Mainstreaming Northeast Tribal Women in India through Financial Education: A Systematic Review

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Mainstreaming Northeast Tribal Women in India through Financial Education: A Systematic Review

By K. Katini,1 Kaikho Hriizhiinio,2 and S Amalanathan3

Abstract

Financial education is required to enhance financial literacy for socio-economic development. This paper aims to understand the financial literacy level among the Scheduled Tribes of India, specifically the Mao-Naga tribe women of Northeast India. The current paper is based on secondary data and adheres to the steps and process of a systematic review. Prominent authors, times, tribes, countries, journals, and keywords have been identified for the comprehensive analysis. Since the goal of this paper is to review the existing literature regarding financial literacy among tribals, the findings indicate that financial education intervention, socio-cultural practices, social affinity, and early life financial experience affect individuals’ financial literacy. It has also been observed that a productive pathway to achieve financial literacy and inclusion lies in integrating financial education programs within the socio-cultural practices of tribal women. Thus, financial literacy can enhance the financial well-being that is necessary for socio-economic development among Mao-Naga tribal women. This paper can help governments, central bank regulators, and researchers know the essential elements of financial literacy and identify the pertinent areas for further empowerment among sub-groups of the population, especially among tribal women of Northeast India.

Keywords: Financial education, Socio-cultural practices, Northeast India, Mao-Naga tribe, Financial literacy, Tribal women

Introduction

Globalization, changes in life span, retirement plans, massive migrations to urban sectors, and constant financial crises necessitate financial literacy as one of the remedial practices for individuals, society, and the economy to channel financial resources and protect them from economic instability (Goyal and Kumar). Financial literacy gives individuals the confidence to manage their finances, balance their daily expenditures, save for emergencies, and plan. Financial vitality throughout people’s lifecycles and individuals’ failure to meet rudimentary standards has gained the attention of policymakers and regulators (OECD, “Ensuring Financial Education”). Financial literacy promotes financial inclusion, social inclusion, and well-being, spreading the benefits throughout the economy (Goyal and Kumar). Governments promote financial literacy to stabilize financial systems, markets, and the economic development of

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individuals and society (Bhandare et al.). Financial education interventions are required to enhance financial literacy for socio-economic development (RBI).

There have been various explanations among experts in financial education literature in response to the lack of a universal definition for financial literacy. For Huston, financial literacy conceptualizes financial knowledge for money management. According to Lusardi and Mitchell, financial literacy is understanding and knowing basic economic concepts and articulating simple calculations for financial independence. This paper considers financial literacy as a blend of financial attitude, awareness, knowledge, behavior, and skills necessary for financial well-being (OECD, OECD/INFE Toolkit). Financial literacy is an implicit topic that is not confined to social well-being alone but also has consequences for economic growth and financial independence (Goyal and Kumar). Financial literacy can impact financial security (Shohe and Srivastav), retirement plans and risk preparedness (Noviarini et al). It reduces financial exclusion from the formal financial sector (Maity) and minimizes social exclusion in society. Financial literacy enables one to be independent, meet present financial needs and uncertain future demands, and thereby attain economic well-being.

For years, Indian Scheduled Tribes (STs) have faced social and economic barriers (Guha et al.). These sub-groups are impoverished and economically vulnerable with poor infrastructure, deficient education, fewer employment opportunities (Bhandare et al.), and harsh topography. They have little access to financial resources and capabilities to uplift their well-being. Lack of engagement by governments and policymakers with tribals in strategizing developmental policy and administration has resulted in tribals feeling neglected (Guha et al.). The state’s treatment of the Northeastern tribal groups as a homogenous group, despite their heterogeneity and without considering their diverse identities, has led to negative outcomes. Anthropologists have highlighted their unique identity in the recent past, but these studies have resulted in little benefit to tribal society’s development. In this situation, it is vital to highlight the socio-economic status and demographic factors of Northeast Indian tribals.

According to the 2011 Census, India houses around 705 STs which constitute 8.6% (104.3 million people) of the total population (Ziipao). A unique tribal identity with dynamic social and cultural practices is found in Northeast India. Most people (75% of the population) are tribal (Behera and Balaji), comprising 250 tribal communities with heterogeneous languages and traditions (Nakhuru et al.). The region shares 98% of its international borders with Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and Bangladesh while sharing only 2% with other states of India and is also sandwiched between East and South Asia (Ziipao). The diverse tribals with varied social structures, identities, and territories, unlike India’s caste system (Ziipao), are vulnerable and require enhanced administration (Haokip) for their uplift. The region is socially, politically, and economically divided into valleys and hills with an unequal distribution of wealth and development. The valley dwellers enjoy better opportunities and the attention of the state. The tribals (Nagas, Kukis and Mizos) predominantly dwell on the hills, and the non-tribals (Assamese, Meiteis) in the valley. There is a vast difference in terms of civilization, culture, and tradition (Arora and Ziipao). The NCFE (National Centre for Financial Literacy) surveyed financial literacy and the region reported high performance (NCFE, “Financial Literacy and Inclusion”) in the valley regions. Yet, here the question remains: what about tribals who are excluded from the formal financial service domain? The contemporary Northeast region performs well in social development (Sangwan), but the tribals need special attention to, particularly tribal women, as they are considered vulnerable segments of society (Rink et al.). The current paper investigates the financial literacy among Mao-Nagas as they are considered one of the early receivers of formal education among the STs of Northeast India. They are recognized STs under the Constitution’s STs Order of 1950 (Kapesa, “Ethnographic Study”).
Limited financial literacy publications have emerged on tribes, but no financial literacy literature has concentrated on women in the last two decades. None of the existing literature encompasses financial literacy and socio-cultural practices. In addition, this research could not locate any financial-related literature examining the convergence of socio-cultural practices and financial education programs among tribal women. The viewpoints and significant facets of India’s tribal women are not appropriately addressed, indicating exclusion from formal financial services. However, Lusardi and Mitchell, in “The Economic Importance of Financial Literacy,” insist on implementing financial education programs targeting a subgroup population. Such gaps compelled the authors to assemble the existing literature and develop a research roadmap for the future. This research aims to highlight tangible results of the significant adoption of financial education programs through a rigorous review. This nascent systematic literature canvasses the art of holistic development with the hope of ultimately assisting governments, central banks regulators, and academic researchers for tribals’ sustainability.

**Objectives of the Study**

This article’s fundamental goal is to understand the tribal women’s current financial literacy situation in India. With the given questions, the authors determine the scope of the research:

- RQ1) What publication trend is prevalent among tribals’ financial literacy concerning times, journals, authors, and tribes in India?
- RQ2) Which themes and studies dominate the financial literacy research among Northeast Indian tribal women?
- RQ3) What have been the most current trends for the Mao-Naga tribe women’s financial literacy?
- RQ4) What research gaps can be identified with implications for future research?

**Research Methodology**

This research is undertaken to increase knowledge about the status of financial literacy among the Mao-Naga tribal women and to analyze how the research criteria and strategy are handled through this systematic literature review model. The researchers used this model due to the dearth of extant literature on the financial literacy of Mao-Naga tribal women. Systematic reviews of the literature are generally employed for nascent research as an evidence-based practice to answer research questions and determine possible solutions and effective research implications (Petticrew and Roberts). Thus, Figure 1 indicates the data retrieval process, and the study’s information is summarized in Table 1.

**Search Strategy**

Data were obtained from the academic bibliographic databases Google Scholar, Elsevier, JSTOR, OECD ilibrary, and ProQuest ABI/INFORM from 2011-2022 June. The study’s sample population included individual adults. The grey literature was justified from the stated databases through Google Scholar, Scopus, and Mendeley and confined to English-language peer-reviewed scholarly articles.

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criterion**

Selected articles were vigilantly counter checked for inclusion and consisted of only scholarly articles. A string of appropriate Boolean words like financial literacy of tribals in Northeast India, financial literacy among Mao-Nagas tribe, tribal women, Mao-Naga tribal women, and financial education interventions of tribals was used to search the articles. The
papers were screened based on full-length articles and shortlisted for final analysis. In case of exclusion, features of non-scientific research papers, magazines, notes, abstracts alone, newspapers, and non-English language articles on financial literacy were omitted.

**Screening and Assessment**

Initially, (n=2,480) studies were assessed through the Boolean words’ financial literacy, tribal women, and Mao-Naga women. During the identification, 288 articles were removed for non-peer reviewed. In screening articles, out of 2,192, 1,327 were excluded for duplication. Around 865 articles were retrieved, 288 could not be retrieved for text assessment, 577 were eligible for review, and 557 full texts were removed for non-financial literacy studies. The current paper considered 20 articles.

**Figure 1: Diagram of the Data Retrieval Process**

- Articles identified from database (n=2480)
- Articles screened (n=2192)
- Articles sought for retrieval (n=865)
- Articles assessed for eligibility (n=577)
- Articles included in review (n=20)
- Articles excluded for reasons like for non-tribal and non-financial literacy (n=557)
- Articles not retrieved (n=288)
- Articles excluded: duplicate articles removed (n=1327)
- Articles removed before screening: for non-peer reviewed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Study Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bönte and Filipiak</td>
<td>Journal of Banking and Finance</td>
<td>Financial literacy, social interaction</td>
<td>Scheduled castes (SCs) and STs</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jain and Jain</td>
<td>Journal of Land and Rural Studies</td>
<td>Financial Inclusion</td>
<td>STs of Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guha et al. (2017)</td>
<td>Development in Practice</td>
<td>Microfinance, migration</td>
<td>STs of Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>Sahoo et al. (2017)</td>
<td>Social Change</td>
<td>Financial inclusion, post office saving</td>
<td>STs of Odisha</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanda and Samanta</td>
<td>International Journal of Social Economics</td>
<td>Financial inclusion and exclusion, financial literacy</td>
<td>STs of Odisha</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Narrative review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shohe and Srivastav</td>
<td>Indian Economics Development</td>
<td>Healthcare, financial security</td>
<td>Sumi tribe of the Northeast</td>
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<td>Empirical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balakrishna and Virmani</td>
<td>The Journal of Decision Makers</td>
<td>Numeracy, financial literacy</td>
<td>STs of Andhra Pradesh</td>
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<td>Samanta and Nanda</td>
<td>International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>Financial literacy information technology, tribal area, socio-economic</td>
<td>STs of Odisha</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chidambaranathan and Guha</td>
<td>Strategic Change</td>
<td>Financial capability, microfinance, financial inclusion</td>
<td>STs of Manipur and Tripura states</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mixed Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy (2020)</td>
<td>The Review of Finance and Banking</td>
<td>Financial services, education qualification, Insurance, money management</td>
<td>Northeast India</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
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<td>Bhandare et al. (2021)</td>
<td>Strategic Change</td>
<td>Insurance, money management</td>
<td>SCs, STs, and others</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
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<td>Gangani (2021)</td>
<td>Elementary Education Online</td>
<td>Digital financial inclusion, digital banking</td>
<td>STs of Gujarat</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
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<td>Rink et al. (2021)</td>
<td>Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance</td>
<td>Gender, financial literacy, matrilineal and patrilineal culture</td>
<td>Khasi, Jaintia and Garo tribes</td>
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<td>Empirical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katini and Amalanathan</td>
<td>Journal of Positive School Psychology</td>
<td>Financial literacy, environmental sustainability</td>
<td>Mao-Naga tribe</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray et al.</td>
<td>Journal of Public Affairs</td>
<td>Accessibility, utilisation of banking service</td>
<td>STs of Odisha state</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
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Findings

A massive rise in financial literacy studies among tribals has been apparent in recent years. Extant literature has shown that the attempt to implement financial education could not succeed as the tribals’ social, economic, political, and cultural practices in India were not considered (Guha et al.). Most of India’s tribals’ extant financial literacy literature is from Odisha state, as shown in Table 1. However, the authors hardly found any literature regarding tribal women’s financial education. This research is a preliminary attempt to map the intellectual associations among the converging trends in major financial literacy works. The finding indicates that since the financial literacy field is an ever-growing subject, this paper has developed a new diversified area that supports blending financial education intervention with the cultural practices among Mao-Naga tribal women, which can deploy human capital formation in return. Globally, little literature identified vulnerable tribal populations and substantiated that financial illiteracy exists both in developing and developed economies.

Financial Education Intervention Worldwide

Fernandes et al. recommend financial education interventions in the form of financial counselling, teaching about financial education in schools, participation in seminars or workshops, and various financial literacy programs. Firli states that financial training can improve individuals’ financial literacy. Financial illiteracy is a significant social problem (Lusardi and Mitchell, “Financial Literacy around the World”) and concentrating on financial education programs is necessary (Nejad and Javid). Strong social affiliation (Noviarini et al.) and early life financial practice can positively impact financial literacy (Brown et al.). Wide financial literacy disparities exist based on ethnicity and income level (Angrisani et al.). Financial education can be imparted through professional or academic modes which can impact financial behaviour (Fan and Chatterjee) and result in the most potent outcome (Cordero and Pedraja).

Financial Literacy and Financial Practices among Tribals in India

Indian tribals have less access to formal financial resources to improve their financial well-being, and they persistently face unequal wealth distribution, social exclusion, and discrimination (Nanda and Samanta). Most tribals borrow money from lenders with a high-interest rate for medical expenses, children’s education, land purchase, loan repayment, cultivation, consumption purposes, and daughters’ marriage (Guha et al.). Utilizing banking services for credit and insurance facilities for socio-economic purposes is rare among tribals due to a lack of awareness (Ray et al.). The tribals understand basic financial literacy skills, yet inadequate education and healthcare facilities worsen their economic conditions (Balakrishna and Virmani). Social schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (Jajuo and Sukai) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana brought vulnerable tribals under the ambit of formal financial service with the personal bank account (Sa-Dhan). Possessing a personal bank account was used merely to receive benefits like the National Rural Employment Generation Scheme rather than availing credit, savings, and insurance facilities (Ray et al.).

Financial Literacy and Practice among Northeast India Tribal Women

In Northeast India, tribals lag in financial literacy and entrepreneurship compared to other social groups like the SCs (Goswami et al.), thus requiring holistic socio-economic inclusion and development. The microfinance and credit sector of the banks in the Northeast region has not reached out to the tribals in remote areas but concentrates on the valleys (Chidambaranathan and Guha). Compared to the other tribal women in India, Northeast women have high literacy due to their social status and cultural practices (Nanda and Samanta). However, Northeast tribal women have very little financial security for their healthcare
resulting from poor financial capability (Shohe and Srivastav). The region has the most inadequate microfinance outreach, recorded at only 4% (Sa-Dhan), which affects women’s well-being as they carry out the responsibility of the households. The National Council for Further Education (NCFE) conducted financial literacy with a national average of 27% and financial inclusion average of 15% across India. Overall, among all other regions, the Northeast region performed well regarding financial literacy and inclusion (NCFE, “Executive Summary”). Among the Northeastern states, Manipur state has the highest record of financial literacy at 38% and financial inclusion at 20% (NCFE, “Executive Summary”). Overall financial literacy among STs was 27%, higher than the SCs (25%) and Other backward classes (26%), and the Northeastern states have the highest representation of STs (NCFE, “Financial Literacy and Inclusion”). However, across the country, concerning gender, only 21% is recorded for women and 29% for men for financial literacy; men have 16% for financial inclusion, and women have only 11%. Therefore, with evidence from the above, it is important to study Northeast tribal women.

Financial Literacy among the Mao-Naga Tribals of Northeast India

The reason for concentrating on the Mao-Naga tribe women in this paper is that they are one of the prominent STs (M. Daniel) settled in Manipur Northeast states, and they play a pivotal role in the prosperity of the Northeastern states as they are settled along the National Highway 2 of Nagaland and Manipur (Kapesa, “The Institution of Movuo”). At the same time, there are two established market sheds solely for the Mao-Naga traders, known as Mao-Market, one at Kohima (capital of Nagaland) and another at Imphal (capital of Manipur). Most of these traders are women. Many Mao-Nagas families, mainly the women, are heavily engaged in agriculture for family sustenance (Jajuo and Sukai). These women are also engaged in SMEs in floriculture, agriculture, and pisciculture. Besides this, many are employed in insurance, banking, educational institutions, and public sectors in the Northeast region (Kapesa, “Ethnographic Study”). Specifically, Mao-Naga tribal women can contribute to the region’s socio-economic growth if they are given the opportunities to substantiate their financial literacy edge through enhanced financial education programs intertwined with their cultural practices.

The past literature indicates that the Mao-Naga women associated with social organizations, microfinance of rotating savings, and credit associations (ROSCAs) known as friendship groups, have better financial capability and money-management behavior (Chidambaranathan and Guha). The ROSCAs are traditional microfinance community-based groups formed to avail social and financial needs (Chidambaranathan and Guha). Unfortunately, not every tribal Mao-Naga woman is associated with ROSCAs but only the affluent (Chidambaranathan and Guha). Thus, this result indicates that when the Mao-Naga women are exposed to certain microfinance, they can accelerate their development opportunities. This type of microfinance could meet the substantial capital expenses of children’s education, house construction, marriages, buying vehicles, purchasing home appliances, and home renovation. Those engaged in such financial practices could increase their social capital (Sato et al.).

The Socio-Cultural Practices of the Mao-Naga Tribe

The most crucial socio-cultural practice among the Mao-Naga is the Genna system. Anthropologists used the term Genna in Northeast India to imply religious and social decrees and sanctions (Ariina, “Indigenous Perspective”). The Genna system has multi-dimensional utilities and corollaries in managing regulations, communication acceptance, and restricted behaviour in society (Kaisü). The Genna system is orally mediated and transmitted by the elders to the younger generations. Orality embodies education and is the process of knowledge transmission among the Mao-Naga tribe (Ariina, “Tribal Philosophy”). The Genna system
connotes and promotes social function, regulates law and order for a peaceful existence, and stimulates and perpetuates socio-economic life (Kaisü). One of the prominent cultural modes of communication among the Mao-Naga tribe is orality; despite the disadvantages of orality, it persists in the form of folklore, folktales, and narrations (Kaisü). Looking into this aspect of cultural practices, instructions on the importance of financial literacy among Mao-Naga tribal women may improve if they explicitly learn from their elders as part of the Genna system. According to the Genna system of the Mao-Naga tribe, the words and advice of the elderly women are regarded and respected so much as they have the final say on what is considered acceptable behavior (Kaisü). Thus, encouraging women to undertake financial education can boost tribal society. At the same time, elderly women need prior financial education and enlightenment which can be orally transmitted to the younger generation. It is important to collaborate with the Genna system while implementing financial education programs among Mao-Naga tribal women, as the Genna system is one of the most determining dimensions of the Mao-Naga tribal society.

**Financial Exclusion among Tribal Women**

Financial exclusion is when individuals do not avail and have access to the formal service and products due to a lack of awareness and opportunities. Lack of participation in income-generating activities, exclusion from political patronage, inadequate living standards (Nanda and Samanta), social discrimination, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and lack of awareness of financial products for social schemes (pensions and insurance facilities) result in poor financial management among tribal women and lead them to abject poverty. Vast financial exclusion in the Northeast region is caused by the poor bank penetration and fewer bank branches with low deposits and credit facilities compared to other regions of India (Maity and Sahu). Financial illiteracy among indigenous tribal women is prevalent in India and globally (Viswanathan et al.). Poor financial education is one of the reasons for financial exclusion among tribal women (Sahoo et al.), possibly leading them to become vulnerable to scams, bribes, and corruption. Samanta and Nanda highlight the essence of the financial education programs at the individual grassroots level by policymakers.

Special provisions for tribals in Northeast states have led to centralizing and social development (Dungdung and Pattanaik). Similarly, concentrating on tribal women’s financial education can enfold them into the formal financial system for economic growth. Rural tribals face higher financial exclusion and illiteracy than urban tribals (Ramanujam et al.). Financial service penetration in rural areas is comparatively lower among women than men (Potrich et al.). Northeastern tribal women like the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo communities with matrilineal cultures performed better in financial literacy than tribal women from patrilineal cultures (Rink et al.). These findings indicate that socio-cultural practices can influence individuals’ financial behavior.

**Discussion**

Despite research evidence on the positive influence of financial education on financial literacy (Bhandare et al.), little work has been done to translate this educational model among indigenous tribal women. Akee et al. emphasized that people with socio-economic awareness were better off regarding debt and wealth management. Therefore, research supports that specific situation-based financial education transmission can motivate women. The efficacy of the conventional financial education system mediated through high school courses, conferences, and seminars has been questioned, inviting substitute methods (Goyal and Kumar). Lusardi insists on tailoring financial education programs in various dimensions to enhance financial literacy.
The microfinance model among the tribal community in Madhya Pradesh was unsuccessful as stakeholders did not design it according to cultural practices (Guha et al.). Past literature shows that STs in India have strong social relations and rituals like marriage (Bönte and Filipiak). Conducting digital financial literacy specifically for the tribal students improved online banking knowledge and digital financial transactions (Nedungadi et al.). Thus, it reveals that no one should be left behind if given the opportunity. Certain developmental steps have been initiated for tribals, but if drastic measures are not adopted for women’s welfare, it will be a tale of misery and hopelessness for Indian tribal women (Rupavath).

The extant literature has acknowledged the centrality of the rich socio-cultural practices of Mao-Naga (Mathibo Daniel; Kapesa, “The Institution of Movuo”; Ariina, “Tribal Philosophy”; Kaisü). At the same time, the Mao-Naga tribal women strongly relate to their cultural values and social practices (Ariina; “Indigenous Perspective”; Noviarini et al.). However, the possible outcome of blending financial literacy with distinct socio-cultural values has not been acknowledged. Against this backdrop, the authors explored how financial education programs with an awareness of socio-cultural values can contribute to financial literacy. Lack of preparedness for retirement, low awareness of various social schemes, poor financial literacy, and being labelled as “underclass citizens” has prompted tribal women to withdraw from socio-economic development domains. This does not mean that Mao-Naga tribal women prefer to remain poor. They aim to live true to their socio-cultural values as tribal women. This study suggests that financial literacy measures can uplift women’s well-being and socio-economic inclusion. Imparting financial education intervention through orality (Kaisü) would be a better communication medium for social cohesiveness to elevate financial literacy. Therefore, the above evidence shows that financial education programs must integrate with diverse socio-cultural practices like the Genna system and upgrade financial literacy to improve Mao-Naga tribal women’s sustainability. The comprehensive studies reveal a productive pathway to achieve financial literacy and inclusion which lies in the integration of financial education programs with socio-cultural practices among tribal women. Thus, financial literacy can enhance the financial well-being that is necessary for socio-economic development among Mao-Naga tribal women.

The rapid transition from a traditional to a technology-driven financial system complicates the tribal women’s situation. Digital financial literacy and technology awareness may benefit individuals (Nanda and Samanta); therefore, special attention should be paid to accumulating such knowledge. Though this study emphasizes the importance of financial literacy, a serious concern is that most tribal women lack basic financial knowledge about financial systems and markets. The inability to comprehend primary financial products is a major task that needs to be addressed before launching any financial literacy campaign or policy aimed at tribal people. Hence, it is time to seriously consider and implement basic financial education programs among tribals for sustainable development. Governments, strategists, and policymakers urgently need interventions to resolve this issue. Implementing primary financial education programs in collaboration with socio-cultural practices for financial literacy and bringing tribals into the mainstream should be two sides of the same coin. Therefore, delving into tribal women’s socio-cultural and economic practices is vital to improve their financial literacy. This study can help the governments, central bank regulators, and researchers to know the essential elements of financial education among tribal women, identify the relevant areas, and pursue further inquiry. This paper supports the acquisition of financial literacy acumen which is becoming increasingly crucial for socio-economic sustainability. This is a wake-up call for the states and other stakeholders to collaborate on a multi-disciplinary approach to improve financial education and, eventually, improve the holistic well-being of vulnerable tribal populations. Attention to socio-cultural roots can
substantially enhance the effectiveness of financial education programs among indigenous tribal women.

**Conclusion and Further Research Implications**

The slow pace of the state’s initiative to include and involve tribal women in developmental strategies and decision-making processes has led to the feeling of second-class citizenship in India (Guha et al.). In this situation, it is essential to identify tribals’ social practices, economic position, and cultural affinity in order to implement financial education. Financial literacy could improve by targeting the sub-group population, considering the cultural, social, and traditional oral methods of communication and the Genna system among Mao-Naga tribal women. Although the literature on financial literacy among India’s tribal community, particularly those of the Mao-Naga tribal women, is limited, other indigenous communities worldwide show strong interlinks between financial literacy and cultural values, social affinity, gender, and social environment. Financial literacy literature among the Northeast Indian tribal women is in its nascent stage, as confirmed by the small number of studies. Thus, encouraging Mao-Naga tribal women to pursue professional courses in economics, marketing, commerce, management, and finance seems rational to reduce socio-economic exclusion and gender discrimination. The Tribal Ministry of India can support this endeavour through employment and offering incentives and scholarships on graduation. Identifying various tribal women who have achieved proficiency in entrepreneurship, banking, and other financial sectors while adhering to social affinity could become role models for reaching financial well-being. A shift in attitude among tribal women in India is another possible option to attain sustainability.

This study is not without limitations. Therefore, researchers should undertake further research among the tribal women of all the Northeastern states and undertake a study based on empirical analysis with qualitative and quantitative approaches to overcome the limitations of the present systematic review.

**Declaration**

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**Disclosure statement**

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