A STUDY ON WOMEN'S ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES INNOWBOICHA AREA (LECHAI GAON) LAKHIMPUR, ASSAM

AdissertationsubmittedtotheDepartmentofSocialWorkforthepartialfulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Social Work.



Submittedto:

DepartmentofSocialWork MSSV,

Guwahati Unit

Submittedby:

Priya shri Dutta

4th Semester

Roll No: MSW23/23

Registration No: MSSV-0023-008-001046

Session:2023-25

MAHAPURUSHASRIMANTASANKARADEVAVISWAVIDYALAYA GUWAHATI UNIT, RUPNAGAR 781032, ASSAM

A STUDY ON WOMEN'S ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES INNOWBOICHA AREA (LECHAI GAON) LAKHIMPUR, ASSAM

AdissertationsubmittedtotheDepartmentofSocialWorkforthepartialfulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Social Work.



Submittedto:

DepartmentofSocialWork MSSV,

Guwahati Unit

Submittedby:

PriyashriDutta

4th Semester

Roll No: MSW23/23

Registration No: MSSV-0023-008-001046

Session:2023-25

MAHAPURUSHASRIMANTASANKARADEVAVISWAVIDYALAYA GUWAHATI UNIT, RUPNAGAR 781032, ASSAM



মহাপুৰুষ শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA VISWAVIDYALAYA

[RecognizedUnderSection2(f)ofUGCAct,1956]
GUWAHATICONSTITUENTUNIT
SankariSanskritiKendra,Rupnagar,Bhangagarh,Guwahati-781032,Assam

DepartmentofSocialWork

CERTIFICATE

I have the pleasure to certify that Miss Priyashri Dutta, MSW 4th Semester student bearing Roll No: MSW-23/23 with Registration No: MSSV-0023-008-001046of2023, MSSV has successfully completed the dissertation entitled "Astudyonwomen's access to financial services in rural communities: challenges and opportunities in Nowboicha area (Lechai gaon) Lakhimpur, Assam."

Shehasmadeasuccessfulcompletion of this research onher own.

Iwish herabright futureahead.

Dr.Deepshik a Carpenter HOD (i/c) Departmentof Social Work Guwahati Unit, MSSV, Nagaon

Dept of Social Work

Dr.DeepshikhaCarpenter,HOD(i/c) Mobile No: +917637887130 Email: irisamen@gmail.comdeepshikhacarpe

nter@mssv.ac.in



মহাপুৰুষ শ্ৰীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA VISWAVIDYALAYA

[RecognizedUnderSection2(f)ofUGCAct,1956]
GUWAHATICONSTITUENTUNIT
SankariSanskritiKendra,Rupnagar,Bhangagarh,Guwahati-781032,Assam

DepartmentofSocia Work

CERTIFICATEOFSUPERVISOR

This is to certify that Miss Priyashri Dutta, student of MSW 4th Semester bearingRollNo:MSW-23/23withRegistrationNo:MSSV-0023-008-001046 of 2023, MSSV, Guwahati Unit has successfully carried out her dissertation entitled "A study on Women's access to Financial Services in Rural Communities: Challenges and Opportunities in Nowboicha area (Lechai gaon) Lakhimpur, Assam". She has successfully completed this research undermysupervisionandguidanceforthepartialfulfilmentoftherequirement for the award of the degree of MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (MSW).

Theworkreportedinthisresearchhasnotbeensubmittedelsewhere and the facts presented here are true to the best of my knowledge.

Iwish herall theverybest forher future endeavour.

Place: MSSV, Guwahati unit

Date: 11/6/2025

DipshikhaBoruah TeachingAssociate Department of Social Work GuwahatiUnitMSSV,Nagaon

> Research Supervisor Dept. of Social Work MSSV

□ Website:www.mssv.ac.in □ E-mail:registrarmssv@gmail.com □ PhoneNo.:95310-89105

MAHAPURUSHASRIMANTASANKARADEVAVISWAVIDYALAYA **GUWAHATIUNIT**

DepartmentofSocialWork

Date: 03.06.2025

PlagiarismVerificationCertificate

TitleoftheResearchProject.Astudyonwomen'saccesstofinancialservicesin ruralcommunities:challengesandopportunitiesin Nowboichaarea(Lechaigaon)Lakhimpur, Assam.

TotalPage 54

Researcher : Priyashri Dutta

Supervisor :DipshikhaBaruah

: Social Work Department

This is to certify that the above Research Project (Dissertation) was scanned for similarity detection in 'Duplichecker' and 'SmallSEO' software tools. The softcopy of the Research Project on which the Plagiarism Check has been carried out is the identicalsoftcopyofthehardcopy, which is being submitted for evaluation. The Process and outcome of the Plagiarism Check is given below:

Analyseddocument:PRIYASHRIMSW2323

Submitted on :3/06/20252:09PM

Submitted by : Dipshikha Boruah

Submitter email :dipshikhaboruah541@gmail.com

Total Word Count : 11,377

:5.92 SimilarityIndex

Analysisaddress:dipshikhaboruah541@gmail.com

The complete thesis/dissertation submitted by the researcher, the Analysis Report and the Exported report from Original Profile have been shared with the library in-charge for review (Signature of Supervisor) through e-mail.

Analysedby-Dipshikha Baruah

Date:03-06-2025 DepartmentofSocialWork

Place:Guwahati GuwahatiUnit,MSSV,Nagaon **DECLARATIONOFORIGINALITY**

I, Miss Priyashri Dutta, studentof MSW4th Semester, Department of Social Work, (Roll No. MSW 23/23

and Registration No: MSSV-0023-008-001046 of 2023, Guwahati Unit, Mahapurusha Srimanta

Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya (MSSV), hereby declare that the research study titled "A study on

Women's access to Financial Services in Rural communities: Challenges and Opportunities in

Nowboicha area (Lechai gaon) Lakhimpur, Assam"is my original work under

theguidanceofDipshikhaBoruah,DepartmentofSocialWork,MSSV,GuwahatiUnit,andthatall sources

used in the study have been properly cited and acknowledged.

Iaffirmthatthisresearchstudyhasnotbeenpreviouslysubmittedforacademiccreditorpublication, nor has

it been copied or plagiarized in whole or in part from any other source.

I confirm that all data collected for the research study has been obtained through ethical means, and

thatallparticipants involved in the study were informed about the purpose and nature of the research,

gave their informed consent to participate.

Prograshos Duffa 11/06/25 and

Priyashri Dutta

Roll No. MSW 23/23

RegistrationNo.MSSV-0023-008-001046

DepartmentofSocialWork

Place:Guwahati, Assam

iν

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Deepshikha Carpenter, Head of the

department of Social Work, for her invaluable guidance and support throughout this

dissertation. Her expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping the

direction of my research and refining my analytical approach.

Special thanks are due to my dissertation supervisor, Dipshikha Boruah, for her

dedicated mentorship and insightful feedback. Her expertise and encouragement have

been invaluable in navigating the complexities of this research journey and refining the quality

of my work.

I extend my appreciation to all faculty members of the department of social work for

their commitment to excellence in education and support throughout my academic

journey.

A special thank you goes to all the respondents who participated in this study. Their

willingnesstosharetheirresponsesandinsightswasessentialforthecompletionofthis work.

This study wouldnot have been possible without the help and support of friends and

well-wishers.

My deepest thanks go to my parents, whose unconditional financial and emotional

support sustained me throughout this journey. Their encouragement was crucial in

helping me complete this study.

Priyashri DuttaRoll

No.MSW23/23

RegistrationNo.MSSV-0023-008-001046 Place:

MSSV Guwahati Unit

 \mathbf{V}

ABBREVIATION

SHORTTERMS	LONG TERM
SHG	SelfHelpGroup
PMJDY	PradhanMantri JanDhan Yojna
UPI	UnifiedPayments Interface
NGO	Non-GovernmentalOrganization
MSEs	MicroandSmall Enterprises
SBLP	SHG-BankLinkageProgramme
RSETI	RuralSelfEmploymentTrainingInstitute
CD	Community Development
Fis	Financial Institutions
GMM	GeneralizedMethodofMoments
DHS	DemographicandHealthSurvey
ATM	AutomatedTeller Machine
CSP	CustomerService Point

ABSTRACT

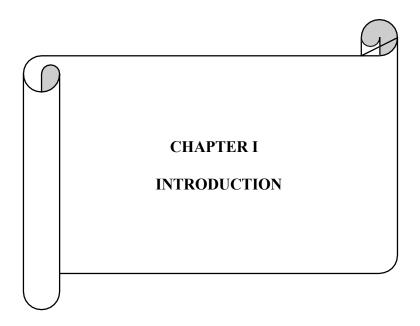
Accesstofinanceiscrucialforruralwomen'sempowerment,ultimatelyallowingtogain financial freedom and contribute to development. This study examines the challenges and opportunities for women in Nowboicha (Lechai Gaon), Lakhimpur, Assam, to access financial services. For this study the researcher uses primary data, collected directly from women aged 30-50 in Lechai Gaon, Nowboicha, through interviews, surveys, and field observations. Researchers used purposive sampling to select participants based on their financial experiences. The firsthand insights ensure that the findings are authentic and relevant, helping to understand financial challenges and opportunities for rural women. The study highlights key barriers that exist for women, including poor banking infrastructure, inconsistent income, low financial literacy and societal norms, which do not allow them to access loans, save money, or even use the formal financial system. Despite these barriers, the study identifies opportunities including digital banking, microfinance institutions, self-help groups and governmentled efforts to increase financial inclusion. The study looks at the effects of these opportunities in regard to rural women's financial autonomy, and the researcher illustrate the need for targeted policies, financial literacy, accessible financial services, which facilitate their financial inclusion. This discussion focused on the contributions ofinstitutional reformand community-level initiatives in supporting financial inclusion forruralwomen. Enhancing banking accessibility, simplify of basic loan processes, and expansion of digital financial literacy, preventing scammers can also facilitate financialaccessforwomen. By addressing these barriers and accessing readily available assistance, financial inclusion can support rural women and enable them to create sustainable sources of income with securing economic stability. This study provides an important contribution to understand the ways financial systems can be adapted to supportdisadvantagedwomenandsupportequality,independence,andsocio-economic growth for women in rural communities.

Keywords: Finance, Empowerment, Opportunities, Barriers, Financial Inclusion, Women, Community, Challenges, Decision, Development.

TABLE OF CONTENT

CONTENT	PAGENO
CertificateoftheHeadofthedepartment	i
CertificateoftheSupervisor	ii
PlagiarismVerificationCertificate	iii
DeclarationofOriginality	iv
Acknowledgement	V
Abbreviation	vi
Abstract	vii
Chapter-IIntroduction	1-8
1.1Introduction	2-4
1.2StatementoftheStudy	5
1.3SignificanceoftheStudy	6
1.4ObjectiveofTheStudy	6
1.5OperationalDefinition	7
1.6ResearchQuestions	8
ChapterII-ReviewofLiterature	9-17
ChapterIII-ResearchMethodology	18-24
3.1TheoreticalFramework	19-20
3.2UniverseofTheStudy	20

3.3ResearchDesign	21
3.4SamplingTechniques	21-22
3.5SampleSize	22
3.6Methodsofdatacollection	22
3.7ToolsforAnalysisofData	22
3.8Ethicalconsiderationandconsent	23
3.9Limitations	23
3.10InclusionandExclusionCriteria	23-24
ChapterIVDataanalysisandInterpretation	25-32
ChapterVFindingsandDiscussion	33-40
ChapterVISuggestionsandConclusion	41-43
References	44-46
Appendix	47-48



Finance is the cornerstone of economic development and engages the management, allocation and use of money, investable and other resources to achieve both short-term and long-term objectives. It enables individuals, institutions and governments to make criticaldecisionsabouthowresourcesareallocated, planforthefutureand emergency. Saving, borrowing, investing and risk management are all activities that contribute to maintaining and promoting economic stability. Finance plays a role in the division of resources and the growth of innovation; finance assists that social development and similar sustainable development.

Themostimportantthingaboutfinance, at its very essence, it is and can help individuals and societies realize their potential. Individuals rely on finance to open up new opportunities and path to achieve their dreams and objectives whether those dreams and objectives are attaining a home, funding education, or retiring with security.

Itprotects individuals from the uncertainties of life, such as medical emergencies or the loss of a job, enabling them to cope with shock and to support their endurance and stability in the stressful periods of hardship. More generally, money is a catalyst for economic development, by driving investment in jobs, industries, infrastructure, technology, and improvements in innovation. All of these investments create jobs, promote higher standards of living, and improve the well-being of society, which are the main contributors to long-term development. Access to financial services, which include deposits and savings accounts, credit, insurance, and even access to advanced digital payment platforms, is particularly transformative for disadvantaged communities.

Access to finance allows people to save for future needs, invest in income generating opportunities and manage financial risk. For example, a savings account provides a place to store their money safely until they are ready to spend it on a major expense, likeeducation and healthcare. Access to credit enablesnewopportunities forpeople to become a business owner and be engaged in financial transactions through entrepreneurial activity or through investments intheir crop or livestock that generates income and it may result in economic activity and betterment of quality of life overall. Accesstoservicesisnotjustafinancialtransactionassociated with economic activity

but for people they fulfill a desire for better allocation of their time and economic resources, and to minimize their exposure to shocks while accessing the marketplace.

Although financial inclusion builds off the concept of financial access, financial inclusion assures individuals from previously underserved communities, focusing on women, are part of formal financial systems. Financial inclusion plays arole in poverty reduction, economic empowerment, and quality of life. Financial inclusion allows people to transition from informal systems which are usually not stable, insecure, and unregulated, to formal financial systems that provide transparency, security, opportunity, and growth. As an example, microcredit institutions allow individuals to expand upon their business development, security for the future and goods spend on furthering education and skills development, both for them as individuals and the communities they are part of.

A savings account provides individuals with the ability to develop positive financial behaviors that will be helpful when facing financial pressures such as crop failures or medicalemergencies. Furthermore, financial inclusion benefits those socially-excluded communities - it creates opportunities and engagement in their communities and the decisions affecting their communities in a bigger context to life.

Women face significant barriers to access financial services across the world, highlightingaccessdeniedtofinancialservicesincludessocialandculturalobstaclesin theformofgenderdiscrimination,lackofclothingandotheritemsneeded,insufficient facilities at financial service providers and a knowledge deficit in terms of financial matters. Nevertheless, the potential for financial inclusion to improve the lives of rural women's is significant. Once women have access financial services and are able to utilize them, they can function in a more productive manner in their families and societies, changing the cycles of dependency and neglect. For example, women who are members of self-help groups are usually able to access communal savings and loans allowing for the overall growth of their small businesses. Financial inclusion will enhance women's capacity to make decisions about their household. The decisions may regard priorities for household needs such as education and health care as well as allowing them to make decisions or partake incollective activity in their communities.

Thisimprovement can create positive consequences for the growth and sustain a bility of entire communities not just the women in these communities.

Recently, therehas been real development inhelping women in rural area sutilize their finances better. While this development comes from innovative technologies, strong government support has aided in providing significant improvement. For instance, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in India aims to provide every household access to banking services. In addition, digital technologies like mobile banking and UPI systems have made it much easier for citizens to improve their management of finances, even in rural and isolated communities. Additionally, microfinance programs which provide loans to citizens without the need for collateral allow women better access to loans to start a business and access the economy. That being said, there are still many challenges, including digital divide, lack of financial literacy, and socio-cultural barriers. The study takes a holistic approach by bringing together solid policies, technology appropriate solutions and community initiatives to address the barriers.

In this study, the researchers delve into the details of gaining access to financial resources for women in rural areas, particularly in the Nowboicha area (Lechai Gaon) of Lakhimpur, and examine the barriers they face and developin novative strategies for reducing them. The study aims to explore how improving access to finance for finance can be improved. The research looking at the social and economic limitations they encounter and

exploring creative ways to reduce them. The research aims to find how getting better access to financecan reallyenablethese. women, both economically and socially. The studies contribute to broader conversations of gender equality, economic growth and social justice while providing genuine and real insights to encourage financial independenceandwell-beingforruralwomen. Ultimately, it holds a promise to promote sustainable development by addressing entrenched inequalities and unlocking the potential of one of the most marginalized social groups of society.

STATEMENTOFTHEPROBLEM

Regardless of the worldwide and national efforts focused at financial inclusion, women residing in rural areas still face continuous obstacles to financial services. Formal financial systems depend heavily on social, cultural standards and regulations that restrict women's decision-making power for themselves and their families, as well as limitsinlegallyestablishedrightsincludingpropertyownership, credit, and even access toopportunitiestointeractwithformalfinance. Furthermore, obstructing their capacity to properly use financial services may be obstacles connected to financial literacy and access education. Women in rural areas have limited educational opportunities, which also contributes to their financial illiteracy. The lack of understanding of banking processes and procedures, credit systems and requirements, investment options, and understanding financial planning are critical barriers, as they further limit women's ability to make independent economic decisions. Again, this increases women's economic dependency and therefore increases economic inequality. In addition, many rural women cannot access formal banking since they cannot apply for loans without property collateral. This causes further reliance on informal money lenders. These barriers not only undermine women's economic security; they also have unexpected effects on their overall well-being and restrict their capacity to care for their families and communities. Just like to overcome these barriers are vital for achieving gender equality and sustainable development. However, existing policies and programs frequently do not account for the uniqueness of these issues, such as geographic mobility cultural considerations impacting rural women; therefore, this research will assess and evaluate the barriers to financial inclusion faced by rural women.It will also identifyrealopportunitiestoassistandempowerthemeconomicallyandsocially(with confidence), and hence the research aim is to make a contribution to community development and gender equity, women's financial inclusion and sustainable development for women in rural area.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Thisresearchissignificantasittacklesthevitalproblemoffinancialexclusionaffecting women in rural Assam. Access to financial services is important for economic empowerment and well-being; however, women in rural areas encounter considerable obstacles. The study aims to comprehend these difficulties and discover methods to overcome them. It will investigate the influence of socio-cultural norms, legal and institutional frameworks, and financial literacy on women's access to use financial services. By analyzing these elements, there search will offer a piece of information into effective interventions, such as customized financial products, focused financial education, and the utilization of technology to enhance access to financial services. The results will aid in shaping policies and practices that promote women's financial inclusion, benefiting policymakers, financial institutions, NGOs, and community leaders. Ultimately, there sear chaims to empower rural women, contributing to gender equality, poverty alleviation, and sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, the study will underscore the significance of community involvement and collaboration in preventing financial exclusion. By engaging local stakeholders and understand their viewpoints, the research aims to develop sustainable and culturally suitable solutions. This strategy guarantees that the interventions are not only effective but also broadly accepted and supported by the community. The long-term goal of the research will be toestablishamoreinclusivefinancialenvironmentthatfosterstheeconomicandsocial empowerment of women in rural settings, promoting overall community development.

OBJECTIVESOFTHESTUDY

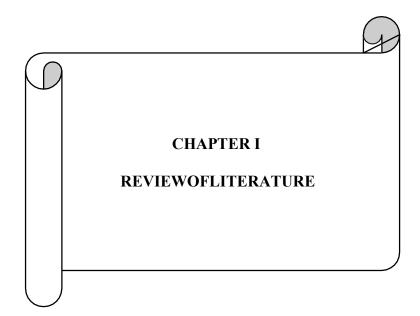
- Tostudytheimpactoffinancialaccessonwomen'swell-being
- ➤ Toidentifybarriershinderingwomenfinancialaccess.
- > Toexploretheopportunitiestoimprovewomen's financial inclusion

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- **1.Finance:** Finance is the management of money and resources, including saving, investing, borrowing, and budgeting to help individuals and businesses grow and make informed financial decisions.
- **2. Financial Service:** This term refers to a broad range of services provided by financial institutions, including but not limited to banking, savings accounts, loans, credit facilities, insurance, and payment services.
- **3. Rural Communities:** Rural communities are geographic areas situated away from of urban centers, characterized by lower population density, limited infrastructure, and economies primarily based on agriculture and related activities.
- **4.Challenges:** Challenges refer to the obstacles or barriers that prevent rural women from effectively accessing and utilizing financial services. These challenges may include socioeconomic factors (poverty, lack of education), cultural norms (gender biases), infrastructure limitations (lack of banking facilities), and institutional barriers (complex procedures, high transactioncosts).
- **5.Opportunities:**Opportunitiesrefertothepotentialstrategies and solutions that can enhance women's access to financial services in rural communities. These may include technological advancements (mobile banking, digital financial services), government policies and schemes, community-based initiatives (self- help groups, microfinance), and educational programs (financial literacy training).
- **6. EconomicEmpowerment**: Thistermreferstotheprocessbywhichwomengainthe abilityto makeeconomicdecisions, controloverfinancial resources, and the power to activities deconomic activities. Improved access to financial services is one of the key factors contributing to women's economic empowerment

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Howdoesfinancialaccessimpactwomen'swell-beinginruralcommunities?
- Whatbarrierspreventwomenfromaccessingfinancialservicesinruralareas?
- Whatstrategies canimprovefinancialliteracyamongruralwomen?



Magesa, Shimba, and Magombola (2013) in the article "Impediments to financial access for women entrepreneurs in Arumeru District, Tanzania." highlights the challenges faced by micro and small enterprises (MSEs). Stated that microfinance institutions operating in the district and examine the barriers preventing women from accessing financial services. The study, based on field research conducted between January and July 2012, involved 150 respondents, including 100 women entrepreneurs and 50 stakeholders. Findings revealed that women facediscrimination from financial institutions, smallloan sizes, strict conditions, lack of collateral, high interest rates, and cultural stereotypes that limit their ability to control financial resources. The study recommends that financial institutions redesign their products to better suit women's needs and that the government re-evaluate interest rates to ensure fairness based on the size of the enterprise. Addressing these barriers is essential for enhancing women's financial confidence and economic participation.

Lusardi, A., &Tufano, P. (2015) in the article "Debt Literacy, Financial Experiences, and Over-Indebtedness" highlights the relationship between financial literacy and over-indebtednessamongwomeninruralareas. Theauthorsemphasize the importance of financial education in helping women make better financial decisions and avoid excessive debt. The research highlights the need for tailored financial literacy programs that address the unique financial experiences and challenges faced by rural women.

Limbu & Bordoloi (2015) in the article "The challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in rural Assam" throws light in the economic and social significance of entrepreneurship in the region. The study notes that while entrepreneurship contributes to capitalcreationandsocialbenefits, itremainsless commonind eveloping regions like Assam, where the economy is largely agrarian. According to the 2011 Census, rural Assam comprises 85.92% of the state 's population, with women making up 48.88% of this demographic. Unlike urban women, rural women are primarily engaged in agricultural activities, often alongside male family members. However, recent trends indicate a growing number of women entrepreneurs emerging in rural Assam. The study emphasizes the potential for enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities, which could transform the rural economy and contribute to economic growth and women's empowerment.

Saikia, D. (2016) in the article "Financial Position of Women SHGs of Assam Under SHG-BankLinkageProgramme(SBLP)" showcasethatSelf-HelpGroups(SHGs) positively impact women's financial empowerment. Women in SHGs of tensee increased income, more control

over household finances, and improved well-being. By participating in SHGs, women gain access to microfinance, develop financial literacy skills, and build social networks. However, thesuccessofSHGsdependsoneffectiveleadership,propertraining,andcontinuousfinancial and technical support.

Kairiza et al. (2017) in the article "Examine gender differences in financial inclusion among entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe" finds weak evidence of female financial exclusion in the formal sector. However, women are equally engaged in informal financial markets, where financial inclusion is linked to better business performance compared to men. The study highlights the importance of informal financial networks in supporting female entrepreneurs and suggests that expanding such mechanisms could enhance women's business success.

Ghouseetal.(2017)inthearticle"ThebarriersfacedbyruralwomenentrepreneursinOman" reveal financial constraints, infrastructural deficiencies, and restrictive socio-cultural norms that limit business success. The study finds that lack of collateral and credit history makes it difficultforwomentoaccessfunding, whilepoortransportation and unreliable communication hinder market expansion. Traditional gender roles further restrict women's ability to seek mentorship and build networks, prioritizing household responsibilities over entrepreneurship. Using Wennekerand Thurik's (1999) entrepreneurship framework, the authors suggest policy interventions and financial inclusion strategies to support rural women in diversifying household income and contributing to economic development. Strengthening credit access, infrastructure, and cultural acceptance can empower rural women and promote sustainable entrepreneurship.

Goel, N., & Madan, P. (2019) in the article "Benchmarking financial inclusion for women entrepreneurship in Uttarakhand, India" underscore to the impact of financial inclusion and factors like family circumstances, entrepreneurial motivation, benchmarking, and entrepreneurial intention on women's decision to pursue entrepreneurship. Using a sample of 250 women entrepreneurs from self-help groups and the RSETI program, the study found a significant positive effect of financial inclusion on women establishing businesses. The study also highlights the importance of financial inclusion schemes in empowering women economicallyandsocially. Whilelimitedtotwodistricts, theauthorssuggested futureresearch across wider geographical areas for broader validation. The findings emphasize the role of women entrepreneurship in fostering societal growth and sustainable development.

Hazarika et al. (2020) in the article "Status of Financial Inclusion Among the Rural Communities of Assam" showcase that rural women are less served than urban women by financial services. The study showed that there are few formal financial institutions in rural areas and that people are unaware of the financial products and services available. Simply having these services availableisn't enough; peoplealso need toknow about themand be able to access them. In this study also found that limited education, lack of control over assets, and restrictive social norms contribute to women's exclusion from financial services. Thesefindingsalignwithbroaderresearchongenderandfinancialinclusion, which highlights the combined impact of economic and social factors (World Bank, n.d.).

Dutta,A.P.(2020)inthearticle "Status of Financial Inclusion Among the Rural Communities of Assam" highlights the status and challenges of financial inclusion in Assam, focusing particularly on the Golaghat (CD) Block. The research highlights the limited penetration of formal financial institutions in rural areas and underscores the significant urban-rural gap in financial inclusion. This study identifies socio-economic factors contributing to financial exclusion, such as limited awareness about financial products and services, low levels of education, and restrictive social norms. The study emphasizes that merely having financial services available is not enough; accessibility and awareness are also critical. These findings align with broader researchong ender and financial inclusion, which high lights the combined impact of economic and social factors on women's financial exclusion.

Gogoi (2021) in the article "The opportunities and challenges faced by rural women entrepreneursinDibrugarh, Assam" displaytheirgrowingroleineconomicactivities beyond traditional household responsibilities. The study finds that various factors encourage rural womentoengageinincome-generatingactivities, contributing to local development. However, they also face barriers such as financial constraints, limited access to resources, and societal expectations. Despite these challenges, many women in the region are actively involved in traditional economicactivities, with support from governmentagencies and local organizations aiding their business growth. The study emphasizes the potential forenhancing entrepreneurial capabilities, which could further strengthen the rural economy and empower women in Assam.

Kulkarni & Ghosh (2021) in the article "Gender disparity in the digitalizationoffinancial services Challenges and promises for women's financial inclusion in India" highlights how

digital financial servicescan play a transformative role in financial inclusion by overcoming barrierssuchascost, distance, and transparency, and tailoring financial services to the specific needs of users. However, the study found that despite advancements in digital financial inclusion in India, women continue to face significant obstacles in accessing and using these services. Through secondary data analysis and a primary survey of women in rural and urban areas, there search identifies barriers including lack of digital literacy and cultural constraints. Interestingly, the economic development of a region does not necessarily reduce the gender gap. The study emphasizes that digitalization can improve women's social and financial autonomy, under scoring the need for a gender-sensitive approach in financial inclusion policies.

Sharizan, Redzuan.et al (2021) in the article "Issues and Challenges of FinancialInclusion Among Low-Income Earners in Rural Areas of Malaysia" reveals the obstacles faced by both financial institutions (FIs) and the rural B40 group. Their research utilized semi-structured interviews with experts from FIs in Kuala Rompin and representatives from the B40 group in Pekan, Pahang. The findings revealed significant barriers for FIs, such as highcosts, security risks, communication challenges, lack of financial education, and incomplete documentation. Additional concerns included competition from conventional institutions, non-payment default risks, and unreliable internetaccess. On the demand side, B40 earners struggled with low confidence, financial illiteracy, misuse of capital, and lack of essential documents. The study emphasized the untapped potential of this group and highlighted the importance of bridging these gaps to boost financial inclusion, alleviate poverty, and reduce societal inequality. These insights have practical implications for Islamic financial institutions, microfinance entities, and regulators to develop targeted strategies addressing these issues.

Baruahetal.(2022)inthearticle"ThechallengesfacedbyruralwomeninaccessingBandhan microfinanceinTinsukiadistrict,Assam" conductedinMargheritasub-division,identifieskey barriers such as short repayment periods, lack of clarity on interest rates, and financial strain due to family crises. Based on responses from 108 Bandhan group members, the findings highlight that while microfinance provides financial support, many women struggle with repayment terms and understanding loan conditions. The study suggests that improving financialliteracy, extending repayment periods, and offering transparent loans tructures could enhance the effectiveness of microfinance for rural women.

Arshad, A. (2023) in the article "The relationship between financial inclusion and women empowermentindevelopingcountries" showcasespaneldatafrom 2004–2019 using statistical techniques such as fixed-effect modeling and GMM estimation. It found that financial inclusion positively impacts women empowerment by helping them build confidence, recognize their skills, and become self-reliant. Factors like financial development, gender parity, and women's employment significantly contributed to empowerment, while gender discrimination had a negative influence. The study emphasized that governments and policymakers must design and implement effective financial inclusion programs to enhance women empowerment. Proper education, awareness, and opportunities to express oneself are also essential for sustained progress in gender equality and social development.

Adera & Abdisa (2023) in the article "The relationship between financial inclusion and women's economic empowerment in Ethiopia" illuminates' access to financial services positively impacts women's economic outcomes, such as improved decision-making power andhousehold welfare. Using data from the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), the authors employed advanced statistical methods to analyze the determinants of financial inclusion and its effects on women. The findings emphasized the importance of collaboration between financial institutions, policymakers, and development agents to implement effective financial inclusion initiatives tailored to the Ethiopian context. This research contributes to understanding how financial inclusion can foster gender equality, economic growth, and poverty alleviation in Ethiopia.

Rao, C.S& Maiya, S. (2023) in the article "A Study of Financial Inclusion Schemes for Rural Women by the Indian Government" highlights the comprehensive review of various financial inclusions chemes launched by the Indian government to promote the economic empowerment of rural women. The study analyzes the effectiveness of these schemes in increasing women's access to financial services and highlight the challenges faced in implementing these programs. also discuss the role of financial literacy and education in ensuring the success of these initiatives.

Tamboli, N.B. (2024) in the article "Financial Literacy: Challenges and Problems Among Rural Women" throws light in thespecificchallenges and problems associated with financial literacyamongrural women in India. The study identifies keybarriers, such as limited access to financial education, socio-cultural constraints, and the lack of tailored financial products

and services. The study suggests targeted financial education programs and policy interventions to address these challenges and enhance the financial inclusion of rural women.

Deka, L. (2024) in the article "Review of Financial Inclusion in Assam" highlights a comprehensiveoverviewofthevariousindicatorsoffinancialinclusioninAssam. Thisreview highlights the need for structured measures to increase theusage and accessibilityofbanking services in the state. This study examines the existing financial infrastructure and identifies key barrierstofinancialinclusion, suchasthelackoffinancialliteracy, limitedaccesstoformal financial institutions, and socio-economic challenges. The study also emphasizes the importance of data collection and analysis to understand the needs of different population segments and to design effective financial inclusion strategies. By advocating for context-specificapproachesandcollaborationamongvariousstakeholders, this study aimstoim prove the financial inclusion landscape for women in rural Assam.

Ergün et al. (2024) in the article "Challenges and opportunities faced by rural women entrepreneurs, focusing on financial, infrastructural, and societal barriers" that limit business growth and sustainability. One of the key challenges identified is limited access to financial resources, as rural women of tenstruggle with loaneligibility due to lack of collateral and credit history, restricting their ability to secure capital for business ventures. Additionally, infrastructural deficiencies, such as poor transportation and unreliable communication, hinder market access and overall competitiveness. Societal norms further constrain women's participation in entrepreneurship, as traditional gender roles prioritize household responsibilities over business activities, limiting their ability to build professional networks and seek mentorship. Despite these obstacles, the study highlights emerging opportunities, particularly through sustainable development and digital platforms, which enable women to expand their businesses and connect with consumers in new ways. By addressing these challenges through policy interventions, financial inclusion programs, and infrastructural improvements, rural women can overcome traditional limitations, ensuring economic empowerment and inclusive development.

Saha.P(2024)inthearticle"WomenEntrepreneursinOdisha"throwslightinthechallenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Odisha, highlighting their growing participation in sectors like agriculture, handicrafts, handlooms, foodprocessing, and eco-tourism. The study

identifiedsocio-economicbarriersfacedbywomen,especiallyinruralandtribalareas,suchas creditconstraints,poorinfrastructure,limitedmobility,andinsufficienttraining.Additionally, culturalpracticesandgenderbiasesinlendingfurtherhinderprogress. Thestudyacknowledged government schemes aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs but pointed out the gap in awareness and accessibility. Opportunities for growth included the expansion of financial inclusion, digital literacy, and targeted skill development programs. Saha concluded that systemic support is critical to overcoming these barriers, enabling women entrepreneurs to flourish and contribute to Odisha's economic development.

Nanda (2024) in the article "Financial Socialization and Financial Inclusion" analyzes the role of financial socialization in promoting financial inclusion among women self-help group (SHG) members. The study highlights how SHGs act as effective platforms for fostering financial inclusion byproviding women with access to credit, savings, and financialtraining. These groups empower women to make informed financial decisions and actively participate in economic activities. The research emphasizes that financial socialization gaining financial knowledge through interaction and exposure within SHGs plays a pivotal role in improving women's financial literacy and inclusion. Key challenges identified include limited digital literacy, access to formal financial services, and socio-cultural barriers that affect women's financial engagement. Nanda suggests that policy measures should focus on enhancing financialawareness, developing tailored financial products, and promoting the digital financial ecosystem for rural women through SHGs to achieve sustained financial inclusion.

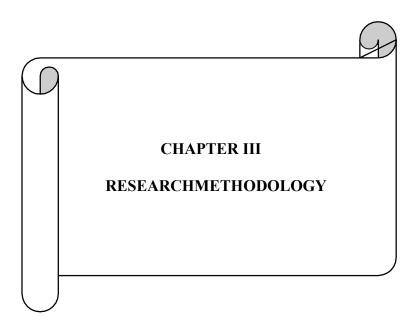
Xhemali(2025)inthearticle"ChallengesandopportunitiesforwomeninruralAlbaniawithin thedigitaleconomy" displayhowlimitedfinancialresources, inadequatedigitalliteracy, poor infrastructure, and restrictive social norms hinder women's participation in digital and entrepreneurialactivities. Using descriptive data from various rural regions, the study explores the role of digital technology in reducing the economic gender gap and enhancing women's financial independence. Findings reveal that digital tools such as e-commerce platforms, mobile banking, and online education significantly improve women's economic stability and entrepreneurship opportunities. The study emphasizes that targeted interventions, including affordable digital literacy programs, improved infrastructure, and accessible financial support, are essential for fostering women's participation in the digital economy. Moreover, integrating women into digital entrepreneurs hip not only strengthen seconomic outcomes but also drives

social and cultural change, challenging traditional norms and promoting greater autonomy in decision-making.

Sadiq et al. (2025) in the article "Mobile money has transformed financial access for ruralwomen entrepreneurs in Nigeria "highlights particularly in areas where traditional bankingservices are limited. The study highlights that rural women in agriculture often struggle with accessing credit, saving money, and making investments, which affects their ability to grow

theirbusinesses. Mobilemoneyoffers a secure and convenient way for the sewomentom anage transactions, receive payments, and access financial service without needing a physical bank. The research identifies key challenges, such as low digital literacy, limited mobile network coverage, and trust issues with digital financial services, which can slow adoption. However,

mobilemoneypresentssignificantopportunities,includinggreaterfinancialindependence, improvedbusinessoperations,andeasieraccesstocredit. Thestudysuggeststhatpolicy interventions, financial education programs, and better infrastructure can help rural womenfully benefit from mobile money services, leading to stronger economic empowerment andbusiness growth.



RESEARCHMETHODOLOGY

Theresearcherhasappliedqualitativemethodforthestudy. Thismethodologyisidealforthis studybecauseitallowsfordeepexplorationofthereal-lifeexperienceofruralwomenasthey struggletoaccessfinancialservices. Ratherthanrelyingonnumbersalone, it focuses on their voices, challenges, and emotions, helping to understand the social, cultural, and economic barriers they face. Through interviews and observations, women can share their financial difficulties in their own words their reliance on money lenders, lack of property rights, and limited access to formal banking. This approach uncovershow deep-rooted norms and financial exclusion impact their autonomy, offering in sight into how they navigate these struggles daily. By capturing personal narratives, qualitative research ensures that the solutions proposed are grounded in their lived realities, creating meaningful change that addresses gender inequality and economic empowerment.

THEORETICALFRAMEWORK:

For this research, the financial inclusion theory is the most suitable and effectively utilized framework. Financial InclusionTheory, proposed byPeterson K. Ozili, focuses on providing equitable access to financial resources and services, particularly to marginalized groups such asruralwomen. The theory emphasizes the importance of removing systemic barriers, such as financial illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, and socio- economic inequalities, that hinder individuals from accessing financial products like credit, savings, insurance, and digital payment systems. It highlights how inclusive financial systems can empower individuals by increasing their economic independence, improving household decision-making, and reducing poverty. Central to this theory are principles of accessibility, affordability, usability, and sustainability, which are critical to fostering long-term economic development and social inclusion.

This theory is particularly suited for the study of women's financial access in Nowboicha, (Lechai Gaon) Lakhimpur, as it aligns with the challenges and opportunities faced by rural women in this region. Nowboicha, with its agriculture-based economy, sees women actively contributing to farming and household management, yet their access to formal financial systems remains limited. Barriers such as inadequate banking infrastructure, cultural restrictions, and gender biases in lending practices significantly impede their financial participation. Financial Inclusion Theory helps frame these challenges systematically while providingalenstoexplorepracticalsolutions. For example, microfinance initiatives, self-help

groups (SHGs), and digital banking platforms are highlighted as effective ways to mitigate these barriers.

Additionally, the theory emphasizes the importance of financial literacy programs, enabling women to make informed financial decisions and leverage available services effectively.

By applying Financial Inclusion Theory, this study gains a structured framework to analyze both the challenges and opportunities for women in that community. The theory helps researchers understand how financial exclusion limits women's economic potential and communitycontributions. It also provides insight into the transformative impact of inclusive financial systems, such as enhanced income generation,improvedsocialmobility,andgreater economicstabilityforfamilies. Furthermore, thetheoryguidesthe formulation of sustainable, evidence-based recommendations, such as expanding banking infrastructure, integrating mobile financial services, and increasing awareness of government schemes tailored to women's needs. In this way, Financial Inclusion Theory not only enhances the depth of the study but also ensures its findings are actionable and aligned with the goal of empowering women in Nowboicha, contributing to their personal growth and the broader development of the community.

UNIVERSEOFTHESTUDY:

The researcher chose the Nowboicha area (Lechai gaon) in Lakhimpur, Assam, for this study because ofits rural characteristics and the socioeconomic challenges experienced by women living there. This geographical location reflects a typical rural environment, where financial inclusionishinderedbyfactorslikelowliteracyrates,Socio-culturalconstraints,andlimited accesstoformalbankingservices. Thearea'svarieddemographicpresentsachancetoexplore—the differences in how women access financial services. This makes the location especially relevant for studying the challenges and opportunities related to women's economic empowerment in rural settings.



RESEARCHDESIGN:

The researcher selected a descriptive research plan to carefully record the current situation, difficulties, and chances regarding women's access to financial services in rural areas. This designisperfectforgivingaclearpicturewithoutchanginganyvariables. Also, aqualitative research method is used to study the data, allowing for a deep understanding of the real experiences and social environments of women, which are important for spotting challenges and Potential opportunities. This designensures the study or research provide comprehensive and meaningful findings.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:

In this research, the researcher chooses purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, to intentionally select participants based on specific characteristics, experiences, or relevance to the study. The researcher chooses purposive sampling for this research study because ithelps the researcher pick participants intentionally who are most connected to the researchobjectives. Whenlooking into women's access to financial services, purposive

sampling makes sure the participant women from rural areas facing financial based on their experiencesandsituations. By focusing on specific individuals who have relevant knowledge or unique difficulties, there sear chercangather richer and more valuable data. It also eliminates ir relevant participants who don't fit the criteria and aligns closely with the goal of improving women's financial access in rural areas.

SAMPLESIZE:

Theresearcherselects15respondentsinordertomakeanexhaustivestudyoftheproblemof accesstofinanceinrural areaswiththeguarantee of saturationofdataensuringthatnomore information seems to be available beyond this point. The number is practicable and cost-effective, making it feasible in qualitative research where quality outweighs quantity. Evidence suggests that 12–15 interviews are usually adequate to determine dominant themes in social studies.

METHODSOFDATACOLLECTION:

The process of gathering information for this study involves collecting data from various relevant sources. The data collection methods can be categorized into primary and secondary data.

- Primary Data Collection: The researcher will collect data directly through interviews and observations.
- SecondaryDataCollection:Theresearcherwillgatherdatafromexistingsourcessuch as books and websites.
- ToolsforDataCollection:Theresearcherwillusestructuredinterview schedule.
- TechniquesforDataCollection:Datawillbecollectedusinginterviews and observations.

TOOLSFORDATAANALYSIS:

Data analysis is the process of examining collected information to uncover meaningful insights. This study uses the matically sis, a widely applied method in qualitative research. It involves carefully reviewing text-based data, such as interview transcripts, to identify patterns, recurring themes, and underlying ideas. Through this approach, there searchers ystematically organizes and interprete the data, ensuring that key finding semerge from real-life experiences and perspectives.

ETHICALCONSIDERATIONANDCONSENT:

Researchers should prioritize ethical considerations throughout their studies. Obtaining informedconsentfromparticipants, ensuring their privacy, and treating them with respectate fundamental. While conducting the study researcher will maintain fair participant, cultural sensitivity and maintaining confidentiality.

LIMITATIONSOFTHE STUDY:

- Thestudy takes time, and short-term studies may not showthe full effects offinancial
 inclusion program. The study focuses on a single rural area, so the findings may not
 apply to other locations with different conditions.
- Notallwomen's experiences are included, which means the results may not represent the wider population.
- Personal Experiences come from individuals, they may not always be completely accurate or objective.
- Financialsituationschangeovertime, butthe studyonly captures the current challenges and opportunities.
- A short research period may not fully capture long-term financial trends or evolving challenges.
- Therespondentsmaynotrepresentallruralwomen,makingfindingslessgeneralizable.

INCLUSIONANDEXCLUSIONCRITERIA

InclusionCriteria

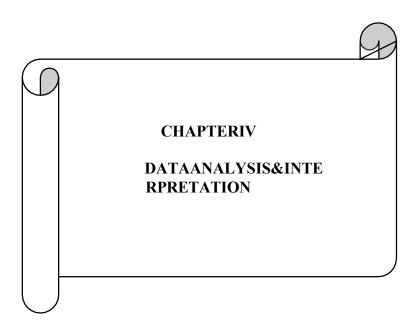
- Womenwithpoorfinancialstability
- Womenworkingininformaljobwithlowincome
- Womenwhodependonmoneylendersinsteadofformalfinancialservices.
- Womenwhounawareofgovernmentprogramsforfinancial support.

ExclusionCriteria

• Womenwithstablejobslikegovernmentemployeesandthosewomengenerating

good income.

 $\bullet \quad Women already benefiting from government financial schemes.$



The researcher using a range of methods to collect data, including structured and individual interviews, and direct observations of participants in the study area. Once the data was gathered,interviewswerecarefullytranscribedtoensureaccuracy. Throughqualitative coding and thematic analysis, patterns and key insights were identified, allowing for a deeper understanding of the findings. This chapterwill present astructured interpretation of the data, highlighting recurring themes and significant observations that emerged during the research process.

ImpactofFinancialAccesson Women's Well-being

ImprovedBusinessOpportunities

Theresearchrevealsthatfinancialaccessplaysacrucialroleinexpandingwomen'sbusinesses.

Respondentswhosecuredsmallloansinvestedinbetterequipmentandrawmaterials,leading to higher productivity. In this context some respondent mention that "I took a small loan to expand my business and repair my shop".

SupportingChildreneducation

The study found that financial inclusion empowers women by enabling them to support their children's education. With access to financial resources, mothers can afford school fees, provide better educational opportunities. Economic stability allows them to, invest in their children's future, and break cycles of poverty, leading to long-term social and economic benefits. One of the respondents mentions that "Yes, I borrowed a small loan and began producing pickles and papadathome. Now I sell the matthemarket and earn as mall amount, which goes towards my children's school fees."

FinancialSecurity

The study highlights that access to banking services significantly boosts women's confidence immanagingtheirfinances. Respondents who actively used financial services reported feeling more secure in their financial decision-making. Many respondents expressed that after opening a bank account, she felt stronger and capable of managing her household expenses independently. In this context one respondent mention that "I save some money each month. Financial empowerment is when a womandoesn't have to rely on others for survival provides me with the freedom to make decisions for me family and myself. In olonger keepmoney at

homethatwillbespentsooneversinceIbeganutilizingabankaccount.Nowadays,I'mable toplanmyexpensesbetterandensurewehaveenoughmoneyforunexpected situation."

EconomicIndependence

The study reveals that financial access empowers women by reducing economic dependence on male family members. The study found that respondents involved in entrepreneurship exercised greater control over their earnings. One respondent revealed that "I run a small vegetable stall in front of my house. Having steady earnings helps me feel secure. Financial empowermentallowsmetomakedecisionsordailyexpenseswithoutdependingonothers. My savings account helps me track earnings and plan expenses properly." while those relying on irregular wagefaced challenges in making financial decisions. While women with bank accounts demonstrated increased financial autonomy, systemic barriers such as collateral-based loans and asset ownership restrictions continue to limit their full independence.

womenparticipationinDecision-Making

The study found that financial inclusion has led to gradual changes in household dynamics, with women increasingly participating in budgeting and financial planning. Effective householddecision-makingleadstofinancialstability,reducedeconomicstress,andimproved qualityoflife,ensuringthatfamiliescanmeettheirneedswhilepreparingforfuturechallenges. Somerespondents stated that herhusband now consults heron financial matters,while oneof the respondents stated that "My savings account allows me to keep money safe, for future emergency Yes, I used a small loan to buy materials for my weaving business, which helped me earn more. Yes, now my husband asks for my input on household budgeting."

BoastWomen Confidence

Research reveals that when women begin earning, they experience a significant boost in confidence, leading to greater financial independence and security. With stable income, they feel more empowered to make decisions, support their families, and plan for their future, reinforcingtheiroverallsenseofstabilityandself-assurance. One of the respondents mentions that "I joined a women's self-help group where we learned how to save money together, and later I was able to take a small loan. Yes, my husband now asks my opinion on household expenses. I feel more involved. My confidence has grown because I earn my own money."

Barriers Hindering Financial Access

LimitedFinancialAutonomy

The study revealed that rural women face severe restrictions in managing their own finances due to gender norms. Many respondents expressed that male family members control household financial decisions, limiting women's ability to exercise financial independence. One of the respondents stated that "Though I earn some money but at the end I handover all the money in my husband hand." The findings indicate that financial autonomy for women is often perceived as a threat to traditional household structures, preventing them from making independent choices regarding savings, investments, and expenditures.

GenderDisparityinLoan Approval

Thestudyhighlightshowsystemicbiasesinfinancialinstitutionsdisadvantagewomenseeking credit. Respondents noted that banks often prioritize male clients because they own assets, making it easier for them to qualify for loans. These discriminatory practices reinforce male dominance in financial matters, denying women equal access to economic opportunities. Additionally, financial institutions often assumethat women lack financial knowledge, which discourages them from applying for loans in the first place. Addressing gender disparities in loan approval would require financial institutions to reassess their policies and introduce women-friendly lending mechanisms.

DocumentationChallenges

The study found that documentation requirements pose a significant barrier for rural women tryingtoaccessfinancialservices. Manyrespondents struggled to meet these requirements due to a lack of formal employment records or property ownership. Few respondents shared that, "Banksaskfordocuments Idon' talwayshave, likeproof of steady income. Since myearnings change every month, it's difficult. Loan terms are confusing. I tried applying once, but there were too many conditions, and I gave up". These illustrate how strict documentation rules prevent women from entering formal financial systems, reinforcing their exclusion from credit opportunities and savings mechanisms. Unfortunately, they have to rely on informal sectors like money lenders.

BankAccessibilityIssues

The study highlights how geographical distance and costly travelim pedewomen's access to financial services. Limited transportation options and high travel costs discouraging women

fromengaging with financial institutions. In this context respondent mention that "The closest bank is far away, and going their costs money". The long distance to banks makes it difficult for rural women to access financial services. Many live far from banking facilities, which means they have to spend time and money traveling just to manage their finances. This challenge limits their ability to open accounts, apply for loans, or learn about financial opportunities, making financial inclusion harder for them.

IrregularIncome Impact

The study highlights how unstable earnings prevent women from maintaining consistent savings or accessing credit or financial support. Irregular income patterns restrict women's ability to secure financial stability, leading to cycles of economic instability. One of the respondentsmentionsthat "Iworkasadomestichelperinnearbyhouseholds. Myearningsare verylow, and Idon' tfeelfinancially secure. Evenif Isave, sudden expenses like medical costs take everything away." Irregular income makes it harder for rural women to access financial services. Since their earnings are unpredictable, they struggle to save money, qualify for loans, or plan long-term financial goals. Banksoften requires table income to approve loans, making it difficult for women with seasonal or inconsistent work to get financial support. This limitation affects their ability to invest in businesses, secure their future, or gain financial independence.

CollateralChallenges

Collateral is a significant problem which limits women's financial access, as asset ownership is largely controlled by men. They often face challenges in accessing loans because lack collateral, such as landor property, which banks require assecurity for lending. Many women do not own assets due to inheritance laws, social norms, or financial limitations, making it difficult for them to qualify for formal credit. As a result, they often rely on informal money lenders, who charge high interest rates, leading to debt trap. Without access to proper financing, rural women struggle businesses, invest in farming, improve their to start or livelihoods, limiting their economic independence. In this context many respondents' mention that "Banks don't trust women who don't have land or a stable job."

Relianceon Husbands for Financial Decisions

The study highlights that many women remain financially dependent on their husbands, restricting their ability to make independent financial choices. Respondents shared that even

whentheyearnmoney, their husbands managehousehold finances, limiting their controlover personals aving sandspending. Financial dependency can arise due to limited financial literacy, lack of independent income, or traditional gender roles that place financial control in the hands of the husband. In many cases, women who are financially dependent they struggle to make independent financial decisions, affecting their ability to save, invest, or plan for the future. This dependence reduces women's ability to invest in their future and reinforces traditional gender roles in financial decision-making. One of respondent stated that "I have never dealt with money because my husband does all the financial work. I know money is a part of independence, but I have never been in charge of my own money. My husband handles the household budget, so I don't really deal with expenses."

LimitedFinancialEducation

The research found that a lack of financial education prevents women from confidently using banking services, savings accounts, and loans. Many respondents expressed difficulty understandingbankingprocedures due to insufficient financial literacyprograms in rural areas social norms and limited access to education also prevent many women from learning financial skills, leaving them dependent on others for money matters. Without structured education, women are unable to engage with formal financial institutions effectively, making financial independence harder to achieve. One of the respondents mentioned "Women in villages need local financial education centers where they can learn easily. If I could learn digital banking, I wouldn't have to depend on my husband to handle transactions."

FinancialScamsTargeting Women

Thestudyfoundthatscammerstakeadvantageofwomenwhodon'tfullyunderstandfinancial services. Some women were tricked into fake loan offers or false promises of financial help, causing them to lose money. One of the respondents shared that "Many women save their moneyinthepostoffice,butoneofamantakeadvantageofthem.Inmyvillage,onemantook all the money people gave him to deposit and ran away with it."

Opportunitiestoenhancewomen'sfinancialinclusion

ImprovingFinancialLiteracy

The study finds that women in rural areas often lack basic financial knowledge, which limits theirabilitytomanagetheirfinanceseffectively. Manyrespondents expressed a desire for

simple and structured training in banking, savings, and investment. In this context one of the respondentsstatedthat "Ineedtrainingsessionsonsavingmoneyandhowtoutilizemoneyon businesses. If we learn together, more women will be confident. "Financial literacy is a cornerstoneofwomen'sempowerment.Introducingfinancialeducationatthevillagelevelcan significantly enhance women's ability to save, invest, and access banking services independently. Training programs should focus on practical applications, such as how to use ATMs, mobile banking, and budgeting strategies.

EnhancingBankAccessibility

Theresearch findsthatdistancetobanksandlack ofguidanceatfinancialinstitutionsprevent women from fully utilizing banking services. Many respondents mention that "Banks are far away, making it hard for me to visit. "I am uncomfortable when visiting a bank since I don't know whom to request assistance from. Accessibility issues prevent many women from engaging in formal financial systems. Setting up decentralized banking centers like Customer Service Points (CSPs) and recruiting female bank officers can create a more welcoming environment for women. Mobile banking solutions can further bridge the accessibility gap by reducing travel needs.

SimplifyingLoanProcedures

Findings indicate that complicated loan procedures, documentation requirements, and lack of collateralhinderwomen'sabilitytosecurefinancialsupport. One of the respondent smentions that "Bankssometimes request documents that Idon't have, like property papers in myname, such as proof of income documents. "I find loan requirements complicated and don't understand the full process." Financial institutions should tail or loan products to meet women's needs, such as reducing bureaucratic hurdles and allowing alternative forms of income verification. Awareness campaigns on loan eligibility criteria and step-by-step guidance can empower women to access credit easily.

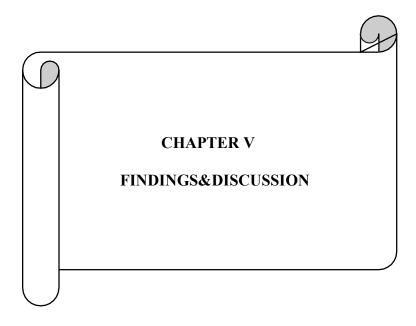
EncouragingWomen'sEntrepreneurship

The research finds that entrepreneurial activities have helped some women achieve financial independence, but limited access to capital remains a challenge for them. Government and private sect or initiative scanplay avital role in promoting women's

entrepreneurship by offering financial support, skill development programs, and networking opportunities. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and microfinanceprograms should beencouraged to provide small, easily accessible business loans to rural women.

AddressingSocialBarriers

The findings in dicate that traditional gender roles continue to shape financial decision-making in many households, limiting women's control over money matters. Few respondents stated that "Inourvillage, money matters are usually left to men. If a woman mentions money, others feels he is attempting to take the man's position". So, it's very important to Change perceptions through a wareness campaigns and success stories of financially independent women can help break traditional barriers. Encouraging joint financial decision-making in households and advocating for policies that recognize women's economic contributions can foster gender-inclusive financial participation.



Here, the study's most significant findings and discussion will be briefly highlighted. The findings reveal the challenges rural women face in accessing financial services, including limitedbankinginfrastructure,irregularincome,andsocietalconstraints. Thesebarriers affect their ability to secure loans, save money, and engage in formal financial systems, ultimately hindering their economic independence. This discussion aims to explore the complexities of financial inclusion for rural women, considering the impact of financial access on their economic stability, decision-making power, and long-term growth.

DemographicOverview

ThestudyconductedinNowboichaarea,locatedinLakhimpurDistrict,Assam,isaruralarea where most people rely on farming and small-scale industries for their livelihood. The study found out that major respondents belonged to the age between 30-50 years in Lechai Gaon, a village within Nowboicha. Their major occupations were into the category as household management, farming, vegetable vendor and community activities, but many face challenges in financial access and economic independence. The literacy level of the respondents were majorly confined to under-matriculate. The research aims to understand their struggles, opportunities, and how financial literacy programs can help them become self-sufficient and improve their lives.

FinancialInclusion: APathwayto Economic Empowerment

The study highlights how financial access plays a transformative role in women's economic independence. Women who secured small loans reported improvements in business productivity, betterinvestment in raw materials, and ahighercapacity for incomegeneration. Thesefinancial opportunities create help build lasting stability, allowing women to contribute meaningfully to their household expenses and economic growth.

However, while financial inclusion serves as a tool for empowerment, women still face systemic limitations, including assetownership restrictions, collateral-based lending, and rigid financial institutional policies. Addressing these barriers is essential for ensuring equitable access to financial resources.

BuildingFinancialConfidenceandHouseholdDecision-MakingPower

Oneofthemostnotablefindingsisthepsychologicalimpactoffinancialaccess. Womenwho opened bank accounts or engaged in financial transactions expressed increase sense of self-confidence. The ability to save independently and plan for household expenses without relying onmale family members which show financial autonomy. Women who manage their own

earnings gain decision-making power, influencing key household financial choices. However, financial independence remains a gradual process rather than an immediate result.

Manywomenstillstrugglewitheconomicinstabilityduetoirregularincomepatterns and limited access to credit. Additionally, patriarchalnorms continue to restrict women's financial authority within families, reinforcing traditional gender dynamics.

EntrepreneurshipandFinancialProgress

Entrepreneurshipprovideastrongpathtofinancialindependenceandself-reliance. The study demonstrates that women engaged in small businesses selling handmade goods, managing livestock, or running home-based shops reported greater financial stability. Access to small loans allowed them to improve their business, increase sales, and improve quality of life. Despite the progress in financial services, women entrepreneurs still face significant barriers that hinder their growth and access to essential resources. Manywomen lack collateral, credit history, or formal proof of income, making it difficult to secure structured financial support.

BarrierstoWomen'sFinancialIndependence

Whilefinancialaccessoffersmanybenefits, womenstill face obstacles that affect their ability to manage money effectively. The findings highlight several key obstacles:

DocumentationBarriers

Formalbankingandfinancialservicesoftendemandextensivedocumentationsuchasproperty papers, employment records, or government-issued IDs. Many women, especially those in informal labour sectors or rural areas, lack these documents due to social and economic barriers. This prevents them securing loans, or accessing financial programs designed to support economic independence.

TraditionalGenderNorms

Many societies have traditional expectations regarding women's role in financial matters. In somecases, women are expected to handover their earnings to male family members whether fathers, husbands reinforcing the idea that men should control household finances. This can prevent women from making independent financial decisions, investing in their ownneeds, or saving for future security.

BankingDiscrimination:

Financial institutions often favour male clients due to asset ownership disparities. In many regions, land and property ownership are predominantly in men's names, making it difficult forwomentoqualifyforloansorcredit. Since assets are commonly required as collateral,

women frequently struggle to access financial resources, limiting their ability to start businesses or make long-term investments.

FinancialLiteracy: The Missing assetin Women's Economic Empowerment

One of the most noticeable findings is the lack of financial literacy among women in that community. Many women struggle to understand banking procedures, loan processes, and digital financial tools, resulting in dependency on others for financial decisions financial illiteracy makes it difficult for women to develop strong saving habits, make informed investment decisions, and plan for their economic future.

A recurring theme from respondents was the desire for financial education programs. Many expressed a willingness to learn about banking, budgeting, and investment strategies if given structured guidance.

FinancialScamsandVulnerability

Many women fall victim to financial scams because they lack awareness about banking and safefinancial practices. Theyoften give their money to middle men, believing they will handle financial transactions or investments. However, these intermediaries sometimes disappear, taking all the money with them. Several people shared experiences of being tricked into fake deposit schemes or false financial promises, leading to significant financial losses.

BarriersinLoan Accessibility

Many women struggle to access structured credit due to rigid financial policies. Banks often prioritize individuals with stable jobs or property ownership, excluding women from formal financial systems. This exclusion forces them to relyon money lenders with high-interestrates, trapping them in cycles of debt. Which impact their quality of life.

Geographical distance-

Manywomenencounterfinancialbarrierswhentryingtoaccessbankingservices. Hightravel costs to distant financial institutions make banking unaffordable for those in rural areas. Additionally, hidden charges, minimum balancer equirements, and transaction fees discourage women from engaging with formal banking systems. These financial constraints, combined with a lack of guidance, result in low participation in banking services.

Securing the Future: Financial Stability

Havingabankaccountandasavingsplanprovideswomenwithacrucialsafetynet,ensuring preparedness for emergencies and financial uncertainties. Respondents expressed the transformative power of financial stability, which not only reduces economic stress but also enables long-term planning. Enhancing accessible savings programs and financial planning tools can further strengthen economic security and promote sustainable financial independence.

CreditReliance

The study reveals that rural women face significant financial exclusion, forcing them to rely on informal money lenders who charge high interest rates, leading to cycles of debt and financial instability. Limited access to formal banking services, credit opportunities, and financial literacy programs exacerbates their dependency on costly borrowing methods. This situation not only restricts their economicgrowth but also affects their overall entrepreneurial and social empowerment

LimitedAwarenessandBarrierstoAccessingGovernmentFinancial Schemes-

The study highlights that a significant number of women lack awareness about existing government financial schemes and benefits, resulting in limited access to formal financial resources. Manyrural women remain uninformed about loan programs, subsidies, and savings opportunities, preventing them from utilizing essential economic support. The absence of structured outreach and financial education efforts further exacerbates this issue, leading to continued dependence on informal money lenders with high-interest rate.

LackofGovernmentOutreachandMonitoringinFinancial Access

Thefindingsrevealthatlimitedgovernmentoutreachandinadequatemonitoringsignificantly hinder rural women's financial access. Despite various financial schemes designed for economic inclusion, many women remain unaware of these benefits due to the absence of active awareness campaigns. Additionally, the lack of effective monitoring results in inefficienciesinimplementation, wherefunds and resources often fail to reach inbeneficiaries. This gap forces women to rely on informal money lenders, subjecting them to high-interest debt cycles, further restricting their financial independence.

The study underscores the transformative role of financial inclusion in enhancing women's economic independence, entrepreneurship, and decision-making. Small loans help improve business productivity and financial stability, while banking access fosters confidence and autonomy. However, systemic barriers such as asset ownership restrictions, collateral-based lending, and gender biases continue to limit full participation. The lack of financial literacy further hinders effective money management and leaves women vulnerable to scams. Strengthening financial education, inclusive banking policies, and consumer protection measures is crucial for sustained empowerment.

DISCUSSION

Financial access is essential for rural women in Nowboicha (Lechai Gaon), Lakhimpur, as it enables them to manage their finances independently, invest in businesses, and improve their overall economic well-being. However, many women face serious challenges in accessing formalfinancialservices, mainlyduetolimitedbankingaccessibility, lackoffinancialliteracy, socio-cultural restrictions, and dependence on informal lending systems, hard documentation process. Peterson K. Ozil's "Financial Inclusion Theory" connects to the study by highlighted how limited banking access, financial literacygaps, socio-cultural restrictions, and dependence on informal lending affectrural women in that region. The research shows that women struggle with complex loan procedures and lack awareness of financial services, just as the theory suggests that institutional barriers prevent financial inclusion. The theory also states that better financial access leads to economic stability and empowerment, which aligns with the findings that women those women received loans improved their businesses, increased their income, and gained financial independence within their households.

The study found that rural women in that region struggle to access formal financial services duetolimitedbankinginfrastructure, relianceoninformallenders, financialliteracygaps, and societalrestrictions, geographical distance, strict documentation process, many women depend on moneylenders on high-interestrates and limited borrowing options make financial stability difficult. The research shows that basic financial access is a bigger challenge in that region. Financial decisions are often influenced by male family members, reducing women's financial independence. To improve financial inclusion, efforts such as better financial literacy programs, easier credit access, stronger SHG support, and gender-based banking policies are needed to helprural women gain financial stability and independence. As a positive aspect the study found that the research found that when rural women were able to access financial services like loans, they experienced positive economic and personal growth. Many women expanded their businesses, increased their income, and felt more financially secure. Some women even gained financial independence with in their households, no longer relying on their husbands formoney. This shows that better financial access can improve women's lives, giving them more control over their finances and opportunities for success.

In the context of literature review, it highlighted several key findings on financial inclusion challengesfacedbyruralwomengloballyandwithinAssam.Magesaetal.(2013)andKairiza etal.(2017) pointedoutthatwomenoftenface gender-relatedbarriers inaccessingcreditand

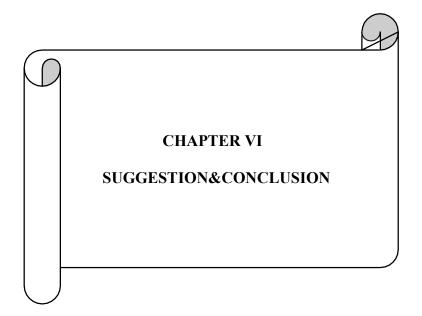
financialservices, which is similar to the situation in Nowboicha, where financial decisions are often influenced by male family members. Saikia (2016) analyzed SHG-bank linkages, showing how Self-Help Groups (SHGs) provide financial support where banks fail to reach women. This matches the findings that women in Nowboicharely informal money lenders and informal institutions, struggle with high interest rates and limited borrowing options.

Ghouse et al. (2017) discussed market expansion barriers for rural women entrepreneurs, but the study found that women in that are a primarily struggling within itial financial access rather—than expand their businesses. This difference highlights that financial inclusion efforts should focus on basic access to credit and financial education before addressing entrepreneurs hip development.

Another notable gap between the literature review and the study is the emphasis on digital financialinclusion. Deka(2024) and Hazarika et al. (2020) highlight digital barriers as a major is sue in financial access across Assam. While digital literacy is a concern, the research found that forwomen in Nowboicha, physical banking access remains an even bigger challenge, with many women relying on informal lenders due to the lack of local banking accessibility.

Goel&Madan(2019) discuss the integrating women into formal banking structures, the study shows that women in that region heavily relyonin formal lenders and microfinance in stitutions, which often take high-interest rates. Gogoi (2021) studied rural women entrepreneurs in Dibrugarh, Assam, showing how financial challenges and social expectations affect their business growth, but also high lighting government support helping them succeed. There search is similar in that it also finds financial barriers and gender restrictions, but it focuses more on women's struggle to access banking services before starting businesses. While Gogoi talks about business expansion, the study shows that many women in Nowboicha first need basic financial access. Another difference is that women in Nowboicha rely more on informal lenders, while Gogoi's study finds stronger formal financial support in Dibrugarh. Both studies show that financial inclusion, better banking access, and financial education are key to empowering rural women.

While literature provides a broad view of financial exclusion among rural women, the study provides ageneral viewpoint, identifying that the biggest obstacles in Nowboichaarebanking accessibility, socio-cultural restrictions, and informal financial dependency rather than just digital exclusion or business expansion limitations.



Based on the findings related to limited financial access in rural women, several recommendations emerge to enhance financial inclusion and economic opportunities for underserved populations.

Here are some practical solutions that can help rural women in Nowboicha (Lechai Gaon) improve financial access and economic opportunities:

- Mobile Banking & Local Banking Points: Provide banking services closer through
 mobile banking and set up CSP can reduce travel costs and make financial services
 accessible.
- **Financial Literacy Workshops**: Conduct workshops on basic saving, banking, and fraud prevention helps women manage money confidently.
- GovernmentProgram Awareness: Organizecommunityeventstoshareinformation about financial programs.
- **Support Women's Small Businesses**: Give grants and small loans to help women grow their businesses.

• NGOEffortstoImproveFinancial Inclusion

NGOscanworkwithgovernmentofficialsandcommunityleaderstoimprovefinancial access for rural women by advocating for simplified loan procedures, better banking accessibility, and mobile financial services. They can conduct awareness programs, organize community meetings, and create policies that remove barriers like complex documentation and limited banking access, ensuring women have equal opportunities to participate in the financial system.

 Women-Centric Banking Initiatives: Advocate for specialized financial products, such as low-collateral loans and flexible repayment schemes, tailored to the needs of rural women entrepreneurs

CONCLUSION

Financial inclusion is essential for empowering rural women, enabling them to build stable livelihoods and contribute to their communities. This study highlights the barriers they face limited banking infrastructure, societal constraints, and irregular income that hinder their financial independence. However, solutions like mobile banking, bank accessibility and financial literacy programs offer new opportunities for access and economic growth.

Government policies and institutional reforms play a crucial role in breaking these barriers. Expandingbankingnetworks, simplifying loan processes, and improving digital infrastructure can make financial services more accessible. Gender-focused initiatives supporting entrepreneurship and financial education are vital for long-term economic stability.

Whilechallengesremain, including limited financial awareness and data availability, continued research and targeted interventions can refine existing solutions. A collaborative approach involving policymakers, financial institutions, and community organizations is necessary to sustain progress.

Ultimately, financial inclusion is about more than just banking it's about giving women the tools to shape their economic futures and drive broader social change. With sustained effort, rural women can achieve financial independence and help build stronger, more resilient communities.

REFERENCE

- Adera, A., & Abdisa, L. T. (2023). Financial inclusion and women's economic empowerment: Evidence from Ethiopia. *Cogent Economics & Finance*, *II*(1), Article 2244864. https://doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2023.2244864
- Arshad,A.(2023).Nexusbetweenfinancialinclusionandwomenempowerment:
 Evidence from developing countries. *Gender in Management*, 38(4), 561–580.
 https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-04-2022-0125
- Baruah, I., Bora, M., & Baruah Deka, M. (2022). Problems faced by rural women in availing
 Bandhan microfinance in Tinsukia district of Assam. *Asian Journal of Agricultural Extension, Economics & Sociology*, 40(3), 85–91.
 https://doi.org/10.9734/ajaees/2022/v40i330863
- Deka,L.(2024).ReviewoffinancialinclusioninAssam.*InternationalJournalof Research and Review, 11*(8), 575-582. https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20240861
- Dutta, A. P. (2022). Status of financial inclusion among the rural communities of Assam. *International Journal of Novel Research and Development*, 7(11),158–165.
 <u>LJNRD(https://www.ijnrd.org/papers/IJNRD2211221.pdf)</u>
- Ergün, Z., Bayram, A. T., & Erkol Bayram, G. (2024). Challenges and opportunities in rural women 's entrepreneurship: Navigating financial, infrastructural, and societal barriers. In Empowering women through rural sustainable development and entrepreneurship (pp. 1-14). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387139462
- Ghouse, S. M., McElwee, G., Meaton, J., & Durrah, O. (2017). Barriers to rural womenentrepreneursinOman. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 23(6), 998–1016. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-02-2017-0070
- Goel,N.,&Madan,P.(2019).Benchmarkingfinancialinclusionforwomen entrepreneurship—AstudyofUttarakhandstateofIndia.*Benchmarking:An International Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-01-2018-0023
- Gogoi, J. (2021). Opportunities and challenges of rural women entrepreneurs: A case study in Dibrugarh District of Assam. *Northeast Journal of Contemporary Research*, 8(1), 29–38.
 - $\underline{https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en\&as_sdt=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+financial+access+among+rural+women+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+financial+access+among+rural+women+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+financial+access+among+rural+women+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+financial+access+among+rural+women+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+financial+access+among+rural+women+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+financial+access+among+rural+women+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=\#d=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&btnG=gs_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&q=challenges+and+opportunities+in+assam\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs\&t=0\%2C5\&tnAds_qabs$

1747992219494&u=%23p%3DmRWDVISWRAEJ

- Government of India. (n.d. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. Retrieved May 28, 2025, (https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/major_initiatives/pradhan-mantri-jan-dhan-yojana/.)
- Hazarika, P. K., et al. (2020). Status of financial inclusion among the rural communities of Assam. *International Journal of Novel Research and Development*.
 <u>IJNRD.https://www.ijnrd.org/papers/IJNRD2211221.pdfhttps://bing.com/search?q=Challenges+Opportunities+Women+Entrepreneurs+Odisha+DOI%3a10.62823%2fIJEMMASSS%2f6.4%28I%29.6946</u>
- Kairiza, T., Philemon, K., & Magadzire, V. (2017). Genderdifferences in financial inclusion amongst entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe. Small Business Economics, 48(1), 259–272. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-016-9773-2
- Kulkarni, L., & Ghosh, A. (2021). Gender disparity in the digitalization of financial services: Challenges and promises for women's financial inclusion in India. *Gender, Technology and Development*.
 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353080648 Gender disparity in the digitalization of financial services challenges and promises for women's financial inclusion in India
- Limbu, S., & Bordoloi, N. (2015). Women entrepreneurship: Problems and prospects inruralAssam.InternationalJournalofInterdisciplinaryResearchinScience,Society and Culture, 1(1), 117–125.
 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334224560 Women Entrepreneurship Problems and Prospects in Rural Assam
- Lusardi, A., & Tufano, P. (2015). Debt literacy, financial experiences, and over-indebtedness. *Management Science*, 61(3), 549-566. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282436829_Debt_Literacy_Financial_Experiences and Over Indebtedness
- Magesa, R., Shimba, C., & Magombola, D. (2013). Investigating impediments towardsaccesstofinancialservices by womenent repreneurs: Acase of Arumeru District. *Developing Country Studies*, 3(4), 99-105. Retrieved from https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/DCS/article/view/8176

- Nanda,S.(2024).Financialsocialisationandpromotionoffinancialinclusionamong womenself-helpgroup members:Ananalysis. *JournalofInformaticsEducationand Research*, 4(1), 646. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378696619
- Rao,C.S.,&Maiya,S.(2023).Astudyoffinancialinclusionschemesforrural women by the Indian government. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*. https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2301114.pdf
- Sadiq,M.S.,Singh,I.P.,Ahmad,M.M.,&Zakari,F.S.(2025).Impactofmobile money on the financial empowerment of rural women agripreneurs in Nigeria: A comprehensive review. https://doi.org/10.62801/JKJMR1.1
- Saha,P.(2024).ChallengesandopportunitiesforwomenentrepreneursinOdisha:A critical review. *International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science, 6*(4I),34
- Saikia,D.(2016).FinancialpositionofwomenSHGsofAssamunderSHG-bank linkage programme (SBLP). *Kalahari Journals*. https://kalaharijournals.com/resources/SP%20Jan Feb 70.pdf
- Sharizan,S.,Redzuan,N.,&Rosman,R.(2021).Issuesandchallengesoffinancial inclusionamonglow-incomeearnersinruralareasofMalaysia. *TurkishJournalof IslamicEconomics*,8(SpecialIssue),277–299.https://tujise.org/uploads/2024/07/5-SHARI%CC%87ZAN.pdf
- Tamboli, N.B. (2024). Financial literacy: Challenges and problems among rural women. *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Research*.
 https://ijaar.co.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/1104173.pdf
- Xhemali, S. (2025, April). Challenges and opportunities for women in rural areas of Albania through the digital economy. Paper presented at ICEBIT 2024 International Conference on Economy, Business, Innovation, and Technology.
 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391111074_Challenges_and_Opportunities_f
 or Women in Rural Areas of Albania through the Digital Economy

APPENDIX

I, Priyashri Dutta, a student of the Social Work Department at Mahapurusha Srimanta SankaradevaVishwavidyalaya,GuwahatiUnit,declarethatthisinterviewscheduleshallonly be used for fulfilling the objectives of my research project (dissertation) entitled "A Study on Women's Access to Financial Services in Rural Communities: Challenges and Opportunities in Nowboicha Area (Lechai Gaon), Lakhimpur, Assam" under the supervision of Ms. Dipshikha Baruah, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, MSSV, Guwahati Unit. I hereby assure you that the data collected will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. Therefore, I humbly request you to kindly provide me with your valuable responses to the set of questions given below.

PriyashriDutta MSW4th Semester RollNo-MSW23/2023 DepartmentofSocialWork MSSV,Guwahati,Unit

INTERVIEWSCHEDULEFORRESPONDENTS

Interview details:

- Name:
- Age:
- Permanentaddress:
- Presentaddress:
- Occupation:
- 1. Howhaveyouachievedfinancialstability? Howdoesfinancial independence help women?
- 2. Howhasaccesstofinancialserviceshelpedyoumanageyour budget?
- 3. Hasfinancialaccessgivenyounewopportunities,likeeducationor business?
- 4. Hasusingfinancialserviceschangedyour roleinfamilydecisions?
- 5. Hasfinancialaccessmadeyoumoreconfidentand independent? How?
- 6. Whatchallengeshaveyoufacedinusingfinancialservices?
- 7. Hasfinancialaccessimprovedyourlife? Ifyes,how?
- 8. Whatsupportwouldhelpimproveyourfinancial well-being
- 9. Haveyoufaced challengesinaccessingmoney? If yes, how?
- 10. Whatproblemsdoyoufacewhenusingbanksorloans?
- 11. Haveyoustruggledwith financialdocumentsor requirements?
- 12. Aretheresocialor culturalreasonslimitingyourfinancialaccess?
- 13. Dogenderbiasesaffectyourabilitytogetfinancialresources?
- 14. Doesdistancetobanksaffectyouraccesstofinancialservices?
- 15. Howdoesyourhouseholdorcommunityimpactyourfinancialchoices?
- 16. Howimportantisfinancialeducationinusingfinancialservices?
- 17. Whatsupportwouldmakefinancialaccesseasierforyou?
- 18. Areyoucomfortableaskingforfinancialadvice? Whathelpwouldbeuseful?
- 19. Whatstrategies canincreasewomen's access to financial services?
- 20. Howcanfinancialprogramsbemonitoredandimproved?
- 21. Howcandigitalskillshelpwomenusefinancialservicesbetter?
- 22. Howcanbanksreducegenderbiasinfinancialaccess?
- 23. Whatcanthegovernment dotohelp womenaccessfinancial services?
- 24. Whattrainingcanhelp womenmanagemoneyconfidently?
- 25. Howcan financialorganizationshelpwomenbecomefinanciallyindependent?