% earning up to Rs. 10,000 per month. This suggests that a significant proportion of rural women in the study area have limited personal earning capacity.

Table No. 7: Monthly Savings of Respondents

Sl. No.	Monthly Savings	Frequency	(%)
1	Up to Rs. 1,000	10	22.22
2	Rs. 1,001 - Rs. 2,000	5	11.11
3	Rs. 2,001 - Rs. 3,000	11	24.44
4	Rs. 3,001 - Rs. 4,000	7	15.56
5	Rs. 4,001 - Rs. 5,000	5	11.11
6	Rs. 5,001 and above	7	15.56
Total		45	100.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Sl. No.	Statements	Yes	(%)	No	(%)	Can't Say	(%)
A	I am aware that government provides financial inclusion schemes for rural women.	31	68.89	11	24.44	3	6.67
B	I am aware of various banking services and financial inclusion facilities available for rural women.	32	71.11	10	22.22	3	6.67
C	I know that government financial inclusion schemes aim to improve financial security for families.	28	62.22	13	28.89	4	8.89
D	I am aware that financial inclusion schemes are designed to support economic development and poverty reduction.	25	55.56	10	22.22	10	22.22

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The findings indicate that a majority of rural women possess a reasonable level of general awareness regarding financial inclusion initiatives. Awareness is highest with respect to the availability of

Interpretation: The findings reveal that while a considerable proportion of respondents save relatively modest amounts, a significant number are able to save more than Rs. 2,000 per month. In fact, 66.67% of the respondents report monthly savings exceeding Rs. 2,000, indicating a positive savings habit among rural women.

Table No. 8: Bank Account Ownership of Respondents

Sl. No.	Bank Account Ownership	Frequency	(%)
1	Yes	45	100.00
2	No	0	0.00
Total		45	100.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The findings indicate universal banking access among the respondents, as every respondent reported having a bank account. This suggests a high level of penetration of formal banking services in the study area and reflects the effectiveness of financial inclusion initiatives aimed at bringing rural women into the formal financial system.

8.6 Awareness Related Analysis

Table No. 9: General Awareness about Financial Inclusion Initiatives among Respondents (N = 45)

banking services and financial inclusion facilities (71.11%) and government-sponsored financial inclusion schemes (68.89%). However, awareness declines when respondents are asked about the broader developmental

objectives of financial inclusion, particularly its role in economic development and poverty reduction (55.56%). This suggests that while many respondents are familiar with the existence of financial inclusion programmes, their understanding of the wider socio-economic benefits of such initiatives remains relatively limited.

Table No. 10: Awareness of Financial Inclusion Schemes, Products and Services among Respondents (N = 45) (Multiple Responses Considered)

Sl. No.	Financial Inclusion Scheme / Products / Services	Frequency	(%)
1	Atal Pension Yojana (APY)	21	46.67
2	Agriculture & MSME Loan	21	46.67
3	Microfinance and SHG Linkage	18	40.00
4	Kisan Credit Card (KCC)	13	28.89
5	Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)	12	26.67
6	UPI & BHIM App	11	24.44
7	Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)	10	22.22
8	Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (No-Frills A/c)	8	17.78
9	Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)	8	17.78
10	Small Savings Schemes	7	15.56
11	Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)	6	13.33
12	Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)	5	11.11
13	Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS)	4	8.89
14	Microinsurance	4	8.89
15	India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)	2	4.44
16	Mutual Funds via SIPs	2	4.44
17	National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)	1	2.22
18	Stand-Up India Scheme	1	2.22

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The findings indicate that rural women are relatively more aware of pension schemes, agricultural credit facilities and SHG-based financial services, whereas awareness of investment products, digital payment systems, livelihood missions and entrepreneurship-oriented schemes remains comparatively low. This suggests that although basic financial inclusion initiatives have achieved reasonable visibility, there is a need for greater financial literacy and awareness campaigns to

improve knowledge of advanced financial products and government-sponsored development schemes among rural women.

8.7 Barriers Related Analysis

Table No. 11: Availability-Related Barriers to Financial Inclusion Initiatives (N = 45)

Sl. No.	Statements	All the Time	(%)	Some-times	(%)	Never	(%)
A	The bank branch does not offer a sufficient variety of financial inclusion schemes to account holders.	8	17.78	32	71.11	5	11.11
B	Financial services tailored to the needs of economically weaker sections are not adequately available at bank.	3	6.67	30	66.67	12	26.67

C	I face difficulty in accessing multiple financial inclusion schemes through my bank account when required.	15	33.33	27	60.00	3	6.67
D	Essential financial services such as savings, credit and insurance under financial inclusion initiatives are not consistently available at the bank branch.	16	35.56	23	51.11	6	13.33

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The findings reveal that availability-related barriers exist to a moderate extent among rural women respondents. Most respondents reported facing these challenges sometimes rather than all the time, indicating occasional difficulties in accessing financial inclusion services. The most prominent barriers relate to the inconsistent availability of essential financial services

(35.56% all the time) and difficulty in accessing multiple financial inclusion schemes (33.33% all the time). These results suggest that although financial inclusion services are available, improvements are needed in service delivery, scheme accessibility and the range of financial products offered through rural banking channels.

Table No. 12: Affordability-Related Barriers to Financial Inclusion Initiatives (N = 45)

Sl. No.	Statements	All the Time	(%)	Sometimes	(%)	Never	(%)
A	The financial inclusion products and services offered by the bank are not affordable based on my financial capability.	8	17.78	31	68.89	6	13.33
B	The bank charges additional or hidden fees for providing benefits under financial inclusion schemes.	18	40.00	23	51.11	4	8.89
C	The repayment instalments for credit or loans obtained under financial inclusion schemes are difficult for me to manage.	20	44.44	22	48.89	3	6.67
D	The penalties or additional charges for delayed payments under financial inclusion schemes are high and burdensome.	15	33.33	21	46.67	9	20.00

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: The findings indicate that affordability-related barriers are a significant concern among rural women respondents. The most prominent issue is the difficulty in managing loan repayment instalments, with 44.44% reporting that they face this problem all the time. This is followed by concerns regarding hidden or additional bank charges (40.00%) and high penalties for

delayed payments (33.33%). Although most respondents reported encountering these barriers only sometimes, the relatively high proportion experiencing them all the time suggests that affordability remains a critical challenge affecting the effective utilization of financial inclusion services.

Table No. 13: Ease of Access-Related Barriers to Financial Inclusion Initiatives (N = 45)

Sl. No.	Statements	All the Time	(%)	Sometimes	(%)	Never	(%)
A	Financial inclusion schemes, products and services are not easily accessible at the bank branch to fulfil my banking needs.	15	33.33	27	60.00	3	6.67
B	The norms, rules and eligibility criteria of financial inclusion schemes are rigid.	20	44.44	17	37.78	8	17.78

C	The KYC norms and documentation procedures required for availing benefits under financial inclusion schemes are difficult to complete.	22	48.89	16	35.56	7	15.56
D	I face difficulty in obtaining loan or credit facilities from the bank through financial inclusion schemes.	18	40.00	19	42.22	8	17.78

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation:

The findings indicate that ease of access-related barriers constitute a significant challenge for rural women in utilizing financial inclusion services. Among the identified barriers, KYC and documentation requirements emerge as the most critical issue, with nearly half of the respondents (48.89%) reporting this problem all the time. Additionally,

rigid eligibility criteria (44.44%) and difficulties in accessing credit facilities (40.00%) are major concerns. These results suggest that procedural complexities and administrative requirements continue to hinder the effective utilization of financial inclusion schemes among rural women.

8.8 Statistical Analysis

Regression Equation

$$FIA = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Availability}) + \beta_2(\text{Affordability}) + \beta_3(\text{Ease of Access}) + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- FIA = Financial Inclusion Adoption
- β_0 = Constant term
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Regression coefficients
- ε = Error term

Variable	Beta Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
Availability Barrier	-0.281	-2.65	0.011	Significant
Affordability Barrier	-0.346	-3.41	0.002	Significant
Ease of Access Barrier	-0.425	-4.28	0.000	Significant
Constant	4.126	5.32	0.000	Significant

Statistic	Value
R	0.731
R ²	0.534
Adjusted R ²	0.501
F-value	15.82
Sig.	0.000

The regression analysis revealed that availability-related barriers, affordability-related barriers and ease of access-related barriers significantly influence the adoption of financial inclusion services among rural women ($p < 0.05$). The model explains approximately 53.4% of the variation in financial inclusion adoption ($R^2 = 0.534$). Among the explanatory variables, ease of access-related barriers emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = -0.425$), followed by affordability-related barriers ($\beta =$

-0.346) and availability-related barriers ($\beta = -0.281$). The negative coefficients indicate that an increase in perceived barriers leads to a decrease in the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives.

Therefore, the null hypotheses are rejected and it is concluded that barriers significantly affect the adoption and utilization of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women

Sub-Hypotheses	Description	Decision	Basis
H01	Availability barriers do not influence adoption	Rejected	Significant negative effect of availability barriers

H02	Affordability barriers do not influence adoption	Rejected	High repayment burden and affordability issues
H03	Ease of Access barriers do not influence adoption	Rejected	Strongest negative impact from access barriers
Main-Hypothesis	Description	Decision	Basis
H0	Availability, affordability and ease of access barriers do not have a significant influence on the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women.	Rejected	All three barrier dimensions adversely affect adoption

9. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. General Findings

1. The respondents were evenly distributed across nine villages representing different taluks of Mysuru District, ensuring balanced geographical representation.
2. The majority of the respondents (64.44%) belonged to the economically active age group of 31-50 years.
3. Educational attainment among respondents was relatively low, with 51.11% having either no formal education or only primary-level education.
4. Married women constituted the dominant group in the study, accounting for 91.11% of the total respondents.
5. Agriculture remained the principal source of livelihood with a majority of respondents engaged as cultivators, agricultural labourers and daily wage workers.
6. Most respondents belonged to lower-income categories, with 62.23% earning up to Rs.10,000 per month.
7. Despite low-income levels, respondents demonstrated a positive savings habit with 66.67% reporting monthly savings above Rs.2,000.
8. All respondents possessed bank accounts, indicating universal access to formal banking services within the study area.
9. A majority of respondents were aware of the existence of government-sponsored financial inclusion schemes and banking services.
10. Awareness regarding the broader developmental role of financial inclusion in poverty reduction and economic development was comparatively lower than awareness of specific schemes and services.
11. Rural women displayed greater awareness of pension schemes, agricultural credit facilities and

SHG-linked financial services than investment-oriented and digital financial products.

12. Awareness of advanced financial products such as mutual funds, microinsurance, India Post Payments Bank services and entrepreneurship-oriented schemes was found to be considerably low.

13. Availability-related barriers were experienced by respondents mainly on an occasional basis, suggesting moderate limitations in service delivery.

14. Affordability-related barriers emerged as a significant challenge, particularly concerning repayment obligations and additional charges associated with financial services.

15. Ease of access-related barriers were reported as major obstacles, especially with regard to documentation requirements and procedural formalities.

B. Major Findings

a. Awareness of Financial Inclusion Initiatives

1. A substantial proportion of respondents (71.11%) were aware of banking services and financial inclusion facilities available for rural women.
2. About 68.89% of respondents were aware that the government provides financial inclusion schemes specifically for rural women.
3. Awareness regarding the role of financial inclusion in economic development and poverty reduction was comparatively lower (55.56%).
4. The most widely known financial inclusion initiatives were: Atal Pension Yojana (46.67%), Agriculture and MSME Loans (46.67%) and Microfinance and SHG Linkage Programmes (40.00%).
5. Awareness levels were comparatively low for: Mutual Funds via SIPs (4.44%), India Post Payments Bank (4.44%), National Rural Livelihood Mission (2.22%) and Stand-Up India Scheme (2.22%).

b. Availability-Related Barriers

1. The major availability-related barriers were: Inconsistent availability of essential financial services such as savings, credit and insurance (35.56% all the time) and Difficulty in accessing multiple financial inclusion schemes through bank accounts (33.33% all the time).
2. Most respondents experienced availability-related constraints only sometimes, indicating moderate service accessibility issues.

c. Affordability-Related Barriers

1. Affordability emerged as a major obstacle to effective utilization of financial inclusion initiatives.
2. Difficulty in managing loan repayment instalments was the most significant affordability-related barrier, reported by 44.44% of respondents all the time.
3. Additional or hidden charges imposed by banks were reported by 40.00% of respondents as a persistent concern.
4. High penalties and charges for delayed payments were perceived as burdensome by 33.33% of respondents.

d. Ease of Access-Related Barriers

1. Ease of access constituted the most critical barrier dimension affecting adoption of financial inclusion initiatives.
2. KYC norms and documentation requirements were identified as the most severe access-related barrier with 48.89% of respondents facing this issue all the time.
3. Rigid norms, rules and eligibility criteria of schemes were reported as a major challenge by 44.44% of respondents.
4. Difficulty in obtaining loans and credit facilities under financial inclusion schemes was reported by 40.00% of respondents all the time.

e. Regression Analysis

1. Regression analysis confirmed that availability, affordability and ease of access barriers significantly influence the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women.
2. The regression model explained 53.40% of the variation in financial inclusion adoption ($R^2 = 0.534$), indicating good explanatory power.
3. Ease of access barriers emerged as the strongest predictor affecting adoption ($\beta = -0.425$).

4. Affordability barriers ranked second in influencing adoption ($\beta = -0.346$).
5. Availability barriers also had a significant negative effect on adoption ($\beta = -0.281$).
6. The negative regression coefficients indicate that an increase in perceived barriers leads to a decline in the adoption and utilization of financial inclusion initiatives.
7. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 15.82$; $p < 0.05$).
8. The null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that availability, affordability and ease of access barriers significantly influence the adoption of financial inclusion services among rural women.

10. CONCLUSION

This study examined the level of awareness and the barriers affecting the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women in Mysuru District. The findings reveal that although financial inclusion programmes have achieved considerable outreach, several challenges continue to restrict their effective utilization. The socio-economic profile of the respondents indicates that most rural women belong to lower-income households, possess relatively low educational qualifications and are primarily dependent on agriculture and informal occupations for their livelihood. Despite these limitations, all respondents possessed bank accounts, demonstrating the success of government and banking initiatives in extending formal banking access to rural areas.

The study found that a majority of respondents were aware of government-sponsored financial inclusion schemes and banking services. Awareness was relatively higher regarding pension schemes, agricultural loans and self-help group-linked financial services. However, awareness of investment-oriented products, digital financial services, entrepreneurship schemes and advanced financial instruments remained considerably low. This suggests that financial inclusion has largely succeeded in creating access but has not fully translated into comprehensive financial literacy and informed utilization.

The study further identified three major categories of barriers affecting financial inclusion adoption: availability barriers, affordability barriers and ease of access barriers. Among these, ease of access barriers emerged as the most critical challenge. Procedural complexities, stringent KYC requirements, documentation formalities, rigid eligibility norms and difficulties in obtaining credit facilities significantly hindered participation in financial inclusion programmes. Affordability-related barriers such as loan

repayment burdens, hidden charges and penalty costs also discouraged effective utilization. Availability-related barriers, although comparatively moderate, reflected gaps in the consistent provision of essential financial services and accessibility of multiple schemes through banking channels.

The regression analysis confirmed that all three categories of barriers significantly influence the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives among rural women. The model explained 53.4 percent of the variation in adoption behaviour, indicating substantial explanatory power. Ease of access barriers exerted the strongest negative influence, followed by affordability and availability barriers. The rejection of the null hypothesis establishes that reducing these barriers is essential for improving the adoption and effectiveness of financial inclusion services. Overall, the study concludes that while significant progress has been made in extending banking access to rural women, meaningful financial inclusion requires more than account ownership. Enhancing awareness, simplifying procedures, reducing financial burdens and improving service delivery are essential for ensuring the effective participation and economic empowerment of rural women through financial inclusion initiatives.

11. SUGGESTIONS

1. Conduct regular financial literacy and awareness programmes to improve rural women's understanding of financial inclusion schemes, products and services.
2. Increase outreach and publicity for lesser-known initiatives such as NRLM, Stand-Up India, PMMY, microinsurance and digital financial services.
3. Simplify KYC requirements, documentation procedures, eligibility criteria and application processes to reduce procedural barriers.
4. Ensure the consistent availability of banking, credit, insurance, pension and other financial inclusion services through rural banking channels.
5. Introduce simplified loan procedures and women-friendly credit products to facilitate easier access to formal credit.
6. Minimize hidden charges, transaction costs, penalties and other financial burdens associated with financial inclusion services.
7. Strengthen and expand Self-Help Group (SHG)-Bank linkage programmes to enhance awareness, participation and financial access among rural women.
8. Promote digital financial inclusion through training programmes on mobile banking, UPI, BHIM, Aadhaar-enabled services and other digital payment platforms.

9. Establish regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to identify implementation gaps and improve the effectiveness of financial inclusion programmes.

10. Encourage greater collaboration among banks, government agencies, NGOs, SHGs and local institutions to enhance outreach and service delivery.

11. Integrate financial inclusion initiatives with skill development, entrepreneurship promotion, livelihood generation and women empowerment programmes to achieve sustainable socio-economic development.

12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is subject to certain limitations. The study is confined to 45 rural women respondents selected from nine selected villages of nine taluks of Mysuru District. Therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to all rural women in Karnataka or other regions of India. The relatively small sample size may also limit the scope for broader statistical generalization. Further, the study relied primarily on self-reported responses collected through a structured questionnaire, which may be influenced by respondents' perceptions, recall ability and personal biases.

In addition, the study focused mainly on awareness levels and selected barriers, namely availability, affordability and ease of access. Other factors such as financial literacy, digital literacy, cultural influences, social norms, family support, institutional trust and technological infrastructure were not examined in detail. Since the study adopted a cross-sectional approach, it captures respondents' perceptions only at a particular point in time and does not assess changes in awareness, adoption behaviour or empowerment outcomes over an extended period.

13. AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies may expand the geographical coverage by including a larger sample of rural women from different districts, states or regions to facilitate comparative analysis and enhance the generalizability of findings. Researchers may also examine the influence of socio-economic variables such as education, income, occupation, age and marital status on the adoption of financial inclusion initiatives. Comparative studies between rural and urban women, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries or different categories of financial institutions may provide deeper insights into factors influencing financial inclusion.

Further research may explore additional dimensions such as financial literacy, digital financial inclusion, mobile banking adoption, social and cultural barriers, and the role of Self-Help Groups in promoting financial inclusion.

Longitudinal studies can be undertaken to assess the long-term impact of financial inclusion initiatives on women's economic empowerment, financial resilience, livelihood improvement and overall quality of life. Qualitative approaches such as case studies, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews may also be employed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and experiences of rural women in accessing and utilizing financial services.

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