

A Study on Financial Literacy among Senior Secondary Students

Exploring the Implications and Benefits

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Abstract

This paper explores the importance of financial literacy for school students in India. With the ever-growing complexity of financial systems, it has become crucial for individuals to possess financial knowledge and skills to make informed decisions. However, the lack of financial education in schools often leads to poor financial management and decision-making, resulting in financial insecurity and debt. This paper highlights the study on financial literacy among senior secondary students, exploring the implications, and discussing the benefits and challenges of implementing such programmes. It also analyses the current state of financial literacy among school students in India and proposes recommendations for improving financial education. The paper concludes that providing financial education to school students is essential to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed financial decisions, ensuring their financial well-being and contributing to the growth of the Indian economy.

Keywords: *Financial literacy, school students, next generation, senior secondary*

INTRODUCTION

Financial literacy is the knowledge and skill required to make informed financial decisions. It is a critical life skill that helps individuals manage

their finances effectively, avoid debt and plan for the future (Dave Ramsey, 2013). In today's complex and ever-changing financial landscape, financial literacy is more important

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than ever before (Sconti, A., 2022). In India, financial literacy is an essential life skill but unfortunately, it is not widely taught in schools (Jayaraman, J. D. and Jambunathan, S., 2018). As a result, many young adults in India are not equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to manage their finances effectively. This lack of financial literacy can lead to debt, financial instability and limited opportunities for economic growth (Struckell, E. M., Patel, P. C., Ojha, D. and Oghazi, P. 2022). This paper will explore the need for financial literacy among school students in India, the challenges and opportunities for improving financial literacy, best practices and case studies for integrating financial literacy into the school curriculum, strategies for encouraging financial literacy beyond the classroom, practical tips and resources for empowering students to take control of their finances, overcoming barriers to financial literacy, and the role of financial literacy in building a stronger and more resilient India.

THE STATE OF FINANCIAL LITERACY IN INDIA—CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

India has a large population and lack of financial literacy among its citizens has been a persistent challenge (Arya, P., 2018). While the government has initiated several programmes to promote financial literacy, there is still a long way

to go. In this section, we will discuss the current state of financial literacy in India, the challenges faced in promoting financial literacy and the opportunities available to improve the situation. Greater financial literacy can also be an important component effort to increase saving rates and improve access to lending for the poorest and most vulnerable consumers. Singh (2020) commented that, we must not forget that growth is not the only measure of development. Our ultimate objective is to achieve broad-based improvement in the living standards of all our people.

Low Financial Literacy Rates

Despite India's growing economy, financial literacy rates in the country remain low. According to a 2019 survey by the National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM), only 24 per cent of Indian adults were financially literate. The lack of financial literacy among the general public is a major challenge, as it impedes the country's overall economic growth.

Limited Access to Financial Services

Many Indians do not have access to basic financial services, such as bank accounts and insurance. According to a 2020 report by the World Bank, only 67 per cent of Indian adults had a bank account. The lack of access to financial services hinders people's ability to manage their finances and build a secure financial future.

Language and Cultural Barriers

India has a diverse population with many different languages and cultures. This diversity presents a challenge for promoting financial literacy, as it can be difficult to develop programmes and materials that are accessible to all (Joshi, V., 2024). Financial education is not a mandatory part of the school curriculum in India, and many people do not receive any financial education or guidance (Yadav, M. and Banerji, P., 2023).

Despite these challenges, there are also opportunities to improve the financial literacy in India. For example, the government has initiated several programmes to promote financial literacy, such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), which aims to provide access to financial services to every Indian household. Additionally, there is a growing awareness of the importance of financial literacy, and many organisations are working to promote financial education and awareness (Joshi, V., 2024). With sustained effort, it is possible to improve the state of financial literacy in India and empower citizens to make informed financial decisions.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are—

1. To assess the current level of financial literacy among school students.
2. To identify knowledge gaps and misconceptions in financial literacy.

3. To explore factors influencing financial literacy among school students.
4. To develop recommendations for improvement in financial literacy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study involves a mixed-method approach. Quantitative data was collected through structured questioner to assess students' knowledge and understanding of financial concepts. Qualitative method like interviews explored their attitudes and perceptions towards financial matters, providing a comprehensive analysis of their financial literacy levels. Data was collected with the help of standardised questionnaire, from Grades 11 and 12 students of Demonstration Multipurpose School, Bhopal. Stratified Random Sampling Method was applied and samples were collected from 30 students.

Results and Analysis

The data obtained from the study is presented below under five sections.

Section 1: Personal Finance

Personal finance refers to managing money, budgeting, saving, investing and planning for financial goals. It involves making informed decisions to achieve financial security and build wealth for a better future. The data obtained in the present study is given as:

Table 1.1: Importance of budgeting in personal finance

	Frequency	Percentage
Helps in managing expenses and savings	28	94
Not important	1	3
Uncertain	1	3
Total	30	100

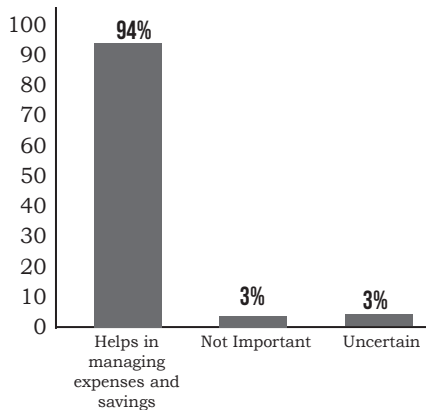


Fig. 1.1: Importance of budgeting in personal finance

The above graph shows the importance of budgeting in personal finance. The 94 per cent students help in managing expenses and savings. The 3 per cent students consider that there is no need to manage expenses and savings. The 3 per cent students were not aware and uncertain about the personal finance and its management. Most students are able to manage their expenses and savings because they receive pocket money from their parents and can save some amount from it.

Table 1.2: Concept of income

	Frequency	Percentage
Money earned from a job or other sources	29	97
Not sure	0	0
Something related to taxes	1	3
Total	30	100

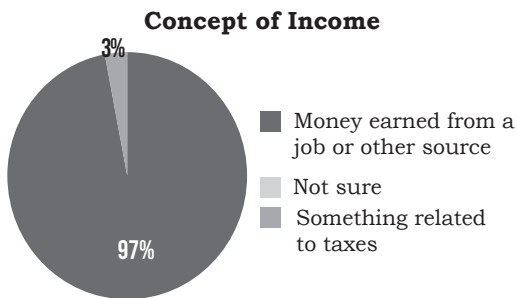


Fig. 1.2: Concept of income

The above chart shows how students are understanding the concept of income. The 97 per cent students consider income as a source of money which is earned from a job or other means. Students consider this as a source because they see their parents working and from them, they can understand their financial position and accordingly, they live their livelihood. The 3 per cent students consider it to be related to taxes because the government's primary source of income is taxes and it pays salaries to its employees from these funds. It is positive to see that students are aware of the term 'Income'.

Table 1.3: Purpose of saving money

	Frequency	Percentage
To meet future financial goals	27	91
No specific purpose	1	3
Not sure	2	6
Total	30	100

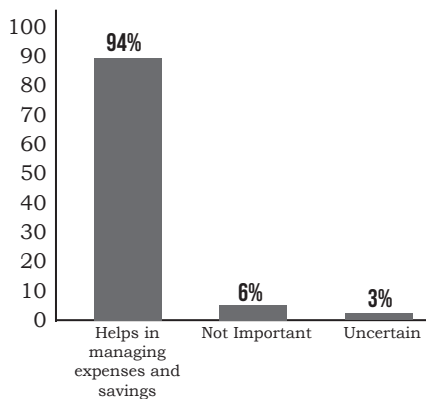


Fig. 1.3: Purpose of saving money

The above graph specifies the purpose of saving money or why savings are important. The 91 per cent students are of the opinion that to meet future financial goals, savings are essential. Since we cannot predict the future, a contingent fund must be maintained, so that money is available when needed. The 3 per cent students show that there is no point in saving money because their family earning is less and cannot spend more, so they are of this opinion. The 6 per cent students were not sure whether to save money or not because they were not aware about the concept of money multiplier. They could start saving

and investing their money so that its money increases over time.

Section 2: Banking and Accounts

Banking and accounts are integral to financial management. Banks offer variety of services, including savings and checking accounts, loans and investment options. Accounts facilitate transactions, tracking income, expenses, and aiding in financial planning and analysis. The data obtained in the present study is detailed below.

Table 2.1: Function of a bank

	Frequency	Percentage
To keep money safe and offer financial services	16	54
Not sure	2	6
To lend money to individuals	12	40
Total	30	100



Fig. 2.1: Function of a bank

The above chart shows the functions of a bank. The 54 per cent students consider bank as an institution where money is kept. In Grade IX, students study about banks and their functions. 6 per cent students were not sure about what banks do or how money is managed in banks, as they had no practical exposure and were unaware how banks operates provide interest and other benefits, and manage their employees' salaries. The 40 per cent students consider it as an institution which lends money. They think that bank provides only loans to people, whenever they need money, the bank will give loans to them. Maximum students did not have bank accounts because they felt that, since they are not earning, there is no need to open a bank account.

Table 2.2: Difference between a checking account and a savings account

	Frequency	Percentage
Checking account is used for day-to-day transactions, while savings account is for long-term savings	20	67
Not sure	4	13
They serve the same purpose	6	20
Total	30	100

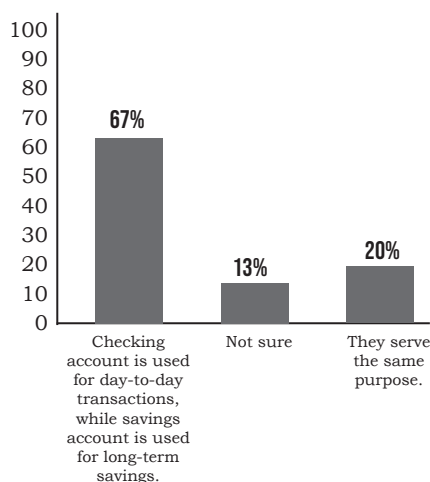


Fig. 2.2: Difference between a checking account and a savings account

The above graph shows the difference between a checking account and savings account. The 67 per cent students consider checking account is used for day-to-day transactions, while savings account is for long-term savings. The 13 per cent students were not sure. The 20 per cent students consider checking account and savings account as they are same. There was lack of awareness among students as they were not aware about the concept of checking account and savings account. Few students were even not aware about the types of accounts, and about private and public sector banks.

The Table 2.3 shows the concept of interest on loan or deposit, and students' understanding of the concept of interest on loan. The 14 per cent students consider that additional money is earned or paid

for borrowing or lending money. The 83 per cent students were not sure and were not aware about the interest on loan or deposit. Due to lack of awareness, students were not able to recognise how the interest rate is determined and they were not aware how interest is charged. The 3 per cent students believed that money is deducted by the bank as fee. But they were not aware that, if they withdraw the amount more than their savings, the interest is being charged. This shows lack of awareness among the students related to the interest on loan.

Table 2.3: Interest on a loan or deposit

	Frequency	Percentage
Additional money earned or paid for borrowing or lending money	4	14
Not sure	25	83
Money deducted by the bank as a fee	1	3
Total	30	100

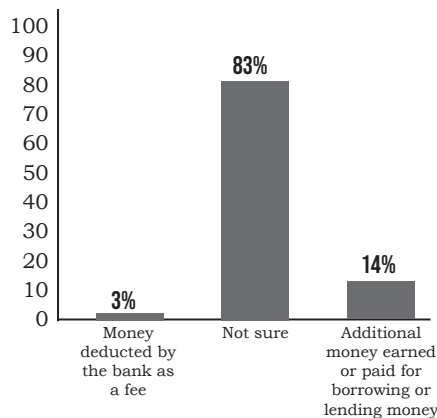


Fig. 2.3: Interest on a loan or deposit

Section 3: Credit and Debt

Credit allows you to borrow money or access goods and services with the promise to repay later, while debt is the amount owed to creditors resulting from borrowing or unpaid bills. The data obtained in the present study is detailed below.

Table 3.1: Meaning of having a good credit

	Frequency	Percentage
Paying bills on time and managing debts responsibly	5	16
Not sure	21	70
Having a high income	4	14
Total	30	100

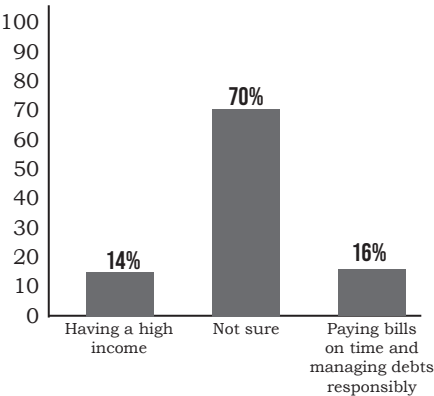


Fig. 3.1: Meaning of having a good credit

The above graph shows the meaning of good credit. The 14 per cent students associate it with a high income, considering it as good credit. For students, income means the money which is earned from

salary or business. The 70 per cent students were not sure about the concept of credit. Maximum students heard this term for the first time as they were not aware of the concept. The 16 per cent students believed that good credit involves paying bills on time and managing debts responsibly. Actually, students were not aware of credit score, rating agencies and the need for credit score, where they can use it and the benefits they can have if they have good credit.

Table 3.2: Consequences of making only the minimum payment on a credit card

	Frequency	Percentage
It can lead to paying more interest over time	20	66
Not sure	5	17
No consequences	5	17
Total	30	100

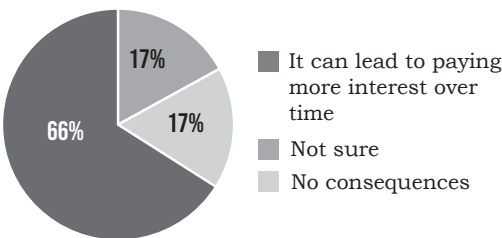


Fig. 3.2: Consequences of making only the minimum payment on a credit card

The above chart shows the consequences of making only the minimum payment on a credit card. The 66 per cent students consider it can lead to paying more interest over time. The 17 per cent students were

not sure of the concept. The students were not aware about the difference between credit card and debit card. The 17 per cent students say that there are no consequences as they are not aware about the concept. Maximum students were not using cards as they were not having bank accounts. They were even not aware about the card system, how a card works and the amount of charges that are charged for using a card or the interest that should be paid if excess amount is withdrawn from a bank account.

Table 3.3: Purpose of a credit score

	Frequency	Percentage
To assess an individual's creditworthiness	10	34
Not sure	18	60
To determine the income level	2	6
Total	30	100

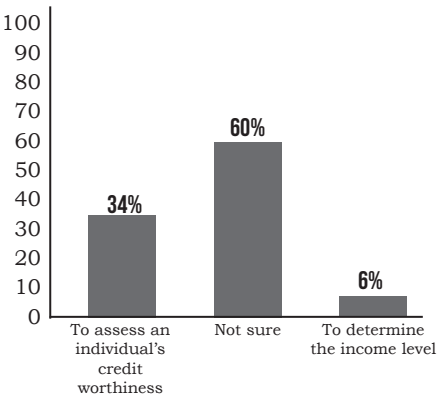


Fig. 3.3: Purpose of a credit score

The above graph shows the importance of credit score. The 34 per cent students are of the

opinion that to assess an individual's credit worthiness, credit score is used. Students especially of commerce background, were of this opinion. The 60 per cent students were not sure about the concept. They consider it as the normal score given by a bank. The 6 per cent students believed that credit score is used to determine the income level. A score card is essential to have good credibility while applying for a loan.

Section 4: Investments

Investments involve allocating funds with the aim of generating returns or profits over time. They come in various forms, such as stocks, bonds, real estate and mutual funds, essential for building wealth. The data collected in the present study is detailed below.

Table 4.1: Definition of an investment

	Frequency	Percentage
Allocating money to gain returns or generate income over time	12	40
Not sure	15	50
Buying expensive items	3	10
Total	30	100

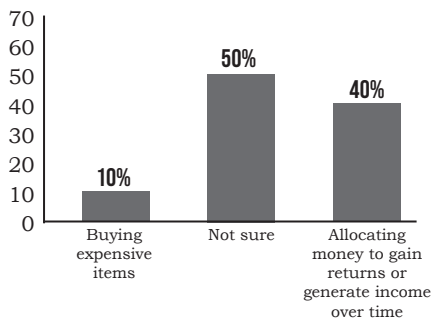


Fig. 4.1: Definition of an investment

The above graph shows the definition of investment. The 40 per cent students consider it as allocating money to gain returns or generate income over time. The 50 per cent students were unsure of the concept of investment, as they thought it only involves investing money to grow their wealth. Maximum students consider investment is done only on land. The 10 per cent consider buying expensive items is called as investment. However, students were not clear what investment is and in which sectors it can be done. Investment is not only about buying things but also about managing them, so that their price gets increased in future.

Table 4.2: Relationship between risk and return in investing

	Frequency	Percentage
Higher risk generally leads to the potential for higher returns	10	34
Not sure	18	60
Risk and return are not related	2	6
Total	30	100

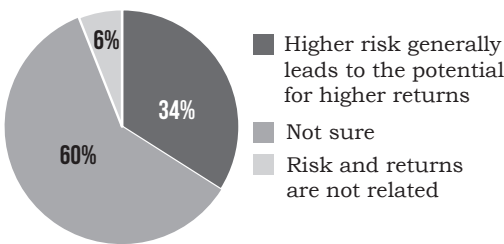


Fig. 4.2: Relationship between risk and return in investing

The above graph shows the relationship between risk and return

in investing. The 34 per cent higher risk generally leads to the potential for higher returns. As the saying goes, the higher the risk you take, the greater the potential for profit; the lower the risk, the smaller the potential profit. The 60 per cent students were not sure of the concept of risk and return. They did not clearly understand what these terms mean. The 6 per cent students consider that risk and return are not related as they are not clear about the concept. They were amazed to know that there is a relationship between risk and return.

Table 4.3: Diversified investment portfolio

	Frequency	Percentage
Spreading investments across different asset classes to reduce risk	20	66
Not sure	5	17
Investing all money in a single asset	5	17
Total	30	100

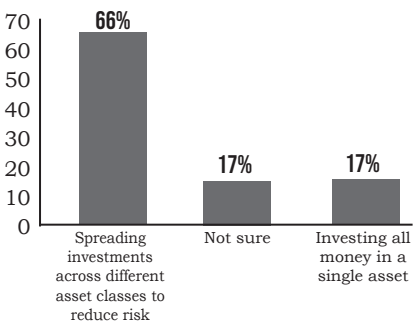


Fig. 4.3: Diversified investment portfolio

The above graph shows diversified investment portfolio. The 66 per cent

students consider an investment portfolio as spreading investments across different asset classes to reduce the risk of investment. The 17 per cent students were not sure about the concept and did not clearly understand its meaning. The 17 per cent students consider an investment portfolio as investing all money in a single asset. As they have heard the term in their Economics subject, so they link it with a single asset.

Section 5: Consumer Awareness

Consumer awareness is the understanding and knowledge consumers have about their rights, responsibilities and the products or services they purchase. It empowers informed decision-making, promotes fair practices and protects against scams. The data obtained in the present study is detailed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Purpose of comparing prices before making a purchase

	Frequency	Percentage
To find the best value for money	10	34
Not sure	18	60
Wasting time	2	6
Total	30	100

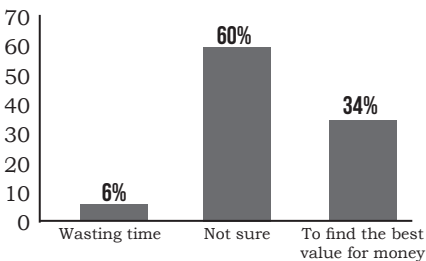


Fig. 5.1: Purpose of comparing prices before making a purchase

The above graph shows the purpose of comparing prices before making a purchase. The 34 per cent students find the best value for money before purchasing. The 60 per cent students were unsure whether they should compare products or not, they just made purchases before making comparisons. The 6 per cent students considered it a waste of time to compare prices before making a purchase as they felt that doing so would waste their valuable time and prevent them from focusing on other areas.

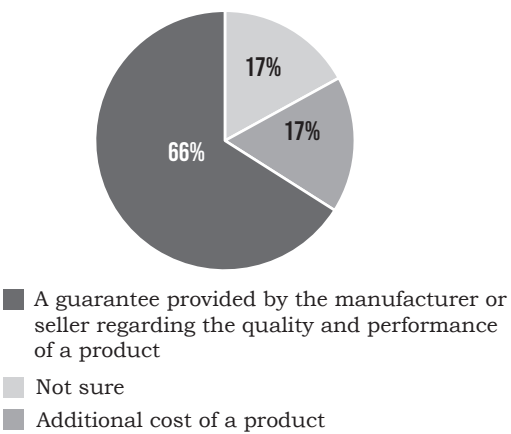


Fig. 5.2: Meaning of warranty as per students

The above graph shows how students understand the concept of warranty. The 66 per cent student consider warranty as a guarantee provided by the manufacturer or seller regarding the quality and performance of a product. As many students were not aware about the difference between warranty and guarantee, 17 per cent students were unsure and did not know the meaning of the term ‘warranty’. They were asking about the use and importance of warranty. Another 17 per cent students considered it as an additional cost imposed on a product. They thought that the warranty price

is included in the total price but they were not aware about the importance of warranty provided with a product.

Table 5.2: Meaning of warranty as per students

	Frequency	Percentage
A guarantee provided by the manufacturer or seller regarding the quality and performance of a product	20	66
Not sure	5	17
Additional cost of a product	5	17
Total	30	100

Table 5.3: Meaning of a responsible consumer

	Frequency	Percentage
Making informed choices and considering the impact of purchases	26	88
Not sure	2	6
Buying whatever is available	2	6
Total	30	100

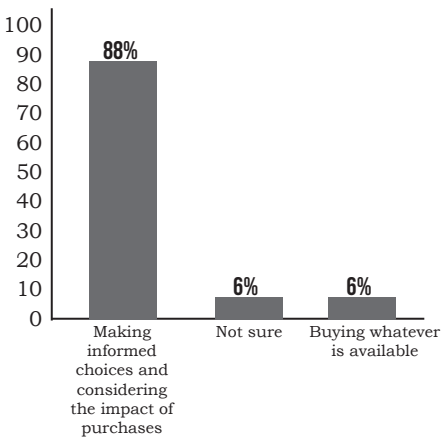


Fig. 5.3: Meaning of a responsible consumer

The above graph shows what students understand about the concept of responsible consumer. The 88 per cent students consider a responsible consumer is someone, who makes informed choices and considers the impact of their purchases. The 6 per cent students were not sure about the meaning of responsible consumer. Another The 6 per cent students consider that a consumer is a person who buys commodities available in the market. They consider that a consumer is someone, who purchases commodities from the market, and think of the consumer and the responsible consumer as the same.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of total 15 questions to measure financial literacy found that out of 30 respondents, on an average, 95 per cent respondents answered correctly. The minimum score was 20 per cent, while the maximum score was 98 per cent. To measure the financial literacy level of respondents, the total score of the respondents was calculated as the percentage of correct answers. The survey responses from each respondent were used to calculate the percentage of correct scores for the entire survey. The questions were asked on the basis of five sections.

Section 1: Discourses Concerning Personal Finance

Questions were asked and conclusion was drawn that students were not aware about the importance of budgeting in personal finance. Maximum students were not clear about the concept of income. Students

were not clear why they should save money or about the agenda behind saving money.

Section 2: Discourses Concerning Banking and Accounts

Maximum students could not differentiate between a savings account and checking account. For many topics associated with banking terms like interest on loans and deposits, students were only guessing.

Section 3: Discourses on Credit and Debt

Questions were asked and conclusion was drawn that students were confused what a good credit is, consequences of making only the minimum payment on a credit card and the purpose of credit score. All these concepts were new to them. Many students were hearing about these terms for the first time.

Section 4: Discourses on Investment

Questions were asked and it was concluded that students had limited understanding about the concept of investment, investment portfolios, and the relationship between risk and return. Students were asking about the process of investing and the importance of investment. This clearly shows that the students were not clear about investment.

Section 5: Discourses About Consumer Awareness

To check the awareness about financial literacy among students,

questions were asked whether they compare prices before making a purchase, so it was found that maximum students do not compare prices before the purchase. They just buy the product and don't feel the need to compare prices. Next, was asked whether the students were aware of or had heard the term 'warranty'. Students were not able to understand what actually warranty means. They do not behave as responsible consumers as they neither purchase products thoughtfully, nor are aware of proper purchasing practices.

MISCONCEPTIONS AND GAPS IDENTIFIED AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REGARDING FINANCIAL LITERACY

High school students often face misconceptions and gaps in financial literacy, including confusion about basic concepts like savings, investments and loans, and a lack of understanding of budgeting and compound interest. Many view all debt negatively, underestimate the importance of taxes and equate stock investments with gambling. Overconfidence in using digital payment systems often masks gaps in broader financial principles, while inadequate knowledge of financial risks, such as insurance and emergency funds, remains prevalent. Students also lack awareness about cybersecurity risks in digital transactions and tend to focus on short-term financial needs, neglecting long-term planning for a goal like retirement.

INTEGRATING FINANCIAL LITERACY INTO THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: BEST PRACTICES AND CASE STUDIES

Integrating financial literacy into the school curriculum is crucial to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed financial decisions in their personal and professional lives. The best practices for integrating financial literacy into the school curriculum include incorporating financial education into existing subjects, such as math, social studies, language and arts, as well as for developing standalone courses or modules. One successful case study is the National Stock Exchange (NSE) Academy's Financial Literacy Programme (NSE Academy Ltd., 2024) since 1992, which provides financial education to students from Grades 6 to 12 through a series of interactive online modules. The programme covers a wide range of financial topics, including saving and investing, banking, insurance and taxes, and is aligned with the Indian education system.

Another successful case study is the Financial Education Initiative Programme by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI, 2024) since 2013, which aims to provide financial education to students in rural and remote areas of India. The programme includes a series of games, quizzes and interactive activities that make learning about finance fun and engaging for students. These programmes were evaluated and found to be more effective and successful (Kossev, K., 2020).

Incorporating financial literacy into the secondary school curriculum involves embedding age-appropriate modules across subjects like Mathematics (for example, budgeting and interest calculations) and Social Studies (for example, economic policies).

Use engaging methods, such as simulations, projects and real-life scenarios to make learning interactive and practical. Train teachers with professional development programmes and provide resources in collaboration with financial institutions. Encourage parental involvement through workshops and shared resources to reinforce lessons at home. By incorporating best practices and case studies in school curriculum, schools can effectively equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve financial literacy and success in the future.

STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING FINANCIAL LITERACY BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMMES AND PARTNERSHIPS

While incorporating financial literacy education into the school curriculum is important, it also extends beyond the classroom through community outreach programmes and partnerships. These initiatives can provide real-world experiences and opportunities for students to apply what they have learned in the classroom. One effective strategy is to partner with local banks, credit unions or other financial

institutions to offer workshops and seminars on financial topics, such as budgeting, saving and investing. These institutions can also provide students with access to financial products and services, such as savings accounts or debit cards, that can help them build a strong financial foundation. Community organisations, such as non-profits or local government agencies, can also play a role in promoting financial literacy among school students. These organisations can offer workshops, seminars or other events that focus on financial topics relevant to the community. For example, a non-profit organisation focused on affordable housing may offer a workshop on the importance of budgeting and saving for a down payment. Engaging parents and families is another important aspect of promoting financial literacy beyond the classroom. Schools can offer workshops for parents on financial topics and provide resources, such as financial planning guides or budgeting worksheets that families can use at home. Community outreach programmes and partnerships can help reinforce the importance of financial literacy, and provide students with practical skills and knowledge that can benefit them throughout their lives.

EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR FINANCES: PRACTICAL TIPS AND RESOURCES

Empowering students to take control of their finances is crucial in helping

them become financially responsible and secure adults. One way to achieve this is by providing practical tips and resources that can help students develop good financial habits. These tips could include setting financial goals, creating a budget, tracking expenses and developing saving habits. Students should also be encouraged to understand the basics of investing and how to make informed financial decisions. In addition to tips, providing students with access to relevant financial resources can be incredibly valuable. Online financial calculators, interactive budgeting tools and informative articles on personal finance can help students build their financial literacy and confidence. Additionally, partnering with local financial institutions to offer workshops and seminars on financial management can help students gain practical knowledge and skills. Ultimately, empowering students to take control of their finances requires a comprehensive approach that involves the school, community and family. Teachers can play an important role in integrating financial literacy into the curriculum and guiding students through the process of financial decision-making. Families can also encourage financial responsibility by modelling good financial habits and engaging in open conversations about money. By working together, we can ensure that every student has the tools and knowledge they need to become financially independent and successful.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO FINANCIAL LITERACY: ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Financial literacy is an important life skill that can empower individuals to make informed decisions about their personal finances. Additionally, there is a general lack of awareness and understanding about financial products and services, making it challenging for individuals to make informed decisions about financial matters. To address these barriers, it is essential to take a multi-faceted approach. This includes providing financial education resources that are accessible and relevant to different socio-economic backgrounds. It is also important to promote financial education through community outreach programmes and partnerships with non-governmental organisations and financial institutions. Moreover, addressing cultural barriers requires a change in societal attitudes towards money and financial literacy. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, workshops and initiatives that encourage open dialogue on financial matters. By overcoming these barriers and promoting financial literacy, we can help students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to make sound financial decisions, and achieve greater financial stability and security.

CONCLUSION

Financial literacy plays a crucial role in building a stronger and

more resilient India. By providing school students with the knowledge and skills to manage their finances effectively, we can foster a generation of financially responsible citizens who are better prepared to face the challenges of the future. Integrating financial literacy into the school curriculum and providing students with practical tips and resources are important steps in this direction. However, it is equally important to address the socio-economic and

cultural factors that may hinder financial literacy, and to ensure that all students have access to education and resources they need. By working together, educators, policymakers and community leaders can empower young people to take charge of their financial futures, and help build a more prosperous and equitable society. Ultimately, investing in financial literacy today is an investment in India's future.

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