

Education Stream and Financial Literacy: Does It Matter? Evidence from Sri Lankan Undergraduates.

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Abstract

The effect of educational streams on financial literacy in Sri Lankan university students is examined by comparing accounting and non-accounting undergraduates in this study. The study made use of a cross-sectional methodology that is recognised by a structured questionnaire encompassing three major variables, namely Financial Skill, Personal Financial Management, and Financial Literacy Awareness, administered to a total of 208 students, consisting of 104 accounting and 104 non-accounting students. The result from the Mann-Whitney U Test indicates that while accounting students indicated a consistently high mean ranking in respect of all three variables, none of these variables are significantly different from each other from a statistical perspective, following which the p-value is 0.127, 0.058, and 0.308, respectively. These outcomes underpin the statement that sleeper effects exist in respect of levels of financial literacy indifferent of educational streams, thus refuting the view that following an educational stream related to accounting would otherwise raise levels of financial literacy. This study contributes to the existing literature on financial literacy by highlighting the role of influences other than academic disciplines. It calls for targeted interventions in the form of practical financial education programs to address the deficiency in financial literacy. Future research might use individual characteristics and external factors, including family background and the availability of financial resources, to understand the determinants of financial literacy in diverse educational and cultural contexts.

Keywords: *Financial literacy, Personal financial management, Financial literacy awareness, Undergraduates of Sri Lankan university*

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Introduction

Financial literacy has increasingly been viewed as a multidimensional construct that entails knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour, which altogether can enable an individual to make well-informed decisions about finances (OECD, 2023; Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). It can be perceived that this multidimensional construct entails not only knowledge but the ability to apply that knowledge into practice, attitudes towards finances, and behaviour related to finances that can be important for young adults moving towards becoming financially independent (OECD, 2023; Shim, Barber, Card, Xiao, & Serido, 2009).

It is a life skill necessary for one to know how to manage personal finance and thereby make good financial decisions in support of economic well-being (Lusardi and Mitchell, 2014). The importance of financial literacy could be important to young adults, particularly university students, as they have always faced situations that brought about financial freedom for the first time and struggled with how to budget, save money, and manage debt (Xiao et al., 2011). Possessing such a rich foundation for financial knowledge in such a group could have a remarkably positive influence in shaping their financial practices to continue well into their adulthood years. Indeed, Shim et al. state, "Previous research suggests that financial knowledge developed during emerging adulthood may have lasting effects on future financial behaviour (Shim et al., 2009).

Moreover, University students often encounter major financial matters like cost management, budgeting, dealing with loans, or making savings or investment decisions. For students at this stage of life, having good financial literacy can greatly help guide their behavior and decision-making. Most recent research reveals that students' or persons' level of financial literacy exerts considerable positive effects on their attitude and behavior related to finances (Choowan, Daovisan, &

Suwanwong, 2025; Lone & Bhat, 2022). Evidence at a college level reveals that students with higher knowledge or more expertise related to finances tend to make more proper or cautious decisions about finances like fewer dangerous lending decisions (Kamel & Sahid, 2021; Vaghela, 2023). Finances or money management knowledge was found necessary for proper behavior like budgeting savings or proper debt management (Azizah et al., 2023).

University students majoring in various accounting and finance disciplines are typically expected to be in good standing in terms of financial literacy since, through their academic studies, they are exposed to various concepts and practices within finance (Peng et al., 2007). In this connection, non-accounting students may have had less academic training about financial matters and could thereby be influenced in knowledge and behaviour relating to finances. The comparison, then, becomes highly relevant because it brings into question the assumption that educational background necessarily corresponds with financial literacy and prudent financial behaviour (Beal & Delpachitra, 2003).

Basic accounting is usually the first exposure non-accounting students have to the financial aspects of a business course. Even though accounting skills may make much difference in business success, most non-accounting students face special challenges in this subject of either high failure rates or the demanding nature thereof (Duve, 2016). Some of the activities conducted in accounting, like classification, recording, summarizing, and interpretation of data, are complex; therefore, students with a weak mathematics foundation may feel discouraged. It has also been identified that students who have prior knowledge of or have experience in accounting and mathematics are found to perform much better than others, while feelings of inadequacy are seen to persist among those who do not possess these skills (Eskew & Faley, 1988; Gist, 1998).



For students who are not accounting majors, the motive for attending an accounting class is different; they treat it as one of the curricular requirements rather than a field they are interested in. In this regard, they need to be given additional guidance to have a basic understanding of the principles of accounting. The literature on accounting education is replete with conflicting results on the impact created through differing educational backgrounds in affecting student performance. Some studies have indicated that accounting experience plays a ridiculously small factor, while other studies have suggested it has a positive effect on students in their academic performance (Azizah et al., 2023; Vaghela, 2023). Such conflicts may imply the fact that a student pursuing accountancy and another not pursuing accountancy would have differing levels of competency in handling the construct 'financial literacy'.

In the context of Sri Lanka, this issue becomes significant because of the nature of the economy as well as the role of government universities as a graduation ground for the workforce of the future. Indeed, Central Bank of Sri Lanka reports have echoed that increasing economic burdens and challenges faced by the country's young adults, hence create a need to strengthen them with financial literacy for economic resilience (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2022). However, only a few studies have investigated financial literacy among university students, particularly comparing students studying in various academic disciplines (Ramadhan and Susilo, 2019). Additionally, Recent empirical research also shows that financial literacy positively affects financial behaviour and financial well-being among Sri Lankan university students (Kumari & Yathusanth, 2024; Senarathna & Anuradha, 2024; Bogahawaththe & Sugathadasa, 2020; Kalunga & Perera, 2024).

Financial literacy tends to shape the monetary behaviour and financial decision-making of the individual, especially among university students in the transition phase to financial

independence (Lusardi and Mitchell, 2007, Wijekumara, & Sugathadasa, 2023). These studies have pointed out, it is for this reason that financial literacy has become an important issue in Sri Lanka, given that it can affect the long-term financial well-being of students in the country. Yet very few studies have specifically targeted the financial literacy of Sri Lankan university students, let alone a comparison between those majoring in accounting and those who are not (Kumari, 2020).

Accounting course students are more exposed to financial concepts and thus their decision on finance in future will probably be wiser as compared to those who do not take similar courses in finance education. It is important to realise these differences in developing appropriate targeted programs in financial literacy that will meet the needs of all students, regardless of the academic disciplines.

While awareness of personal finance is increasing, the overall financial literacy level of university students, as well as that of Sri Lankan students, is at a moderate level and requires additional educational interventions. This conclusion was supported by Edirisinghe, Keerthipala & Amarasinghe, 2017. This study has focused on the relationship between financial literacy and financial behaviour among Sri Lankan undergraduate students, bearing in mind the differences between accounting and non-accounting students. Addressing this research gap, the study will provide insight into the factors that influence financial literacy and will recommend ways in which financial literacy education can be improved in Sri Lankan universities by enabling students to make prudent financial decisions on the acquisition of goods and management of personal finances.

Academically its reflect, students following accounting and finance courses are projected to illustrate higher levels of financial literacy, given their instruction on matters about financial reporting, decision-making, and financial management tools and techniques. On the other hand, students not pursuing

accounting courses receive lower-level instruction related to personal finances. These disparities could lead to differences among various study groups on matters pertaining to financial literacy, attitudes, and practices. Yet empirical research tends to show ambiguity on this topic and issue. While diverse studies assert that know-how can lead to positive outcomes related to improved finances (Azizah et al., 2023; Vaghela, 2023), other studies demonstrate that know-how alone can neither lead to nor result in positive outcomes unless facilitated by attitude and self-efficacy factors (Choowan et al., 2025; OECD, 2023).

For Sri Lanka, financial literacy among university students has garnered increasing attention within policy circles because of the rising cost of living and economic instability in the country that exerts pressure on young adults to demonstrate efficacy in their own finances (Kumari & Yathusanth, 2024; Senarathna & Anuradha, 2024). Although previous studies on the topic exist with restricted focus, little empirical research has ever been done to investigate differences pertaining to accounting and non-accounting students among undergraduates of Sri Lankan universities on related dimensions of financial literacy and behavioural outcomes (Bogahawaththe & Sugathadasa, 2020). This aspect holds considerable significance within educational and socio-economic paradigms because of the importance attached to producing financially capable students among Sri Lankans. Accordingly, this research attempts to explore and examine the level of financial literacy, including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour pertaining to finance among accounting and non-accounting undergraduate students at state universities in Sri Lanka. Filling this research gap would help create more informed knowledge about how accounting discipline matters when considering finances to offer evidence-based input to make appropriate educational efforts to increase financial literacy among students at state universities.

This study will fill the literature gap by investigating and comparing the level of

financial literacy among accounting and non-accounting students in Sri Lankan state universities. Therefore, the investigation seeks to establish whether specialist training received by accounting students provides them with higher financial literacy than other groups and whether there should be wider influences in infusing programs for financial literacy into other non-accounting curricula. In addition, the results are also useful to policymakers, educational institutions, and Sri Lankan curriculum developers in supporting strategies aimed at enhancing the financial literacy of all university students. It is developing a generation of financially literate graduates in Sri Lanka who can start building a more financially conscious and resilient population (Dewmini et al., 2023).

A major strength of this study would be that it was conducted within the Sri Lankan context, where research has increasingly advocated for the significance of accounting/finance literacy among students, given the growing economic pressures, inflation, and increasing incidents of cost-of-living problems (Kumari & Yathusanth, 2024; Senarathna & Anuradha, 2024). By taking into account state universities in Sri Lanka, among others, there would indeed exist inherent local significance while providing empirical evidence showing how research can pragmatically relate to socio-economic factors prevalent within the state's ambience. The other significant aspect would perhaps be related to how accounting versus non-accounting students show diverse possibilities that can empirically unveil how students associated with management or accounting courses show more extensive knowledge associated with accounting/finance literacy compared to students with different courses (Bogahawaththe & Sugathadasa, 2020; Kalinga & Perera, 2024).

In addition to which considerable significance would exist with how research tends to connect knowledge with behavior or well-being associated with human life showing how knowledge among other areas related to human life tends not to lead to positive



outcomes if not associated with positive attitudes related to human life (Choovan, Daovisan, & Suwanwong, 2025; OECD, 2023; Lone & Bhat, 2022). Lastly, considerable emphasis would exist with how research tends to define research gaps and objectives associated with research objectives showing how research tends to exist with how knowledge tends not to exist with positive outcomes but how more significant knowledge related to human life tends to define research gaps associated with research related to how different courses among students show diverse problems associated with research investigations (Dewmini, Wijekumara, & Sugathadasa, 2023; Kumari & Yathusanth, 2024).

Therefore, this study tries to explore and investigate the knowledge, skill level, attitude, and behaviour related to finances among accounting and non-accounting students at the state universities of Sri Lanka. Closing this gap would help bring more informed knowledge about the importance of the accounting discipline in considering finances, providing input into educational efforts to increase knowledge among students at state universities.

Literature review

The definition of financial literacy can be described as the ability to understand and apply the concepts of finance when making sound personal decisions. That means it involves the understanding of basic concepts associated with money management, savings, investment, credit, insurance, and risk management. As indicated by Lusardi and Mitchell (2007), it is defined as the ability to make proficient choices concerning finance for monetary prosperity; it includes compound interest, knowing the difference between nominal and real values, and managing one's financial situation.

Various definitions of financial literacy have been proposed, each emphasising different dimensions. For instance, Remund (2010) defined financial literacy as "the degree to which one understands key financial concepts

and possesses the ability and confidence to manage personal finances through appropriate short-term decision-making and sound judgment" (p. 284). From this comes a broader meaning that includes not only knowledge but also one's confidence in applying the concept in real life. Similarly, according to Chardin (2011), it is the person's capacity to feel capable of making informed judgments and effective decisions regarding the use and management of finances. Likewise, Mason and Wilson (2000) conceptualised it as processing information to make decisions and understanding the financial consequences of the decisions made.

Financial literacy is generally defined as the knowledge of basic concepts of finance that enables individuals to make informed and efficient financial decisions for long-term financial wealth. The main components that comprise financial literacy include compound interest, understanding nominal versus real values, and prudent financial decision-making in securing financial prosperity (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2007). The basic elements of financial literacy, as identified by Lusardi and Mitchell (2007), are: basic personal finance knowledge, money management, credit and debt management, saving and investment, and risk management.

In Indonesia, the Financial Service Authority (Otoritas Jasa Keuangan) defines financial literacy as "the process of improving knowledge, confidence, and skills that enable people to manage their finances effectively." The definition shows that people need to understand financial services and products to build better financial habits, which lead to success. The broader meaning is that financial literacy covers the ability not only to acquire knowledge but also to develop the necessary skills and behaviours for financial success. The information helps us evaluate student financial literacy through these findings. The students plan to learn financial management skills, which will help them handle their money needs during university and after graduation.



Academic researchers have conducted studies which examined financial literacy levels between students who study accounting and those who do not. Edirisinghe et al. (2017) explored 223 management undergraduates at three Sri Lankan universities and reported that most of the students possessed reasonable financial literacy. The assessment showed that accounting students achieved better results when it came to money management and investment topics. The research indicates that accounting students develop better financial decision-making abilities because their academic studies provide them with relevant knowledge.

Financial literacy levels experience direct effects from the various demographic elements which exist in society. The research by Kim and Sherraden (2014) shows that gender and socioeconomic status affect financial literacy assessment results because men tend to achieve higher scores in these evaluations. People with higher economic status gain access to better financial education opportunities and resources, which help them improve their financial knowledge. The research results demonstrate that financial education programs should develop teaching methods which address the unique educational requirements of various population segments.

Another influencing factor is the pre-university exposure to and quality of financial education the individual has received. Students specializing in accounting majors generally have an earlier exposure to finance-related subjects among their peers. This gives them some advantage. Edirisinghe et al. (2017) find that this is also true in Sri Lankan universities, and that accounting students score higher in financial literacy. Similarly, academic discipline is a great determinant of students' financial knowledge and behavior. Non-accounting students generally have less exposure to budgeting, planning, and investment management, and lack the ability to manage their personal finances.

Ramadhan and Susilo (2019) conducted a comparative study at the State University of Yogyakarta, using a sample of 178 economics students and analysing year intake, study programs, and gender. The study found that there is a significant difference in financial literacy between the year of intake and the study program, but not gender. These study findings suggest that financial literacy levels vary by academic background and, therefore, demand educational interventions sensitive to the needs of students from different programs.

Financial literacy includes the skills to analyse financial statements and assess the financial performance of a business. According to Edirisas (2010), accounting information is not only important to determine profit or loss, but also cash flows and financial positions. However, most owners of businesses, especially in SMEs, lack accounting skills to make financial decisions in an enterprise (Andhika & Damayanti, 2017; Norkamsiah et al., 2017; Dang-Duc, 2011. In small firms, this could result in minimal bookkeeping.

Financial literacy still depends on such demographic factors. Some evidence is found, although stereotypes claim that women have less financial management skills, Kim and Sherraden (2014) find that females in developing countries are increasingly managing SMEs and, in turn, highly contributing to their family and national economic welfare. These findings help contextualise the need for students to be financially literate to ensure personal and professional competency.

Sarigül (2014) surveyed 1,127 students from three universities with a 29-item financial literacy measurement instrument that inquired about saving and spending, banking, risk and insurance, and investment knowledge, as well as general knowledge. With the use of demographic variables, it was shown that financial literacy interacts significantly with student characteristics; therefore, university curricula should integrate financial education since financial literacy influences students' financial behaviour. Knowledge, skills and



self-confidence allow informed financial decision-making! Programs are especially necessary for non-accounting students, who often have gaps in their knowledge base. This study tries to do a comparative analysis of the financial literacy level of accounting and non-accounting students in Sri Lankan state universities. By analysing factors affecting the level of financial literacy, this study will contribute to developing financial literacy in the Sri Lankan education system and students' financial decision-making behaviours.

More recent studies additionally support this concept of the multidimensionality of financial literacy. Dewmini et al. (2023) uncovered that digital financial literacy, which integrates knowledge, digital skills, and technology usage, has a substantial influence on the financial behaviour of management undergraduates in Sri Lanka. Additionally, Kumari and Yathusanth (2024) found that financial literacy regarding risk, savings, investments, and loans has a significant impact on their financial planning and cash management. Bogahawaththe and Sugathadasa (2020) found that demographic factors include faculty or major, confirming its influence on literacy and supporting the need for a focus on accounting or management students as one population.

International studies findings, stating that Kamel and Sahid (2021) found positive impacts of financial literacy on financial behaviour in a Malaysian university student sample, while Vaghela (2023) identified that, in Indian undergraduates, both literacy and attitude predict responsible financial behaviour. Meta-analytic evidence underlines the mediating effect of financial self-efficacy: if students are confident in their financial competencies, like managing savings, they can translate knowledge into behaviours, like budgeting and avoiding debt (Choowan, Daovisan, & Suwanwong, 2025; Lone & Bhat, 2022).

Theoretical underpinnings boost the argument for why to choose dimensions for study. Self-Efficacy Theory proposes how perceived

capability affects behavior and motivation, since students with more efficacy with finances will likely be able to utilize knowledge for financial success (Lone and Bhat, 2022). Human Capital Theory argues that improvement in knowledge about finances would increase capability and decision-making (Azizah et al., 2023). These theories explain why dimensions like Financial Skills, Personal Financial Management, and Awareness are chosen while considering other dimensions like credit or risk literacy that could sharpen these dimensions further.

Although this research concentrates on these three dimensions, it acknowledges that there could be a benefit to incorporating other constructs into this research. Previous research has found it necessary to incorporate digital literacy constructs, behavioural attitude constructs, and constructs of self-efficacy to gain a more well-rounded level of financial capability (Dewmini et al., 2023; Choowan et al., 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

This quantitative research approach utilises a cross-sectional survey design since the study focuses on differences between accounting and non-accounting undergraduate students in Sri Lankan state universities regarding financial literacy. The quantitative approach is therefore called for, as it is suitable for the objective measurement of financial literacy dimensions, enabling statistical techniques for comparing groups (Creswell, 2014). In particular, the survey method is appropriate when one needs to get standardised data from many respondents over a limited time.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study consist of undergraduate students studying at Sri Lankan state universities, as identified by the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka. The most recent statistics from the UGC report that state universities accommodate a considerable share of undergraduate students



studying in various disciplines, including accounting, management, science, and engineering. From this, six state universities were selected, which were accessible, as well as representative of both accounting and non-accounting academic streams. A convenience sampling technique was employed due to time and logistical constraints.

A total of 208 undergraduate students participated in the study, in which respondents were classified as accounting students and non-accounting students, with 104 students in each group. This is considered an acceptable number of samples for non-parametric comparison of groups and has sufficient statistical power for meaningful interpretation.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis of this study is the individual undergraduate student. Each response reflects a student's level of financial skills, personal financial management behaviour, and financial literacy awareness.

Questionnaire Design and Instrument Adaptation

A questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The instrument was tailored from previous empirical studies on financial literacy and financial behaviour, instead of only international toolkits. The questionnaire was especially developed using the following studies:

- Personal Financial Management: adapted from Edirisinghe, Keerthipala, and Amarasinghe (2017); Ariffin, Sulong, and Abdullah (2017)
- Financial Literacy Awareness: adapted from Lone and Bhat 2022
- Financial Skills: adapted from Lone and Bhat 2022
- Overall Financial Literacy Structure: based primarily on Edirisinghe, Keerthipala, and Amarasinghe 2017

It is expected that these studies conducted in South Asian and developing country settings make their topics especially relevant to Sri Lankan undergraduates.

The questionnaire measured financial literacy as a multidimensional construct using the following three dimensions:

(i) Financial Skills

This dimension of understanding gauges students' ability to apply their knowledge of finance to real-life situations, such as simple calculations involving rates of interest, savings, and decision-making on financial aspects. Items have been adapted mainly from Lone and Bhat (2022).

(ii) Personal Financial Management

This dimension considers the students' financial behaviour in terms of budgeting, saving, managing expenditure, and debt management. Items were adapted from works by Edirisinghe, Keerthipala, and Amarasinghe (2017) and Ariffin, Sulong, and Abdullah (2017).

(iii) Financial Literacy Awareness

This dimension assesses the awareness of students regarding their understanding of financial concepts and confidence in handling personal financial matters. These items have been adapted from Lone and Bhat (2022)

All the attitudinal and behavioural items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from:

- 1-Strongly Disagree
- 2-Disagree
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 – Agree
- 5-Strongly Agree

Additionally, structured items were used to collect demographic information about the participants' academic stream, year of study, and gender.

Operationalisation of Variables

The key variables of the study were operationalised as follows:

Independent Variable

- **Educational Stream:**
 - Accounting students = 1
 - Non-Accounting students = 0

Dependent Variable

- **Financial Literacy**, measured through three dimensions:
 1. Financial Skills *Lone and Bhat (2022)*.
 2. Personal Financial Management *Edirisinghe, Keerthipala, and*

Amarasinghe (2017) and Ariffin, Sulong, and Abdullah (2017).

3. Financial Literacy Awareness *Lone and Bhat (2022)*

Each dimension was measured with several items, and composite scores were computed by averaging the responses for each construct.

While there is a wide conceptualization of financial literacy as a combination of knowledge, skills, behaviour, and attitudes, prior empirical literature indicates that there is no universally accepted single measurement framework. Various dimensions of financial literacy are operationalized by researchers based on their objectives, population, and contextual relevance.

In the present study, financial literacy is operationalized along three dimensions, namely: Financial Skills, Personal Financial Management, and Financial Literacy Awareness. Although behaviour and attitudes are not constructs in themselves, they are indirectly captured through Personal Financial Management, as it reflects the actual financial behaviours of budgeting and saving, and Financial Literacy Awareness is representative of students' financial perceptions and attitudinal orientation. The financial literacy operationalisation in this study is based on previously validated empirical models by Edirisinghe, Keerthipala, and Amarasinghe (2017), Ariffin, Sulong, and Abdullah (2017), and Lone and Bhat (2022). Thus, using these dimensions will serve the purpose of maintaining consistency in methodology, appropriateness in the context,

and comparability with results from earlier studies.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this research is based on a multidimensional construct of financial literacy, encompassing Financial Skills, Personal Financial Management, and Financial Literacy Awareness, identified as significant components determining the overall financial literacy of the respondents. Financial Skills, developed from the ability to employ basic concepts of finances to concrete situations, was formulated based on the methods of Lone & Bhat (2022). Personal Financial Management, identified through behavioural parameters of budgeting, saving, and costs, was developed from the perspectives of Edirisinghe, Keerthipala, & Amarasinghe (2017) and Ariffin, Sulong, & Abdullah (2017). The development of Financial Literacy Awareness, based on the perspectives of Lone & Bhat (2022), was designed to encompass the perceived capacity of the respondents to tackle finances. These dimensions combined provide a comprehensive structure for the adaptability of Financial Literacy, according to the structure suggested by Edirisinghe, Keerthipala, & Amarasinghe (2017), to be appropriate for measuring literacy among Sri Lanka's undergraduates.

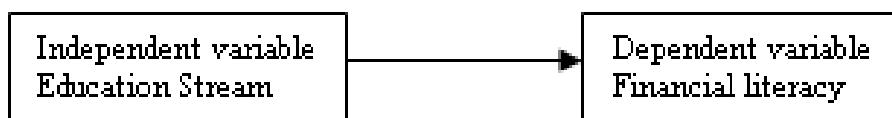


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Constructed by the Researcher using existing literature

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ascertained through the review of the questionnaire by subject experts in accounting and finance. The construct validity of the instrument is well supported since all the questionnaire items were adapted from previously published and validated empirical studies.

A pilot test was conducted before the main data collection. The internal consistency reliability of the full financial literacy scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which returned a value of 0.734. This value exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, hence the instrument possesses acceptable reliability for social science research.

Data Collection Method

Primary data were gathered using an online survey through Google Forms. The link to the questionnaire was shared among undergraduate students of the selected state universities via official academic communication platforms and through students' networks. Participation in the survey was purely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data

submission. The responses were automatically recorded in Google Sheets and later exported to SPSS for data analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was done using SPSS statistical software. First, descriptive statistics, including mean, median, standard deviation, and frequency distributions, were computed to summarise the financial skills, personal financial management behaviours, and financial literacy awareness of students. Accordingly, the second step was to perform normality tests, including the Shapiro–Wilk and Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests. Since the latter indicated that the distribution of data was not normal—the p-value was less than 0.05—non-parametric statistical methods were employed. In testing whether there is a statistically significant difference between the accounting and non-accounting students with respect to the three dimensions of financial literacy, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed. This test is utilised in comparing two independent groups where the normality assumption is violated.

Analysis & Findings

Reliability test

Table 1 shows that the reliability analysis reveals that the overall scale of measurement has an acceptable level of internal consistency with a value of Cronbach's Alpha = 0.734. It therefore confirms that this instrument can successfully measure related constructs of financial literacy among target population groups. Additionally, because the same standardised instrument was applied equally to accounting and non-accounting students under equal circumstances, the reliability associated with measurements can safely be regarded to be equal among different streams and hence justifies the accomplishment of comparison among group statistics related to these measurement

Tables 2 and 3 show the descriptive statistics for accounting and non-accounting students. The analysis outcomes show conclusively that accounting students score higher mean scores on every aspect of financial literacy when compared to non-accounting students. Particularly speaking, the mean score pertaining to accounting students' financial skill (Mean = 3.39) can be compared to that of non-accounting students (Mean = 3.21). Similarly, it can also be noted that accounting students' mean score (3.59) for personal management of finances is higher when compared to the mean score (3.39) of non-accounting students. Most importantly, accounting students' mean score (3.53) on financial literacy awareness can be compared to that of non-accounting students (mean score = 3.41). These results confirm that accounting students exhibit relatively

Descriptive Statistics



stronger financial literacy attributes across all measured dimensions.

Normality Test

Tables 4 & 5 show the analysis of the normality test of accounting and non-accounting students. However, regarding the normality tests shown for both the Accounting and Non-Accounting groups, data on all three financial literacy variables did not meet the normality assumption. All the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk's test results in both groups had a p-value of 0.000 for each variable, which indicates that data are far from being normally distributed. That would indicate that the variables, on average, do not normally distribute the data in either of the two groups. From the result, therefore, application of non-parametric tests can be considered for the further testing process, for example, the Mann-Whitney U Test without any assumptions for normality in data to analyses the differences in the Accounting and Non-Accounting groups.

Mann-Whitney Test

Tables 6 and 7 show the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test. The results show that although the accounting group consistently had higher mean ranks for all three financial literacy variables, namely Financial Skill, Personal Financial Management, and Financial Literacy Awareness, than the non-accounting group, the differences in means between the two groups were not statistically significant. The p-value for Financial Skill is 0.127, indicating no significant difference between the groups. Also, the p-value for Personal Financial Management is 0.058, which is above the threshold of 0.05 but only by a margin and hence could mean that although the difference is not statistically significant, it is close enough to the significance. The last is the p-value for financial literacy awareness, which is 0.308

and hence confirms no significant difference between the two groups in this variable.

Where the students of accounting always tend to obtain higher scores in these measures of financial literacy, yet statistical tests show such differences not large enough to become significant. Hence, these results would imply that educational streams, or accounting versus non-accounting, bear not that much influence on financial literacy, or at least regarding the variables measured within this study. This would therefore imply that other factors, whether individual characteristics or influences from the outside, may be more influential in shaping financial literacy outcomes than the choice of educational stream.

Although accounting students scored higher mean ranks on skill, personal management, and awareness of financial literacy, the lack of statistical significance implies that accounting education alone cannot determine students' level of financial literacy competencies. It can be inferred from previous research studies that accounting education alone cannot determine students' level of financial literacy competencies because accounting education influences financial literacy competencies not only at school but at an informal level too because of different factors like learning at an informal level, family backgrounds, and experience with online financial institut

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.734	4



Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Accounting

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Educational stream	104	1	1	1.00	.000
Financial Skill	104	1.00	5.00	3.3894	.74377
Personal Financial Management	104	1.00	5.00	3.5946	.71687
Financial Literacy Awareness	104	1.00	5.00	3.5337	.78256
Valid N (listwise)	104				
a. educational stream = Accounting					

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Non-Accounting

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Educational stream	104	2	2	2.00	.000
Financial Skill	104	1.00	5.00	3.2091	.89910
Persona financial Management	104	1.00	5.00	3.3942	.82014
Financial Literacy Awareness	104	1.00	4.67	3.4135	.79201
Valid N (listwise)	104				
a. educational stream = non-accounting					

Table 4: Tests of Normality for Accounting

	Educational stream	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Financial Skill	Accounting	.156	104	.000	.924	104	.000
Personal Financial Management	Accounting	.150	104	.000	.901	104	.000
Financial Literacy Awareness	Accounting	.142	104	.000	.919	104	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

b. Educational stream = Accounting

Table 5: Tests of Normality for Non-Accounting

	Educational stream	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Financial Skill	Non-Accounting	.158	104	.000	.966	104	.008
Personal Financial Management	Non-Accounting	.152	104	.000	.945	104	.000
Financial Literacy Awareness	Non-Accounting	.157	104	.000	.921	104	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

b. educational stream = non-accounting

Table 6: Mann–Whitney U Test Ranks for Financial Literacy Dimensions by Educational Stream

	Educational stream	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Financial Skill	Accounting	104	110.78	11521.50
	Non-Accounting	104	98.22	10214.50
	Total	208		
Personal Financial Management	Accounting	104	112.33	11682.00
	Non-Accounting	104	96.67	10054.00
	Total	208		
Financial Literacy Awareness	Accounting	104	108.73	11307.50
	Non-Accounting	104	100.27	10428.50
	Total	208		

Table 7: Mann–Whitney U Test Statistics for Differences in Financial Literacy Dimensions

	Financial Skill	Personal Financial Management	Financial Literacy Awareness
Mann-Whitney U	4754.500	4594.000	4968.500
Wilcoxon W	10214.500	10054.000	10428.500
Z	-1.525	-1.898	-1.020
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.127	.058	.308
a. Grouping Variable: Educational stream			

Discussion

It was found that accounting students scored significantly higher than non-accounting students on all three aspects of Financial Literacy: Financial Skill, Personal Financial Management, and Financial Literacy Awareness. The mean scores recorded were 3.39 for accounting students on Financial Skill, 3.59 on Personal Financial Management, and 3.53 on Financial Literacy Awareness, while those for non-accounting students were 3.21, 3.39, and 3.41, respectively. These results indicate that accounting students perceive themselves as relatively more capable in terms of financial literacy than non-accounting students.

However, the Mann-Whitney U tests indicated the lack of significance in these differences (Financial Skill = 0.127; Personal Financial Management = 0.058; Financial Literacy Awareness = 0.308), which means the stream of education doesn't cause any significant variation in the level of financial literacy among the students of the universities. Evidence has been obtained in support of the findings of previous studies, which have indicated the mixed significance of educational backgrounds in the performance of the students in relation to financial literacy. According to the findings obtained by various authors, such as Edirisnghe, Keerthipala, and Amarasinghe (2017) and Kamel and Sahid (2021), the students coming from backgrounds associated with finance have shown slightly better understanding but have largely been affected by factors such as "individual experience and practice" in the case of financial outcomes associated with financial literacy.

On the other hand, Choowan, Daovisan, and Suwanwong (2025) showed that when considering the application of studies related to financial literacy, differences found among students related to different streams were not significant at times, showing how external factors more often affect these aspects of study applications.

The reliability of the instrument was established with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.734, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). It can thus be said that these items are measured with reliability associated with those constructs of financial literacy. Although these items measured reliably, the lack of statistical significance of differences among accounting and other students could mean small effect sizes or unobservable individual differences. It was pointed out that socio-economic factors, education of immediate families, individual self-efficacy related to finances, and access to non-formal or cyber-based education related to finances can significantly affect outcomes related to finances (Lone and Bhat, 2022; OECD, 2023). According to research carried out by Azizah, Susilaningih, and Noviani (2023), knowledge related to finances cannot mean critical differences if not applied or motivated to achieve actual outcomes related to finances.

These findings indicate that while accounting students feel they have stronger abilities regarding financial literacy, stream does not seem to greatly affect financial literacy outcomes. There could be other factors associated with non-academic domains that could greatly impact these outcomes. These could range from individual experience with finances to other factors like resource acquisition and desire to learn about finances. The increasing effect of digitalisation on financial literacy among students was discussed by Dewmini, Wijekumara, and Sugathadasa (2023).

It's important to note that because it's been conducted on a relatively small sample ($N = 208$) specific to students at one university, there could well be factors at play that limit the ability to generalise outcomes. It's also important to note that because it relies on subjective responses to generate outcomes, it could well be subject to response biases. Regarding research recommendations to gain more knowledge around these matters, larger samples from multiple universities with longitudinal studies to evaluate the growth of



these students' literacy over time would greatly benefit studies going forward. Further factors like socio-economic status and digital financial experience could well offer other insights into outcomes, too. On how these outcomes could well inform practice at an educational level to offer improved outcomes for students regardless of stream, Kumari (2020) and Kumari and Yathusanth (2024) suggest incorporating education with virtual platforms for practice exercises related to finances, with Vaghela (2023) recommending related practice exercises.

Conclusion

The test results obtained from this research prove that although accounting students had a significantly higher average value for Financial Skill, Personal Financial Management, and Financial Literacy Awareness than non-accounting students, this difference is insignificant. It can thus be concluded that the academic stream is a less influential factor in the determination of the financial literacy of students. Moreover, financial literacy is found to be driven by external and personal factors, for example, family background, actual experience of practical finances, digital literacy, and personal enthusiasm to learn, rather than being driven by academic stream. These conclusions prove that the formal academic stream is ineffective in improving or increasing financial literacy unless long-term experience is gained.

These results have generated meaningful implications for institutions of higher learning, lecturers, and curriculum developers. Firstly, Financial literacy should not be limited to institutions offering accounting or finance courses; institutions of higher learning can incorporate financial literacy as a multidisciplinary skill that can be beneficial to all. The adoption of digital platforms, remote simulations, and experiential learning, underscored by authors such as Kumari (2020) and Kumari &

Yathusanth (2024), can make financial literacy learning easier and more engaging for different streams. Universities can provide financial management workshops, micro-certification courses, hands-on budgeting activities, and online financial tools that encourage students to actively apply what they learn. By emphasising learning that is driven by technology, these institutions have the capacity to provide equal opportunities that are not affected by personal backgrounds.

Future research can attempt to study financial literacy with more crowds over time to improve universality. Further, research on a longer time span can be extremely helpful about the dynamics of the phenomenon concerning financial literacy. Further, parameters such as earnings from the family, parental awareness about finances, online financial practices, digital literacy, and attitudes towards risk may be explored. Further, by using modalities like qualitative research methods, for example, by using techniques involving interviews or focus group research, deeper behavioural trends can be accessed that may be underlying basic trends revealed by survey techniques. Further, since digital financial platforms keep on undergoing dynamic changes, a study about the effects on the awareness level concerning finance on digital platforms on students can prove to be a rewarding task.

The importance or relevance of the study would be that while accounting background students might be better off than any other group in terms of their own finances, streams in colleges/schools would not affect the results in terms of financial literacy outcomes. A well-rounded, experiential, and subject-less approach towards teaching financial literacy would emerge strongly from the results obtained in this study, and with the inclusion of a futuristic, technological, and experiential approach towards learning, colleges/schools would be the game-changers in increasing literacy levels in terms of making correct financial choices concerning a complex financial world for any student.



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