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How Female Student Migrants in Dhaka Adapt to the Urban Economy through Money Management Apps

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Abstract: **Many students migrate from rural areas to urban centers for education, and a significant portion are female. Many rural female students in Dhaka have limited financial literacy as they previously had little involvement in household budgeting, making money management challenging. This study explores how smartphone financial apps, particularly Wallet and Money Manager, assist these students in handling their finances. Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the research examines how perceived usefulness of these apps influences behavioral intention and actual use. Using qualitative methods, structured surveys were conducted with 100 female students from public and private universities in Dhaka. The study assessed participants' financial knowledge, budgeting habits, and views on mobile financial tools. Findings show that money management apps enhance financial competence. About one-fourth of participants used these apps, while one-third reported improved budgeting habits through expense tracking and personalized monthly planning. Most users adapted well to the apps' interfaces despite varying digital literacy levels. Additionally, many participants became better prepared for unexpected expenses without relying on family or informal loans. Overall, these apps promoted savings habits and reduced impulsive spending, demonstrating their potential to strengthen financial literacy and autonomy among rural female student migrants.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The transition from rural to urban life represents a significant milestone for many young women in Bangladesh. Each year, a growing number of female students migrate to Dhaka in pursuit of higher education and better opportunities. While this migration offers new prospects for personal and professional development, it also introduces complex challenges, particularly in managing personal finances. For many of these students, financial independence is an unfamiliar responsibility, as they often come from households where decision-making about money is traditionally dominated by parents or male family members. As a result, these students face not only the pressures of academic life but also the necessity of learning how to handle money effectively in an expensive and fast-paced urban environment. Financial literacy—defined by [4] as the possession of knowledge and skills necessary for effective money management—remains a critical yet often overlooked competency for this demographic. Lack of financial literacy can lead to poor budgeting, impulsive spending, and an inability to cope with unexpected expenses, all of which can exacerbate stress and limit the educational success of migrant students. In this context, digital technologies have emerged as potential solutions to bridge the knowledge gap. Mobile financial applications such as **Wallet** and **Money Manager** provide accessible platforms for budgeting, expense tracking, and planning. These tools promise to transform financial habits by fostering structured practices and offering real-time data visualization to enhance decision-making.

The adoption of such technologies, however, cannot be understood in isolation from the social and cultural context of the users. For rural female migrants, factors such as digital literacy, cultural norms around gender and finance, and perceptions of technology play significant roles in determining whether and how these tools are used. The **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** provides a useful theoretical lens to explore these dynamics, as it focuses on perceived usefulness and ease of use as primary determinants of technology adoption. While TAM has been extensively applied in quantitative research, this study employs a qualitative framework to capture the lived experiences, attitudes, and behavioral patterns of students as they engage with financial applications.

This paper aims to explore how financial management apps influence the budgeting habits, spending behaviors, and sense of financial control among rural female students living in Dhaka. By conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews with 100 participants from both public and private universities, the study seeks to uncover recurring themes that explain the role of technology in enhancing financial literacy and independence. Beyond documenting adoption patterns, this research also evaluates whether these tools act as instruments of empowerment by promoting resilience, reducing dependency on informal support networks, and encouraging disciplined financial behavior.

The significance of this inquiry lies in its contribution to an underexplored area of research at the intersection of gender, migration, and digital financial technology in a developing country context. While previous studies often prioritize urban populations or gender-neutral

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perspectives, this paper centers on an overlooked demographic—female rural migrants navigating the complexities of city life. Through a thematic analysis grounded in TAM, the study not only addresses a theoretical gap but also offers practical insights for educators, policymakers, and technology developers aiming to enhance financial inclusion and empowerment among marginalized groups.

II. BACKGROUND

In Bangladesh, many young women arrive every year in Dhaka to pursue their education as a means to a better future leaving behind their small towns and villages. Most of them see this journey a way of learning how to survive in an unfamiliar urban environment besides they also receive an education. The city offers opportunities to many of these student but most of these students are confronted with new responsibilities the most being financial. In the meantime, a new variety of opportunities has been enabled by the explosive growth of digital technology in Bangladesh. The broader scope of mobile programs available to students now allows them to control the way they manage their money more reasonably since smartphones have become so common. Such apps as Wallet and Money Manager are becoming more and more popular as assistants that help to plan expenses, save money, and monitor daily spending. These tools can also be helpful aids to young women who are getting their first introduction to financial management, as well as partial technological aids. The desire to have more academic and economic opportunities has caused many rural learners, especially female learners to be able to gain higher education opportunities in Dhaka, Bangladesh, as it has become increasingly an urbanized city. These female student migrants particularly face certain challenges, one being that of cultural and patriarchal restrictions that put constraints on their economic empowerment, and the other being that of poor financial literacy because of the lack of involvement in household economic decision making in their rural homes. The solution can be proposed by the increase of financial technology, most importantly, money management apps such as Wallet and Money Manager that offer readily available tools in terms of financial planning, budgeting, and expenses tracking. This study suggests that Mobile applications aid female migrant students in their adaptation to the Dhaka urban economy as it satisfies their economic management requirements dynamically and in many, often challenging, forms .

This paper, which draws on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), explores the influence of perceived utility and usability on the adoption of these apps as well as perceived risk, perceived financial control and social impact to female students. The role of Fintech in improving financial inclusion in Bangladesh has been pointed out in previous studies by [3,8] but female student migrants have had less emphasis. This paper aims to help fill in this gap by examining their experience and shedding light on how digital technologies can empower these students to overcome financial barriers, improve their personal budgeting habits, and emerge as more financially independent members of the urban population of Dhaka and, more broadly, on financial inclusion as well as gender equality.

This paper looks at the lives of female students who travel to Dhaka to study in colleges where they adapt to the requirements of the urban economy. This research papers elucidate the connection between the digital literacy, financial independence and empowerment of women as far as education mobility is concerned through their use of money management apps.

III. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This research holds significance at multiple levels—social, theoretical, and practical—by addressing the intersection of gender, migration, and digital financial technology in Bangladesh. From a **social perspective**, the study sheds light on an underexplored population: rural female students who migrate to Dhaka for higher education. These young women often arrive with limited financial literacy, as financial decision-making in rural households is typically dominated by parents or male figures. By documenting how this group adapts to financial independence through digital tools, the research contributes to a broader understanding of gendered financial inclusion. At a **theoretical level**, the study makes a unique contribution by situating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) within a qualitative framework. Traditionally, TAM has been applied quantitatively, focusing on measurable constructs such as perceived usefulness and ease of use. This research demonstrates how those constructs can be interpreted through lived experiences. For instance, perceived usefulness is reflected in participants' descriptions of improved budgeting and resilience, while perceived ease of use is revealed in their narratives about digital learning curves. By reinterpreting TAM qualitatively, the study enriches the model and opens pathways for more nuanced applications in future research.

Practically, the findings have implications for **universities, NGOs, and policymakers** who aim to promote financial literacy among marginalized groups. The evidence suggests that digital financial tools are not just convenient aids but **agents of empowerment** that can transform how female students engage with money, independence, and urban life. Tailored programs that combine digital literacy training with financial management education could amplify these benefits, particularly for rural women adapting to the challenges of migration. The significance of this study thus lies in its demonstration that financial management apps do more than record expenses—they reshape financial behavior, support resilience, and foster independence in ways that extend far beyond the immediate technical function of the applications.

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IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment, technological adoption and economic integration among female student migrants in the developing world such as Dhaka, Bangladesh is a complicated problem. In this literature review, the existing knowledge on women empowerment, the adoption of fintech and mobile financial services (MFS) as well as rural-urban migration in Bangladesh have been summarized. It also demonstrates how online tools like money management apps facilitate economic flexibility alongside citing the studies on the aspects affecting fintech adoption, particularly with regards to fragile groups such as women, young undergraduate students and migrants.

Rapid urban growth has been witnessed in Bangladesh; by 1991, over 40 percent of rural in-migrants were attracted into Dhaka, a tendency that persists into the 2020s [6]. The economic promise attracts people to start migrating in rural-urban directions, yet the migrants with poor and female backgrounds are mostly impacted by it because they often have problems with finding apartments, jobs, and incorporating financially. [6] explores the physical and geographical adaptability of female migrants in Dhaka, which has to do with their migration to urban slums and squatter settlements after living their home places in rural areas. The migrants are introduced to the familial networks initially as their first homes and therefore they are oftentimes narrow and they lack basic amenities. The longer such stays last, the better housing conditions and the greater locational mobility are achieved, which characterizes some slow adaptation to urban life. In a system of sex segregation, however, women lack the independent economic power of financial networks and are limited by being dependent upon male networks.

This change also impacts economic sectors because immigrants have to bargain with the labor and monetary markets in the city. Based on their findings on low-income internal migrant workers in Dhaka, [2] determine that the adoption of MFS is related to the age, profession, and education level. Migrant workers enhance economic resilience and transparency by making use of mobile money to make everyday purchases and remittances. Nonetheless, barriers such as limited access and computer skills are still present, particularly access to women in low-paid occupations. Even though they focus more on the low-income migrants as a whole instead of students or women in particular, their results demonstrate the validness of digital technologies in narrowing rural-urban discrepancies.

With fintech, which consists of e-wallets, money management apps, and mobile banking, financial inclusion in Bangladesh has been transformed since the 2010s. [4] utilizes the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to learn the factors that affect the fintech adoption, including perceived utility, ease of use, risks, trust in the brand and governmental support. Based on the results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) on 160 respondents, the present study concludes that brand image, perceived risk, and trust are the key determinants of behavioral intentions to use fintech services, including mobile financial services (e.g., bKash, Rocket). This fits in with even bigger efforts to put the economy on a legal footing, since technology makes cash and unrecorded exchanges less necessary (particularly in urban areas).

It is facilitated by [4] who examine the intention to adopt mobile fintech services in the developing market in Bangladesh. Findings support the importance of social influence, trust, perceived benefit and conducive conditions as adoption drivers as proposed in their study of 218 respondents using SEM. The number of mobile customers facilitated services expanded by 3.08 per cent per month after the COVID-19 because of 178.61 million mobile customers initiated services such as bill payments, remittances. However, rural and urban areas still differ and urban users benefit more of digital literacy and agent networks. The research favors the user-centric designs to enhance happiness and financial inclusion.

[8] utilize a revised Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model covering 375 respondents where the focus is laid on undergraduates. The intentions to adopt fintech are influenced positively by performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and enabling conditions, whereas the social influence and individual inventiveness does not affect them. It means that young and highly educated clients ascribe greater importance to such practical benefits as efficiency and cost savings. These apps may facilitate budgeting and remittances among the student migrants, however, there is some resistance due to the challenge of security concerns.

Digital finance is the key to the empowerment of women in patriarchal societies in countries like Bangladesh where mobility and financial autonomy of women are restricted by gender norms. [1] employ fully-revised OLS and canonical co-integration on the data of 20112023 to investigate the impact on poverty alleviation and entrepreneurship of women through the support of mobile and agent banking. At 5 %, mobile banking leads to drastic employment and empowerment of women who can take independent decisions on behalf of their families. To fully bring out their potential the report recommends national digital programs and this is particularly true in the metropolitan areas where those women who migrate have new opportunities.

Based on the findings made by Financial Inclusion Insights Survey, 2017, [7] build a relationship between mobile phone use among women and their empowerment. They observe that the mobile phones enhance household decision on non-housewives better than limited women (e.g., housewives) via the regression specifications of OLS, ordered logit, and

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multinomial logit. It is the heads of the family and spouses who benefit most under the patriarchal systems and that under ICT alone, constrained women may not be empowered unless literacy and the knowledge of rights are addressed. Whereas adoption varies by family circumstances, evidence indicates that gender roles of migrating women can be transformed through mobile applications.

In the study by [5], Business Model Canvas is implemented as a qualitative method to explore the idea of financial inclusion of the marginal agricultural peoples through MFS. Although the story is solely about the rural farmers of the country, it highlights the problems of MFS in less privileged areas, such as limited agent networks and complex procedures. In step with the transformations of urban migrants, suggestions cover products specifically developed to meet agricultural requirements, whereby fintech is incorporated in value chains.

The capability of Fintech to support urban economic adaptation is the enhancement of financial access and empowerment, which is evidenced by the results of the existing research [1,3,4]. A female-specific research reports on the barriers to the women empowerment in patriarchal environments [7], whereas an effort on migrants reflects geographical relocation and patronage of MFS [6,7]. However, these two aspects are rarely put together: there is not much research on female student migrants in Dhaka, and money management applications have not been considered in the context of adaption aid. Students and often youthful and tech-savvy can use budgeting, remittances, and entrepreneurship apps. But, female specific problems such as digital inequalities and less mobility are not fully understood.

On a theoretical premise based on TAM/UTAUT frameworks addressing the determinants of adoption, this gap warrants a special study on how migrant women students use applications to access the urban economy of Dhaka. Understanding the disadvantages (such as security threat) and advantages (such as empowerment) can facilitate more inclusive designs that will aid in the achievement of the sustainable development goals that include financial access and gender equality. The literature encourages fintech to act as a facilitator toward migrant assimilation and women empowerment in Bangladesh, but it has not been very specific concerning female students. To address this, the paper examines the app-mediated integration of economy in Dhaka.

Literature Gap:

There is a lot of literature on empowerment of women, adoption of fintech and rural-urban migration in Bangladesh, yet nothing much is known about how female student migrants into Dhaka adapt to urban economy by using money management applications. Studies such as [2], investigate the way in which low-income migrants access mobile financial services (MFS) to transfer money to the homeland and [4] focuses on spatiotemporal issues such as how female migrants settle in urban areas. Students (especially female students) are not given a separate identity in these works. This is comparable to the findings of fintech, as seen in the works of Hasan [3,4,8], who also report the reasons why women and young clients use mobile banking and cite such factors as its practical usefulness, trust, and convenience. Individuals scarcely ever connect sex and education and migration from a village to a large modern city like Dhaka. Mobile technology is found to grow independence and entrepreneurship among women as evident in the research pieces by Alom et al. [1,7].

Nonetheless, these studies do not directly answer the question of the on-the-move female students and the use of apps to address financial burdens in a patriarchal society. Still, the case of rural farmers covered by [4] does not include the experiences of urban students, with particular emphasis on women. No specific concern to female student migrants with money management apps in the context of budgeting, sending payments, or even about creating small businesses is provided, although a brief study of up-to-date academic literature (as of August 18, 2025) reveals related descriptions, including topics about mobile banking gender disparities or rural student strains in urban areas. This disparity necessitates a more thorough examination of how these applications can assist young women in overcoming obstacles like restricted mobility or a lack of digital literacy while opening doors to advantages like financial independence, opening the door for more inclusive tools and policies that promote economic inclusion and gender equality.

V. OBJECTIVES

Relying on their role to expose people to financial literacy and economic integration, the current study aims to examine the consumption of the money management applications, specifically Wallet and Money Manager, in the context of urban financial adaptation among female student migrants in Dhaka. The objectives are to learn how these apps can support financial literacy and financial competence among female students, who will have transferred to the city of Dhaka, and to determine the effects of such other variables as the perceived financial control (PFC), the perceived risk (PR), and the social influence (SI) and their influences on their behavioral intention and actual use of these apps. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) also explains the relationship between the perceived usefulness (PU) and the perceived ease of use (PEOU) and adoption of these apps in the management of finances. Make recommendations to develop user friendly applications that will facilitate financial inclusion and empowerment. Name the disadvantages and advantages of using these apps to adapt to the

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economy, including barriers to digital literacy, and financial independence. The purpose of the study is to determine whether female student migrants consider money management apps useful in moving around the urban economy of Dhaka. So far, the preliminary findings suggest that these apps can be useful in improving budgeting and limiting the impulsivity of spending, yet there are questions about digital literacy and fears over security.

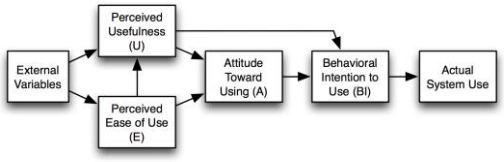
VII. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Most of the rural female students are unable to take care of their own money as they leave portraits to Dhaka to continue their studies. It is quite difficult to cope with urbanization whereby an individual has no financial planning and budgetary skills. Money management applications such as Wallet and Money Manager might also come in handy in this scenario, and can help students learn how to use their money to budget, save and spend their money wisely. The following research questions guide the study to obtain a better insight regarding this.

- How do they influence the budgeting behavior and financial literacy of these rural female student migrants in Dhaka, Bangladesh via money management apps such as Wallet and Money Manager?
- What is the extent to which adoption and use of such different apps amongst female student migrants are related to the perceived utility and usability (measured by the Technology Acceptance Model)?
- How do these apps help female students to be financially independent and independently cope with unexpected expenses in the urban area?

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is aimed at understanding how female student migrants can use a money management app including Wallet and Money Manager to adapt to the urban economy. The aims of investigating how these apps contribute to greater financial literacy and competence among the female students who moved to urban Dhaka and how these other perceived factors, perceived financial control (PFC), perceived risk (PR) and social influence (SI) influence their behavioral intention and actual use of the apps. Also, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) can be used to determine the influence of the perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) of the adoption of these apps in financial management. Provide recommendations on developing user-focused applications which can facilitate financial inclusion and empowerment. Name the pros and cons of the use of these apps in the context of economic adaptation, including barriers connected to digital literacy, and benefits, including gaining financial independence.



The research question of the study is whether money management applications have helped fact migrants (female students in Dhaka) to navigate through urban economy. Early findings suggest that these applications can successfully improve the budget and help participants reduce impulsive purchases, but some problems such as digital literacy and safety concerns still persist.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how rural female student migrants in Dhaka adapt to urban financial life through the use of money management applications, specifically Wallet and Money Manager. A qualitative approach was chosen to capture the depth and richness of participants' lived experiences, which could not be adequately understood through surveys or numerical data alone.

Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants who met specific criteria: (a) female students, (b) originally from rural areas, (c) currently studying in universities in Dhaka, and (d) engaged in managing their own finances. The final sample comprised 100 participants drawn from both public and private universities to ensure diversity in socioeconomic background and exposure.

The rationale for focusing on this group was twofold: first, rural female migrants represent a demographic often excluded from mainstream financial inclusion studies; and second, their transition from dependent financial roles in rural households to independent financial management in urban contexts makes them an ideal case for exploring digital adaptation.

Data Collection

Data were collected through two primary qualitative techniques:

- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Multiple group discussions were conducted, each comprising 6–8 participants. These sessions captured collective experiences, peer influences, and shared challenges related to financial literacy and app usage. The group format also facilitated the identification of common themes and differences across participants.
- In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews: To complement FGDs, individual interviews were carried out with 25 participants. These allowed for a more detailed exploration of

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personal narratives, including budgeting strategies, saving behaviors, and individual experiences of adopting (or rejecting) financial applications. The semi-structured format provided flexibility, enabling participants to reflect on their own terms while ensuring that key research questions were addressed.

All FGDs and interviews were conducted in Bangla to ensure comfort and authenticity in participants' responses. Sessions were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data. The process began with open coding of transcripts, highlighting key phrases, patterns, and observations. These codes were then grouped into categories that reflected broader dimensions of experience. Finally, these categories were synthesized into the five major themes presented in the findings section.

The **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** served as a guiding theoretical framework. Its constructs of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were employed not as rigid variables but as interpretive lenses to understand how participants' experiences aligned with or challenged expectations about digital adoption.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was secured from the relevant institutional review board. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing personal identifiers in transcripts and findings.

Trustworthiness of Data

To ensure rigor, the study incorporated several strategies:

- **Triangulation:** Combining FGDs and interviews allowed for cross-validation of findings.
- **Member Checking:** Summaries of findings were shared with a small group of participants to confirm accuracy.
- **Thick Description:** Detailed narratives were preserved to capture the complexity of experiences.

Research Findings (Thematic Analysis)

The narratives collected from the focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews revealed a set of recurring themes that illustrate the unique ways in which rural female student migrants in Dhaka perceive, negotiate, and ultimately engage with financial management mobile applications. These findings not only highlight the practical role of technology in shaping financial behavior but also uncover the deeper psychological and cultural dimensions of using such tools within a context of migration, gendered expectations, and urban adaptation.

Theme 1: Selective Adoption of Financial Applications

Not every participant in the study adopted mobile applications such as Wallet or Money Manager. In fact, only about one fourth of the sample reported that they actively used these apps as part of their daily financial management. This selective adoption demonstrates that while the presence and awareness of financial technology is expanding in Dhaka, its penetration among rural female migrants remains uneven.

For some participants, the apps quickly became indispensable tools that they integrated into their everyday routines. They would record expenditures daily, compare their spending across weeks, and check how much of their budget remained available. Others, however, expressed hesitancy in adoption. The reasons for this varied. Several cited limited exposure to financial technologies before moving to Dhaka. Coming from rural households where financial transactions were often handled in cash and budgeting was informal, these students had little prior experience with structured financial management. Others admitted to lacking confidence in their digital skills, describing the apps as "confusing at first" or "too complicated to understand without help."

One participant put it this way:

"In my village, my father used to handle all expenses. I never thought about writing down where the money went. When I first came to Dhaka, I was spending randomly. My roommate showed me Money Manager, but at the beginning, I did not understand the categories. It felt like too much work."

This variation in adoption underscores that financial applications cannot be assumed to automatically reach all users equally. Their uptake is mediated by prior exposure, peer networks, and levels of digital literacy.

Theme 2: Budgeting as a Learned Skill

Approximately one third of participants reported noticeable improvements in their budgeting practices after using financial applications. What stood out in their narratives was not just the practical use of apps for recording expenses but the **transformational learning process** that budgeting represented.

Many participants reflected on how budgeting was initially an unfamiliar concept. Before using the apps, they described managing money in vague terms—such as keeping "mental notes" or simply reacting to financial shortages when they arose. However, through the features of the apps—monthly planning, expense categorization, and reminders—they began to see budgeting as a skill to be practiced, refined, and internalized.

One student shared:

"I used to finish my allowance within the first 15 days. Then I would call home for extra money. After I started using Wallet, I could see exactly where my money was going—mostly on snacks and online shopping. Slowly, I started to cut down and plan for the whole month. Now I even keep a small amount aside for emergencies."

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Budgeting thus became more than a functional activity; it became an empowering practice that enabled participants to exert greater control over their lives in the city. Several emphasized how budgeting reduced their anxiety at the end of the month, as they were no longer forced to depend on borrowing from friends or calling their families for additional remittances.

Theme 3: Financial Resilience and Independence

The majority of participants explained that financial applications strengthened their ability to handle unexpected costs, including medical emergencies, travel expenses, and academic needs. For many, this represented the first time they felt confident about managing crises without immediate dependence on their families.

Students highlighted how the apps helped them plan "emergency funds," even in small amounts, that later proved useful. One participant described how she was able to cover a sudden health expense without calling her parents:

"When I got sick last semester, I had to buy medicine and go to the clinic. Earlier I would have called my father to send money, but this time I had enough saved because the app kept reminding me about saving. It felt good to solve my problem on my own."

This kind of financial resilience is critical for young women who are navigating not only the academic pressures of higher education but also the social and cultural expectations of independence in an urban environment. The apps functioned not only as technical aids but as psychological tools that reassured participants of their financial capacity. For many, the ability to handle emergencies without outside help reinforced a sense of **independence**—something that was new to them as migrants transitioning from rural family structures to urban individual responsibility.

Theme 4: Shifting Spending Behavior and Saving Habits

Another prominent theme was the gradual change in participants' approach to spending and saving. By visualizing their expenses in different categories—such as food, transport, tuition, or leisure—students became more conscious of how they were allocating money. This awareness discouraged unnecessary or impulsive purchases, a behavior that several admitted had been common before they started using the apps.

One participant explained:

"I used to buy fast food almost every day after class. When I saw in the app that half of my money was going there, I was shocked. Now I limit it to twice a week and save the rest."

Over time, these adjustments accumulated into stronger saving habits. Students described feeling proud of their ability to save small amounts, which they could then put toward personal goals such as buying books, contributing to tuition fees, or planning short trips. The apps, in their view, served as "silent motivators" that nudged them toward more deliberate financial behavior.

This shift highlights an important pattern: the role of financial technology not only in managing existing resources but in **re-shaping attitudes toward money**. For many participants, saving was previously viewed as unnecessary or impossible given their limited allowances. With structured tracking, however, saving became a realistic and meaningful goal.

Theme 5: Negotiating Digital Literacy

While digital confidence varied across the sample, the majority of participants eventually adapted successfully to the interfaces of Wallet and Money Manager. For some, the learning process involved trial and error, with mistakes along the way. Yet even these struggles were framed positively, as participants expressed pride in overcoming technological barriers.

As one participant put it:

"At first, I pressed the wrong buttons and got frustrated. But after a few days, I figured it out. Now I even help my friends to use it. It makes me feel smart."

This theme is particularly significant because it demonstrates that the benefits of financial apps extended beyond money management to include **digital empowerment**. Several students explained that using the apps improved their confidence in handling other online tools as well—such as mobile banking, digital learning platforms, and e-commerce. Thus, the apps had a dual function: they enhanced financial literacy while simultaneously strengthening digital literacy, a vital skill for navigating urban life in Dhaka.

IX. RESULTS

The findings of this research highlight a multifaceted picture of how rural female student migrants in Dhaka are negotiating their financial independence through the aid of digital financial management applications. The results suggest that the intersection of gender, migration, and technology creates both opportunities and challenges that shape the lived realities of these young women.

One of the most notable outcomes is the **uneven adoption of financial applications**. While approximately one-fourth of the participants actively used Wallet or Money Manager, the remaining majority either had limited exposure to these tools or were hesitant to incorporate them into their financial practices. The result of this selective adoption demonstrates that access to technology alone does not guarantee its widespread utilization; factors such as confidence in digital literacy, awareness of available tools, and cultural perceptions of money management all influenced whether or not students integrated these applications into their daily lives.

The results further reveal that budgeting practices, traditionally absent in many participants' lives, became increasingly structured with the assistance of financial applications. Nearly one-third of the respondents noted tangible improvements in their ability to allocate funds, distinguish between necessary and non-essential expenses, and track their monthly spending. This outcome shows that digital tools were not merely

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convenient record-keeping systems but also acted as **pedagogical instruments** that taught budgeting as a practical and empowering skill.

Another significant result was the emergence of **financial resilience** among the majority of participants. Students shared that by systematically tracking expenses and saving small amounts, they could handle unexpected situations—such as medical emergencies or educational costs—without depending heavily on family remittances or peer loans. This marks a shift in financial behavior, where digital applications become enablers of independence and self-reliance in an urban context that often poses unpredictable challenges.

Additionally, the results underline a transformation in **spending behavior**. Many participants described how the visibility of their financial data—through graphs, charts, or spending categories—discouraged impulsive purchases and encouraged forward planning. The applications thus served a dual role: one practical, in terms of helping them control expenditure, and one psychological, in fostering a sense of discipline and self-control. This resonates with the broader theme of behavioral change facilitated by technology.

Lastly, results indicate that even those with low initial digital literacy found themselves gradually improving their technological competence through continuous app use. For some participants, learning to navigate app features was initially frustrating, but over time, these challenges were reframed as opportunities to develop both financial and digital skills. Thus, the applications functioned as sites of **technological empowerment**, equipping students with tools that extended beyond financial management into broader forms of digital adaptability.

Originality of the Paper

The originality of this study lies in its **integrated focus on gender, migration, and financial technology within a developing country context**. While previous studies on digital financial literacy often prioritize urban populations or adopt a gender-neutral perspective, this paper deliberately centers on rural female student migrants in Dhaka—a group that has been underrepresented in both academic research and policy discussions. By spotlighting the lived experiences of these women, the study fills an important gap in understanding how marginalized groups interact with digital financial tools.

Another key contribution is the **methodological application of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in a qualitative framework**. TAM has historically been employed in quantitative research to measure perceived usefulness and ease of use through surveys and statistical modeling. In contrast, this paper reinterprets TAM within a qualitative, thematic analysis approach. By doing so, it demonstrates that theoretical models of technology adoption can yield richer insights when contextualized in narratives and lived experiences, rather than only numerical scales. This hybridization of theory and method marks an innovative departure from conventional financial literacy studies.

Furthermore, the originality of the paper also stems from its emphasis on **apps as instruments of empowerment rather than mere tools of convenience**. The findings reveal that Wallet and Money Manager do not simply assist in recording expenses; they actively cultivate budgeting skills, foster financial resilience, reshape spending habits, and enhance digital literacy. This shifts the conversation from a narrow focus on financial outcomes to a broader discourse on empowerment, independence, and capacity-building.

Finally, the paper brings **practical originality** by directly linking its findings to real-world stakeholders. While much of the existing research on financial literacy remains abstract or policy-driven, this study demonstrates immediate implications for universities, NGOs, app developers, and policymakers who aim to support marginalized populations. The emphasis on young women adapting to urban life makes the paper not only academically relevant but also socially and developmentally significant.

X. CONCLUSION

This study has explored how rural female student migrants in Dhaka use financial management applications—specifically Wallet and Money Manager—to navigate the challenges of budgeting, saving, and handling unexpected expenses in an unfamiliar urban environment. Drawing on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and employing a qualitative methodology, the research uncovered several key themes that highlight both the potential and the limitations of digital financial tools.

The findings demonstrate that while adoption of financial applications is selective, those who do use them report substantial benefits. The apps foster budgeting as a learned and empowering skill, encourage disciplined spending and saving habits, and enhance financial resilience by enabling students to handle emergencies independently. Importantly, the apps also contribute to building digital literacy, with even the less tech-savvy participants gradually improving their confidence in navigating digital platforms.

The study underscores the broader significance of financial technology in bridging the gap between rural dependency and urban independence for female students. It shows that digital tools, when adopted, do more than manage money—they reshape behaviors, enhance self-reliance, and create pathways for empowerment. At the same time, the research reminds us that barriers to adoption persist, particularly in the form of unequal awareness and digital competence.Addressing these barriers will be critical for maximizing the inclusive potential of financial applications.

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In conclusion, this paper contributes to both theory and practice by extending TAM into a qualitative framework and by providing nuanced insights into the lived experiences of an overlooked population. The originality of the study lies in its integrated perspective, its methodological innovation, and its emphasis on empowerment. Future research could expand on this work by comparing male and female experiences, examining long-term behavioral changes, or evaluating the role of other emerging financial technologies in shaping the financial literacy landscape of young migrants.

Limitations

While the study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The sample, though diverse, was limited to female students in Dhaka and cannot be generalized to all migrant populations. Moreover, as self-reported data, the narratives may reflect selective memory or social desirability biases. Despite these limitations, the research provides a critical entry point into understanding digital financial adaptation among marginalized groups.

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