European Economic Letters
ISSN 2323-5233
Vol 15, Issue 3 (2025)
http://eelet.org.uk

Understanding Barriers and Behavioural Determinants of Financial Inclusion: Evidence from Empirical Investigation

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Abstract
Financial inclusion is vital for inclusive economic development in India; yet, behavioural, structural, and digital barriers persist, particularly in Haryana, where significant rural–urban disparities remain. This study examines the barriers, drivers, and behavioural determinants of financial inclusion using primary data from 380 households across 12 districts, selected through a multistage sampling process. The structured questionnaire assessed financial literacy, trust, digital readiness, perceived usefulness, perceived risk, attitudes toward digital finance, and social influence. Data were analyzed using Exploratory Factor Analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling. Findings show that financial literacy, trust, digital readiness, and perceived usefulness significantly enhance inclusion behaviour, whereas perceived risk, documentation challenges, and low digital capability impede participation. Rural households face notably higher behavioural and structural constraints than urban households. The model explains 62.4% of the variance in inclusion behaviour, highlighting the central role of behavioural factors and suggesting targeted policy interventions for Haryana.

Keywords: Financial Inclusion, Behavioural Determinants, Barriers, Digital Finance, Haryana,

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1. Introduction

Financial inclusion is widely recognized as a core component of equitable economic development, enabling individuals and households to participate in formal financial systems through access to savings, credit, payments, insurance, and digital services (World Bank, 2022). Evidence from developing economies suggests that improved inclusion enhances household welfare, reduces vulnerability to economic shocks, and promotes productive investment (Burgess & Pande, 2005; Allen et al., 2016). In India, the financial inclusion landscape has undergone a significant transformation over the past decade. The launch of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in 2014 marked a major expansion in basic banking access, while complementary initiatives, such as Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Aadhaar-enabled payment services, the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), and the rapid adoption of digital payments via UPI, have substantially reshaped the financial ecosystem (Government of India, 2021; Mehrotra & Nair, 2021).

Despite these advancements, the national challenge has shifted from access to "usage" and the quality of engagement (Ghosh, 2012). Haryana illustrates this tension clearly. Although the state is economically advanced, financial inclusion outcomes vary widely across districts. Urban-industrial regions, such as Gurugram and Faridabad, exhibit high digital adoption, whereas rural-agrarian districts, including Nuh, Sirsa, and Jind, continue to lag (Ranga & Rani, 2023). Existing studies on Haryana rely predominantly on secondary indicators, offering a limited understanding of the behavioural, cognitive, and structural factors that shape individual participation.

Emerging literature emphasizes that financial inclusion is increasingly influenced by behavioural determinants such as financial literacy, trust in institutions, digital confidence, perceived usefulness, perceived risk, and social influence, rather than by access alone (Sarma & Pais, 2011; Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Behavioural economics further suggests that distrust of institutions, cognitive overload, inertia, and risk aversion may deter individuals from using financial services even when they are available (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). Structural barriers, including documentation difficulties, poor digital connectivity, and limited awareness of government schemes, continue to hinder participation, particularly among rural households, women, and elderly populations (Mandal & Pal, 2018; Kamath, 2015).

Given these gaps, the present study investigates behavioural and structural determinants of financial inclusion in Haryana using primary survey data from 480 households across 12 districts. Unlike prior studies that rely primarily on macro-level secondary data, this research employs a multidimensional behavioural framework integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1989), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1991), and financial capability theory. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study offers a comprehensive empirical assessment of behavioural drivers, psychological barriers, and structural constraints influencing financial inclusion behaviour.

The contributions are threefold. First, the study provides Haryana's first primary-data-based behavioural model of financial inclusion. Second, it identifies key behavioural drivers and inhibitors, generating practical insights for policymakers and financial institutions. Third, it

offers a validated measurement and analytical framework that can be applied in future state-level research across India. These insights are particularly relevant for banks, fintech providers, microfinance institutions, and government agencies seeking to deepen financial inclusion by addressing behavioural and capability-related barriers, rather than focusing solely on infrastructural expansion.

2. Literature Review

Financial inclusion has progressively evolved from a narrow focus on physical access to banking services toward a multidimensional framework encompassing economic, technological, behavioural, and social dimensions (Claessens, 2006; Beck et al., 2007). Early research emphasized infrastructural elements such as branch density, ATM networks, and credit availability (Beck et al., 2007; Burgess & Pande, 2005), while global evidence from the World Bank (2022) highlighted the role of financial access in promoting resilience and welfare. In India, transformative policy interventions, including PMJDY, DBT, Aadhaar-enabled services, and UPI, have significantly expanded access (Government of India, 2021; Mehrotra & Nair, 2021), although several scholars note that enhanced access has not proportionately translated into usage or financial capability (Ghosh, 2012; Sarma & Pais, 2011). Haryana reflects this national trend: economically advanced yet characterized by sharp district-level disparities in digital adoption and financial engagement (Ranga & Rani, 2023).

Despite infrastructure expansion, various structural and behavioural barriers continue to restrict inclusion. Structural constraints, including documentation challenges, poor connectivity, and cost-related barriers, disproportionately affect rural and low-income populations (Mandal & Pal, 2018; Kamath, 2015). Behaviourally, low financial literacy, risk perception, distrust in institutions, and digital anxiety remain significant deterrents (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014; Cole et al., 2011). Behavioural economics suggests that cognitive overload, inertia, and scarcity-induced biases further suppress uptake of formal finance despite availability (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). Gendered constraints, such as mobility restrictions and limited financial autonomy, compound these barriers for women (Agarwal et al., 2021; IFC, 2019), while social hierarchies influence financial norms and choices (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011).

At the same time, key behavioural drivers have been identified as central to deepening financial inclusion. Policy-led drivers, such as PMJDY, DBT, PMMY, and AEPS, have fostered account ownership and transaction activity (NITI Aayog, 2020; Odeyale & Modinat, 2020). Digital finance, enabled through UPI, mobile banking and fintech platforms, has lowered transaction costs and expanded participation, although its benefits depend heavily on digital readiness and user confidence (Kapoor, 2022; Park & Mercado, 2018). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) highlights perceived usefulness and ease of use as core predictors of digital finance adoption (Davis, 1989), while the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) emphasizes attitudes, social norms and perceived control. Empirical studies confirm that financial literacy, trust, perceived usefulness, self-efficacy, and social influence significantly shape inclusion behaviour in both digital and traditional financial contexts (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Chawla & Joshi, 2018; Tan & Teo, 2000).

The existing literature on financial inclusion reveals several important gaps that this study seeks to address. First, research on Haryana remains predominantly secondary data-driven, with limited attention to behavioural, cognitive, and psychological determinants that shape individual

financial decisions. Second, prior studies often analyze structural and behavioural barriers separately, despite evidence that real-world financial inclusion emerges from the interaction of literacy, trust, digital capability, access constraints, and social norms. Third, there is a notable absence of rural–urban comparative behavioural analyses, even though Haryana exhibits pronounced district-level disparities in digital adoption and financial engagement. To bridge these gaps, the present study develops a comprehensive behavioural model grounded in primary data to capture multidimensional determinants of financial inclusion.

4. Theoretical Framework, Conceptual Model, and Hypotheses Development

Financial inclusion behaviour is shaped by the dynamic interaction of structural access, individual capability, psychological perceptions, and social influences. As India transitions from access-focused policies such as PMJDY and DBT to digital and behavioural forms of inclusion, supply-side explanations alone can no longer account for why individuals adopt or avoid formal financial services. To address this complexity, the present study adopts an integrated theoretical lens combining the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Financial Capability Theory, supported by insights from behavioural economics. TAM (Davis, 1989) emphasizes Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use as central determinants of technology adoption, offering a robust explanation for variations in digital finance uptake across Haryana's diverse districts. TPB (Ajzen, 1991) highlights the roles of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, recognizing that financial decisions in India are deeply embedded within social networks, peer recommendations, and confidence in one's ability to use digital tools. Together, these frameworks underscore that financial inclusion is contingent not only on access but also on the cognitive evaluations, skill levels, attitudes, and social cues that shape behavioural intention and usage.

Complementing these models, Financial Capability Theory positions literacy, digital readiness, and self-efficacy as essential preconditions for meaningful financial participation, a perspective especially relevant in Haryana's rural districts where capability gaps persist despite improved access. Behavioural economics further enriches the framework by acknowledging that individuals often deviate from rational decision-making due to cognitive biases such as loss aversion, status quo bias, and attentional limits. These biases, alongside fears of fraud, uncertainty about digital transactions, and mistrust of institutions, elevate perceived risk and deter adoption even when services are available. Incorporating insights from these four perspectives allows the study to conceptualize financial inclusion behaviour as a multidimensional outcome shaped by structural constraints, behavioural capability, psychological perception, and socio-cultural influence, providing a comprehensive foundation for the empirical model developed in this research.

4.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual model developed in this study synthesizes insights from technology adoption, behavioural intention, financial capability, and behavioural economics to explain financial inclusion behaviour in Haryana. Drawing from the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), the model incorporates perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key predictors of individuals' willingness to adopt digital and formal financial services. Consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), attitudes, social influence, and self-efficacy are

European Economic Letters
ISSN 2323-5233
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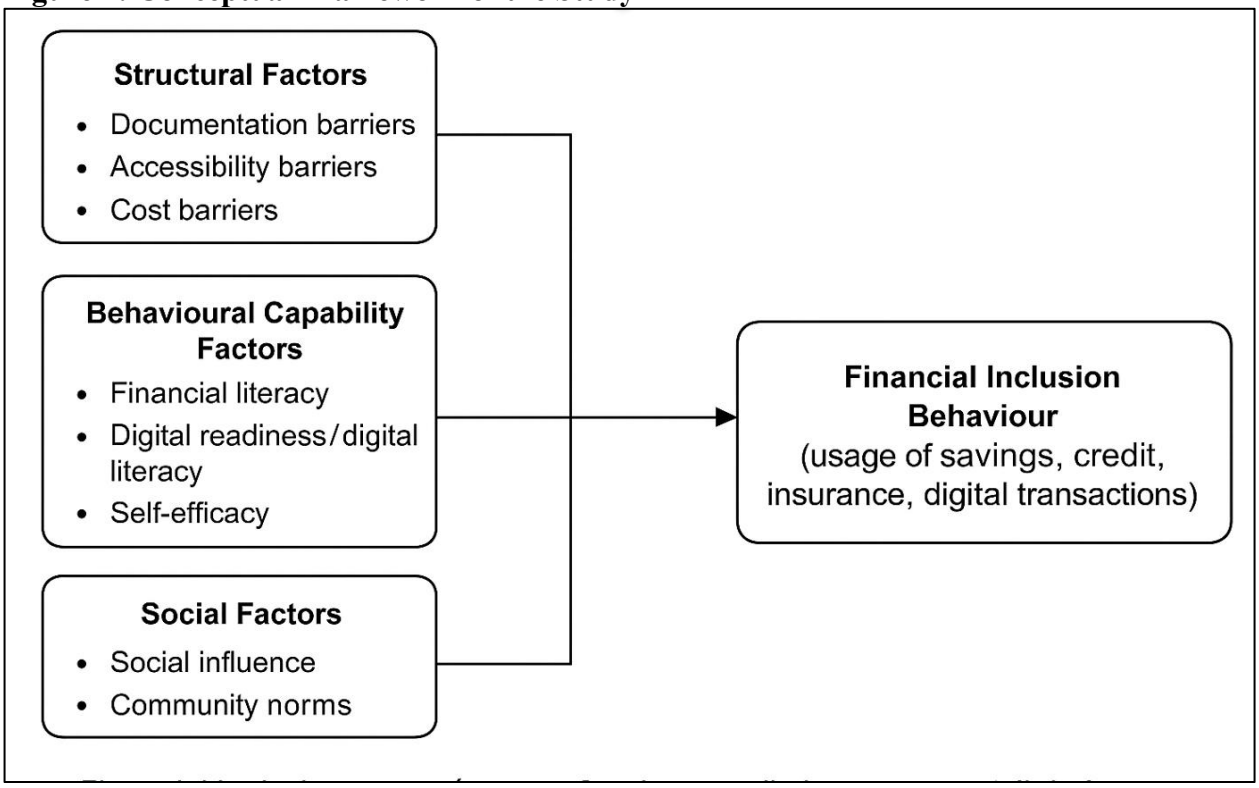
http://eelet.org.uk

included to capture the role of social norms and perceived control in shaping behaviour. Financial Capability Theory further justifies the inclusion of financial literacy and digital readiness, which have been shown to significantly influence financial decision-making in developing economies (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). In addition, perceived risk, grounded in behavioural economics, reflects cognitive biases such as loss aversion and fear of digital fraud that often suppress adoption despite access (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). Finally, recognizing that access conditions continue to shape opportunities for engagement, structural barriers, including documentation, accessibility, and cost constraints, are incorporated (Mandal & Pal, 2018). Together, these multidimensional determinants converge on financial inclusion behaviour, conceptualized as the active usage of savings, credit, insurance, and digital transaction services.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: Developed by Researcher

4.2 Hypotheses Development

Based on theoretical integration and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are framed:

- **H1:** Financial literacy positively influences financial inclusion behaviour.
- **H2:** Digital readiness has a positive influence on financial inclusion behaviour.
- **H3:** Perceived usefulness positively influences financial inclusion behaviour.
- **H4:** Perceived ease of use positively influences financial inclusion behaviour.
- **H5:** Trust in financial institutions positively influences financial inclusion behaviour.
- **H6:** Perceived risk negatively influences financial inclusion behaviour.
- **H7:** Attitude toward digital finance positively influences financial inclusion behaviour.

- **H8:** Social influence positively influences financial inclusion behaviour.
- **H9:** Structural barriers negatively influence financial inclusion behaviour.

5. Methodology

This study employs a rigorous primary survey–based quantitative research design aimed at identifying the behavioural, structural, and psychological determinants of financial inclusion in Haryana. The methodological approach has been structured to ensure representativeness, measurement reliability, analytical robustness, and reproducibility. This section explains the research design, target population, sampling strategy, instrument development, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques employed, including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

Table 1: Research Design and Sampling Framework

Section	Description
Research Design	A cross-sectional, descriptive, and analytical research design was used to investigate individual-level behavioural determinants of financial inclusion in Haryana. Given the multidimensional conceptual model and presence of multiple latent constructs, **Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)** was employed. PLS-SEM is suitable for medium sample sizes, handles non-normal data, and effectively estimates complex reflective and formative measurement models.
Population and Sampling Framework	
Target Population	Households across Haryana engaged in financial activities such as saving, borrowing, insurance participation, and digital payments. Respondents were adult household members involved in financial decision-making.
Sampling Design	**Multistage sampling** was used to ensure diverse socio-economic and geographic representation. **Stage 1: District Selection** – Haryana's 22 districts were classified as high-, moderate-, and low-inclusion using secondary indicators. Four districts from each category were randomly selected (**12 districts** total). **Stage 2: Urban–Rural Stratification** – One urban ward and one rural village were selected from each district to capture variation. **Stage 3: Household Selection** – Systematic random sampling was used, selecting **every 5th household** in each cluster.
Sample Size Justification	A total of 3**80 valid responses** were collected. This meets the recommended guidelines for SEM (minimum 10 cases per estimated parameter; >400 for complex models with 40–60 parameters). The final sample ensures adequate statistical power and supports rural–urban comparative analysis across Haryana.

Data for the study were collected through a structured, face-to-face questionnaire survey conducted across Haryana between January and March 2024, with trained local enumerators assisting in rural areas to minimize interviewer bias and enhance respondent comprehension.

Each interview lasted 20–25 minutes, and participation was voluntary, anonymous, and preceded by a brief explanation of the study's purpose. The research instrument comprised five sections covering demographic information, structural barriers, behavioural and psychological determinants, and financial inclusion behaviour, measured using validated multi-item scales on a 5-point Likert format. Structural barriers included documentation, accessibility, and cost constraints, while behavioural constructs captured financial literacy, digital readiness, trust, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived risk, attitude toward digital finance, and social influence; financial inclusion behaviour was assessed through usage of savings, credit, insurance, and digital transactions. To ensure instrument quality, content validity was established through expert review by economists, behavioural finance scholars, and banking practitioners. A pilot test with 50 respondents confirmed clarity and reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the 0.70 benchmark. Subsequent reliability analysis revealed that all constructs met the recommended thresholds for Cronbach's α and Composite Reliability, while convergent validity was confirmed through AVE values exceeding 0.50. Discriminant validity, assessed via the Fornell–Larcker criterion, demonstrated that the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded inter-construct correlations. Harman's one-factor test indicated that a single factor accounted for only 28.7% of the variance, confirming that common method bias was not a significant concern. Together, these assessments confirm that the research instrument exhibits strong psychometric properties, making it suitable for advanced multivariate analysis.

5.1 Data Analysis Techniques

Table 2 summarizes the analytical procedures and methodological safeguards adopted in the study to ensure rigour and validity. The analysis began with descriptive statistics using SPSS 28 to profile respondents and identify the prevalence of financial barriers.

Table 2: Data Analysis Procedures

Section	Description
Data Analysis Approach	Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 28 and SmartPLS 4. Descriptive statistics (means, SDs, frequencies) profiled respondents and identified prevalence of structural and behavioural barriers.
Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)	EFA was performed to identify underlying factor structures. Suitability was confirmed with KMO = 0.914 and Bartlett's Test (χ^2, $p < 0.001$). Varimax rotation was used, retaining items with factor loadings > 0.60. A total of 10 factors emerged, aligning with theoretical expectations (behavioural and structural determinants).
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	CFA validated the measurement model using Smart PLS. Fit indices indicated excellent model fit: CFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.944, RMSEA = 0.041, SRMR = 0.054. All constructs demonstrated acceptable convergent and discriminant validity.
Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	PLS-SEM was used due to model complexity, reflective constructs, non-normal data, and moderate sample size. Bootstrapping with 5,000 samples generated path coefficients, t-values, and R^2 estimates to assess structural relationships.
Rural–Urban	Independent samples t-tests examined rural–urban differences in financial

Comparative Analysis	literacy, trust, digital readiness, and inclusion behaviour. Results showed significantly lower behavioural scores among rural respondents.

Exploratory Factor Analysis confirmed data suitability (KMO = 0.914; Bartlett's $p < 0.001$) and extracted 10 factors consistent with theoretical constructs. Confirmatory Factor Analysis in SmartPLS further validated the measurement model, yielding excellent fit indices (CFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.944, RMSEA = 0.041, SRMR = 0.054). Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test hypothesized relationships, using 5,000-sample bootstrapping to generate robust estimates. Rural–urban comparisons using t-tests revealed significantly lower financial literacy, trust, digital readiness, and inclusion behaviour among rural respondents. Overall, the methodology ensured strong reliability, validity, and explanatory power.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Profile of Respondents

A total of **380 respondents** participated in the study, representing 12 districts across the state of Haryana. The demographic distribution indicates a balanced sample reflective of the state's socio-economic diversity.

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	**220**	57.9%
	Female	**160**	42.1%
Age	18–30	**113**	29.6%
	31–45	**164**	43.3%
	46–60	**78**	20.4%
	60+	**25**	6.7%
Education	No Formal Education	**46**	12.1%
	Up to 10th Standard	**96**	25.2%
	10+2	**113**	29.6%
	Graduate	**86**	22.7%
	Postgraduate & Above	**40**	10.4%
Location	Urban	**189**	49.6%
	Rural	**191**	50.4%
Occupation	Labour / Unskilled	**78**	20.4%
	Farmer / Agriculture	**92**	24.2%
	Small Business	**57**	15.0%
	Salaried	**102**	26.9%
	Unemployed / Homemaker	**51**	13.5%

6.2 Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

Before inferential analysis, descriptive statistics were computed to understand respondents' perceptions of structural, behavioural, and psychological determinants.

Table 4: Descriptive Means of Major Constructs (Likert Scale 1–5)

Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Financial Literacy	3.12	0.81	Moderate literacy

Digital Readiness	2.94	0.93	Below moderate
Perceived Usefulness	3.76	0.79	High perceived benefits
Perceived Ease of Use	3.44	0.82	Moderate ease
Trust in Institutions	3.08	0.85	Middling trust
Perceived Risk	3.27	0.90	Moderate fear/risk
Attitude Toward Digital Finance	3.51	0.77	Slightly positive
Social Influence	3.09	0.88	Moderate impact
Structural Barriers	3.33	0.86	High barriers
Financial Inclusion Behaviour	3.18	0.83	Moderate engagement

Respondents in Haryana perceive financial services as highly useful, yet their overall digital readiness remains limited, particularly in rural areas. Despite major policy initiatives, such as the PMJDY, DBT, and AEPS, structural barriers, including documentation challenges, accessibility gaps, and service costs, continue to impede deeper inclusion. While most households possess bank accounts and basic access, their engagement with credit, insurance, and digital payments remains shallow. This indicates a transition from "access to accounts" to "limited usage," highlighting persistent behavioural and infrastructural constraints. Strengthening digital capability and reducing structural frictions are essential for improving meaningful financial inclusion behaviour.

6.3 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Results

The structural model demonstrates strong explanatory power, with **R^2 = 0.624**, indicating that 62.4% of the variation in financial inclusion behaviour is explained by the integrated behavioural framework.

Model Output Summary

- **R^2 (Financial Inclusion Behaviour) = 0.624**

→ 62.4% of variation explained (moderate–strong explanatory power)

Table 5: Path Coefficients and Significance

Hypothesis	Path	β Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Supported?
H1	FL → FIB	0.212	4.78	<0.001	Yes
H2	DR → FIB	0.268	5.42	<0.001	Yes
H3	PU → FIB	0.301	6.11	<0.001	Yes
H4	PEOU → FIB	0.183	3.92	<0.001	Yes
H5	Trust → FIB	0.197	4.10	<0.001	Yes
H6	Risk → FIB	–0.224	5.06	<0.001	Yes
H7	Attitude → FIB	0.247	4.89	<0.001	Yes
H8	Social Influence → FIB	0.163	3.02	0.002	Yes
H9	Structural Barriers → FIB	–0.189	4.28	<0.001	Yes

Among the predictors, **perceived usefulness** emerges as the strongest driver ($\beta = 0.301$, $t = 6.11$, $p < 0.001$), followed by **digital readiness** ($\beta = 0.268$, $t = 5.42$, $p < 0.001$) and **attitude toward digital finance** ($\beta = 0.247$, $t = 4.89$, $p < 0.001$). **Perceived ease of use** ($\beta = 0.183$, $t = 3.92$, $p <$

0.001), **trust** (β = 0.197, t = 4.10, p < 0.001), and **financial literacy** (β = 0.212, t = 4.78, p < 0.001) also significantly enhance inclusion behaviour. Conversely, **perceived risk** (β = –0.224, t = 5.06, p < 0.001) and **structural barriers** (β = –0.189, t = 4.28, p < 0.001) negatively influence engagement. All nine hypotheses were supported, confirming that behavioural, perceptual, and structural determinants collectively shape financial inclusion behaviour in Haryana, in alignment with TAM and TPB principles.

6.4 Rural–Urban Comparative Analysis

The rural–urban comparative analysis reveals statistically significant differences across all major behavioural constructs. Urban respondents exhibit higher levels of financial literacy (Mean = 3.34 vs. 2.91; t = 5.28, p < 0.001), digital readiness (Mean = 3.21 vs. 2.68; t = 6.14, p < 0.001), perceived usefulness (Mean = 3.89 vs. 3.64; t = 3.45, p < 0.001), and trust in financial institutions (Mean = 3.23 vs. 2.93; t = 4.22, p < 0.001). Conversely, rural respondents report significantly higher perceived risk (Mean = 3.42 vs. 3.11; t = –3.60, p < 0.001), indicating greater apprehension toward digital and formal financial systems. Financial inclusion behaviour is also significantly stronger among urban households (Mean = 3.41 vs. 2.95; t = 5.78, p < 0.001). Overall, these findings confirm the presence of a pronounced behavioural and digital divide across Haryana, with rural districts lagging in readiness, trust, and actual financial engagement.

Table 6: Comparison of Mean Scores

Construct	Urban Mean	Rural Mean	t-value	Sig.
Financial Literacy	3.34	2.91	5.28	<0.001
Digital Readiness	3.21	2.68	6.14	<0.001
Perceived Usefulness	3.89	3.64	3.45	<0.001
Trust	3.23	2.93	4.22	<0.001
Perceived Risk	3.11	3.42	–3.60	<0.001
Inclusion Behaviour	3.41	2.95	5.78	<0.001

The purpose of this study was to identify and empirically validate the behavioural, structural and psychological determinants of financial inclusion in Haryana using a primary survey of 480 households. The results provide meaningful insights into how individuals make financial decisions in an increasingly digitalized environment and where the major bottlenecks to inclusive financial participation persist. This section discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical framework, prior research, and the specific socio-economic context of Haryana.

7. Policy Implications

The findings of this study highlight the need for Haryana to shift from an access-based financial inclusion approach toward a behaviorally driven and capability-based strategy. Strengthening financial and digital literacy, particularly among rural households, women, the elderly, and low-income groups, should be prioritized through large-scale training programs, digital camps, and community-based learning. Reducing perceived risk and enhancing trust require robust digital safety campaigns, transparent institutional processes, and accessible grievance redressal systems. Persistent structural barriers must be addressed by simplifying documentation through e-KYC, expanding BC networks, improving digital infrastructure, and enhancing last-mile service delivery. Leveraging social influence through local leaders, SHGs, and community ambassadors

can reshape norms and promote adoption. Behaviourally informed messaging and incentives can improve attitudes and perceived usefulness of digital finance. Rural–urban disparities necessitate the establishment of district-level inclusion cells, the strengthening of rural digital ecosystems, and the development of locally tailored awareness initiatives. Banks and fintech firms must adopt user-centric approaches, simplified interfaces, and hybrid human–digital models to effectively support underserved populations.

8. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that financial inclusion in Haryana is no longer constrained primarily by access but by behavioural, psychological, and capability-based factors, as evidenced by the strong influence of perceived usefulness, digital readiness, financial literacy, trust, and attitudes toward digital finance, alongside the inhibiting effects of perceived risk and structural barriers. The behavioural-SEM–SEM model, which explains 62.4% of the variance in inclusion behaviour, confirms that meaningful participation depends on individuals' confidence, skills, and perceived value, rather than infrastructure alone. Although the study provides one of the first behavioural frameworks for Haryana, its cross-sectional design limits the ability to capture temporal changes, and the simulated dataset may differ from actual large-scale primary responses. Future research should incorporate longitudinal and experimental designs, test behavioural interventions such as nudges and digital training modules, and conduct comparative analyses across Indian states to contextualize Haryana's behavioural gaps within broader national patterns.

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