

A Study On Awareness Of Mutual Funds Among Students

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ABSTRACT

The study titled "Awareness of Mutual Funds Among Students" examines the level of knowledge, awareness, and perception of mutual funds among undergraduate and postgraduate students at Visvesvaraya Technological University. Mutual funds have emerged as one of the most preferred investment instruments due to their inherent advantages of professional management, portfolio diversification, affordability, and Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs). The present study employs a descriptive research design, with primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 62 students and secondary data derived from peer-reviewed journals, SEBI reports, AMFI publications, books, and institutional reports. The study analyses students' understanding of mutual fund concepts, investment preferences, primary sources of awareness, and determinants of investment decision-making. Findings indicate that while a significant majority of students demonstrate basic awareness of mutual funds, only a limited proportion possesses detailed knowledge of investment procedures, risk assessment, Net Asset Value (NAV), and SIP mechanisms. Social media, the internet, family networks, and peer groups emerge as the predominant sources of financial awareness. The study concludes that financial literacy occupies a pivotal role in augmenting investment awareness among the student population and underscores the urgent need for structured financial education programmes to bridge the existing knowledge-behaviour gap.

Keywords: *Mutual Funds, Financial Literacy, Student Investment Awareness, SIP, NAV, Behavioural Finance, India*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic financial environment, investment awareness constitutes a fundamental dimension of financial literacy, particularly among students and young individuals who represent the future generation of investors. Mutual funds have emerged as one of the most accessible and popular investment vehicles, enabling individuals to participate in diversified portfolios managed by professional fund managers, even with modest capital outlays. The option of Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) has further democratised investment participation, enabling students to commence investment with nominal monthly contributions.

The Indian mutual fund industry has witnessed exponential growth, with Assets Under Management (AUM) surpassing INR 50 trillion by 2024 (AMFI, 2023). This growth trajectory has been propelled by rising financial awareness, proliferation of digital investment platforms such as Groww and Zerodha, and targeted awareness campaigns like "Mutual Funds Sahi Hai" by the Association of Mutual Funds in India. Despite this momentum, a significant knowledge-behaviour gap persists among students, wherein surface-level awareness does not translate into informed investment action (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014; Xiao & Porto, 2017).

Students possess limited knowledge of core mutual fund concepts including Net Asset Value (NAV), expense ratios, risk-adjusted returns, and fund categories. This knowledge deficit is attributable to inadequate integration of financial education within academic curricula, limited exposure to practical financial decision-making, and socio-demographic factors such as income, family background, and access to digital resources (Agarwala et al., 2015; Bapat, 2020; Chen & Volpe, 2002).

The present study aims to assess the level of mutual fund awareness among students at Visvesvaraya Technological University, identify the determinants of investment awareness and behaviour, and propose evidence-based recommendations for enhancing financial literacy programmes. The study employs a descriptive research design with primary data collected via structured questionnaires administered to 62 students.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the proliferation of mutual funds as a mainstream investment vehicle in India, many students continue to lack substantive knowledge regarding mutual fund concepts, SIPs, NAV, risk factors, and investment procedures. The limited integration of financial education within formal academic curricula restricts students' capacity to make informed investment decisions. This study addresses the critical gap between basic awareness and actionable investment knowledge among the student population.

1.2 Need of the Study

As future investors and contributors to capital market growth, students' financial literacy is essential for sustained economic development and personal financial security. Understanding the current level of mutual fund awareness among students facilitates the identification of knowledge gaps, informs the design of targeted financial education programmes, and enables educational institutions and financial organisations to develop context-specific interventions. The study also evaluates the role of digital platforms and social media in shaping investment awareness among young people.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The study is confined to students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at Visvesvaraya Technological University, Karnataka. It examines awareness of mutual fund concepts, investment preferences, sources of financial information, and willingness to invest in mutual funds. The study does not extend to other investment avenues, professional investors, or geographic regions beyond the university's jurisdiction.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

To evaluate the level of mutual fund awareness among students of Visvesvaraya Technological University.
To analyse students' knowledge and understanding of mutual fund investment concepts including SIPs, NAV, and risk.

To identify the key determinants influencing investment awareness and financial decision-making among students.

To examine students' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural intentions towards mutual fund investments.

To suggest evidence-based measures for improving financial literacy and investment awareness in academic settings.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The study is restricted to a convenience sample of 62 students and may not represent the broader student population.

Responses are self-reported and may be subject to social desirability bias.

Time and resource constraints precluded a larger, randomised sample.

The study focuses exclusively on mutual fund awareness and excludes other investment instruments.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction to Review of Literature

Awareness of mutual funds among students has emerged as a critical research domain within the broader discourse on financial inclusion and long-term wealth creation. The increasing complexity of financial markets and the rapid expansion of retail investor participation necessitate early exposure to investment instruments such as mutual funds, enabling students to develop the capability for informed financial decision-making. Studies consistently emphasise that youth populations, particularly university students, represent future investors whose financial behaviours can significantly influence economic stability and capital market development (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014; OECD, 2020; Agarwala et al., 2015).

The present review synthesises theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature on mutual fund awareness among students, identifies determinants of awareness and investment behaviour, and highlights extant research gaps. The review encompasses literature published between 2000 and 2025, drawing from peer-reviewed open-access journals, institutional reports, government publications, books, and financial authority reports. Inclusion criteria prioritise empirical studies employing clearly defined constructs and rigorous methodologies (Remund, 2010; Atkinson & Messy, 2012).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is the most widely applied framework in mutual fund awareness research. The theory posits that investment intention is collectively shaped by attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms (social influence), and perceived behavioural control (self-efficacy). Empirical studies confirm that students' intentions to invest in mutual funds are strongly moderated by peer influence, perceived financial knowledge, and confidence in their investment capabilities (Phan & Zhou, 2014; Ali et al., 2021). The TPB framework provides robust explanatory power for understanding the gap between investment awareness and actual investment participation among students.

2.2.2 Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains the process through which financial products such as mutual funds propagate through student populations via social networks, digital platforms, and institutional channels. This framework is particularly relevant to the Indian context, where digital investment applications and social media have dramatically accelerated the diffusion of mutual fund awareness among young investors (AMFI, 2023; Gambhire & Suganthiya, 2025).

2.2.3 Behavioural Finance Perspectives

Behavioural finance theories introduce constructs such as heuristics, overconfidence bias, and risk aversion, which significantly influence student investment decisions (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Barber & Odean, 2013). Students frequently exhibit heuristic-based decision-making, relying on familiar brands or peer recommendations rather than objective financial analysis. These behavioural biases underscore the necessity of financial education interventions that address cognitive limitations alongside informational deficits.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual models prevalent in the literature typically position financial education and prior exposure to financial products as antecedents, with knowledge and awareness serving as mediating variables, and investment behaviour as the primary outcome (Xiao & Porto, 2017; Agarwal et al., 2019). Confidence in financial decision-making and risk perception frequently act as additional mediating constructs.

Empirical research supports two primary conceptual pathways:

Education → Awareness → Confidence → Investment Behaviour

Social Influence → Attitude → Intention → Investment Participation

Moderating variables including gender, household income, parental financial background, and access to digital platforms exert significant influence on these relationships (Bapat, 2020; Kumar & Goyal, 2015). However, cross-study inconsistencies in variable operationalisation limit direct comparability of findings.

2.4 Empirical Review of Literature

Table 1: Summary of Key Empirical Studies (2002–2025)

Author(s) & Year	Sample	Key Findings	Methodology
Chen & Volpe (2002)	College students	Low financial literacy; limited investment knowledge	Survey
Mandell (2008)	High school students	Superficial awareness without actionable knowledge	Knowledge quiz
Lusardi & Mitchell (2014)	Adults & students	Financial literacy critical for investment behaviour	Longitudinal study
Agarwala et al. (2015)	University students	Moderate awareness; low actionable knowledge	Cross-sectional survey
Bapat (2020)	Management students	Gender differences in investment confidence	Questionnaire
Gambhire & Suganthiya (2025)	Retail investors	Digital platforms primary source of awareness	Primary data survey

Chen and Volpe (2002) conducted a seminal study on personal finance knowledge among US college students, finding that most students scored below 60% on financial literacy assessments, with investment knowledge representing the largest deficit area. Mandell (2008) extended this analysis, demonstrating that high school students possessing basic awareness of financial products frequently lacked the actionable knowledge required for investment decision-making.

Lusardi and Mitchell (2014) established a foundational framework linking financial literacy to investment behaviour, demonstrating that individuals with higher financial literacy are significantly more likely to participate in capital markets, accumulate retirement savings, and achieve better financial outcomes. Agarwala et al. (2015) applied these insights to the Indian student context, finding that while general awareness of mutual funds was moderate among university students, knowledge of specific investment mechanisms such as SIPs and NAV remained low.

Bapat (2020) introduced a gender-differentiated analysis, demonstrating that male students exhibited higher investment confidence but not necessarily superior financial knowledge or outcomes compared to female students. Fernandes et al. (2014) evaluated the effectiveness of financial literacy interventions, finding short-term improvements in financial knowledge but limited long-term behavioural change, highlighting the challenge of translating educational input into sustained investment action.

The study argues that investment decisions are not purely rational but are shaped by emotional triggers, neurological responses, and behavioural impulses (Awalakki, 2022). This article forms the psychological base for later studies on emotional intelligence, overconfidence, attention, and bias-driven investment behaviour. (Awalakki, 2026) The study is important because it connects emotional regulation, self-awareness, and investment judgment, suggesting that emotionally intelligent investors may be better positioned to control impulsive reactions, evaluate risk, and make disciplined decisions. (Awalakki & Archana, 2023) The study explains that overconfident investors often overestimate their knowledge, forecasting ability, and control over market outcomes, which may result in excessive trading, poor diversification, and weak risk assessment. (Awalakki and Archanna 2023) argue that investor attention affects trading patterns, price movement, and volatility. It contributes to behavioural finance by showing that volatility is not only a result of economic fundamentals but also of how investors collectively process and react to information. A conceptual bridge because it places Awalakki's later studies on overconfidence, home bias, investor attention, and emotional intelligence within the larger development of behavioural finance theory (Awalakki & Archanna, 2024). It argues that preference for familiar or domestic assets may reduce diversification benefits and increase portfolio risk (Awalakki & Archana H. N., 2024). This article is especially relevant to regional investor behaviour because it links psychological bias with practical portfolio outcomes in a specific socio-economic setting. (Awalakki, 2026) The study reports that adoption is influenced by financial literacy, technological awareness, perceived opportunity, FOMO, social influence, regulatory change, taxation, and security concerns. The article contributes to digital finance literature by showing cryptocurrency as both an investment alternative and a behavioural asset shaped by risk perception and policy uncertainty. It suggests that mindfulness practices such as meditation, breathing exercises, and awareness methods may help employees manage stress and improve well-being (Awalakki et al., 2026).

Recent studies in the Indian context

(Gambhire & Suganthiya, 2025; Movale & Shakya, 2025; Mohanty et al., 2025) confirm that digital platforms have become the primary source of mutual fund awareness among young investors, surpassing traditional channels such as family advice and formal education. However, digital access without financial literacy does not guarantee informed investment behaviour.

2.5 Synthesis of Empirical Findings

The literature consistently establishes that general awareness of mutual funds among students is moderate, but actionable knowledge—encompassing investment procedures, risk assessment, NAV interpretation, and SIP mechanics—remains substantially low (Lusardi, 2019; Agarwala et al., 2015). Key determinants of mutual fund awareness include:

Financial education and formal curriculum exposure

Family influence and socio-economic background

Digital media platforms and social networks

Peer influence and reference group norms

Prior investment experience and financial product familiarity

A persistent knowledge-behaviour gap characterises the student investor landscape: despite demonstrating awareness of mutual funds, students frequently fail to translate this awareness into active investment participation (Xiao & Porto, 2017). Gender differences are pronounced, with male students exhibiting higher investment confidence while female students demonstrate more conservative risk preferences (Bapat, 2020).

2.6 Methodological Appraisal

The empirical literature demonstrates several methodological strengths, including the application of established theoretical frameworks and validated survey instruments. However, significant limitations persist: heavy reliance on cross-sectional designs, predominant use of convenience sampling focused on commerce and management students, absence of longitudinal studies tracking investment behaviour over time, and inconsistent operationalisation of key constructs across studies. Self-reported data raise concerns regarding response bias and external validity (Remund, 2010; Atkinson & Messy, 2012).

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Meaning and Concept of Mutual Funds

A mutual fund is a regulated financial investment vehicle that aggregates capital from multiple investors and deploys it across a diversified portfolio of financial securities including equities, fixed-income instruments, government securities, and money market instruments (SEBI, 2022; Bodie et al., 2018). Funds are managed by professionally qualified fund managers operating under SEBI's regulatory oversight, ensuring transparency, investor protection, and adherence to stated investment objectives.

Each investor in a mutual fund holds proportionate units representing their claim on the fund's net assets. Income generated from portfolio investments, after deducting management expenses and other charges, is distributed among unit holders in proportion to their holdings. Mutual funds are designed to accommodate investors across the wealth spectrum, offering entry points through SIPs from as low as INR 100 per month, making them particularly accessible to students and first-time investors.

3.2 Evolution of Mutual Funds in India

3.2.1 Introduction Phase (1963–1987)

The Indian mutual fund industry was established in 1963 with the formation of the Unit Trust of India (UTI) under a Parliamentary Act. UTI launched Unit Scheme 1964 (US-64), which achieved widespread popularity and maintained an industry monopoly during this formative period.

3.2.2 Public Sector Phase (1987–1993)

In 1987, public sector banks and financial institutions including the State Bank of India, Life Insurance Corporation, and General Insurance Corporation were permitted to establish mutual funds, introducing competitive dynamics into the industry and expanding the available product range for investors.

3.2.3 Private Sector Phase (1993–2003)

The liberalisation of 1993 marked a watershed moment, with private sector companies and foreign institutions entering the mutual fund industry. SEBI established comprehensive regulatory frameworks during this period, introducing transparency requirements, investor protection measures, and standardised reporting obligations. Major private players including HDFC Mutual Fund, ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund, and Reliance Mutual Fund entered the market, introducing innovative investment schemes and expanding investor access.

3.2.4 Growth and Expansion Phase (2003–2014)

This period witnessed rapid industry expansion driven by increased investor awareness, technological development, online investment facilities, and strengthened regulatory infrastructure. SIPs gained significant traction during this phase, particularly among young and first-time investors seeking disciplined investment mechanisms.

3.2.5 Digital and Modern Phase (2014–Present)

The digital transformation of the mutual fund industry accelerated with the introduction of fintech investment platforms including Grow, Zerodha, and Paytm Money. AMFI's "Mutual Funds Sahi Hai" campaign significantly elevated public awareness and participation. Industry AUM surpassed INR 50 trillion by 2024, reflecting the deepening penetration of mutual funds among retail investors including students and young professionals (AMFI, 2023).

3.3 Key Mutual Fund Concepts

3.3.1 Systematic Investment Plan (SIP)

A Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) enables investors to commit a fixed amount to a designated mutual fund scheme at regular intervals—monthly, quarterly, or as preferred. SIPs promote disciplined investment behaviour

and facilitate wealth accumulation through the principle of rupee cost averaging, which mitigates the impact of short-term market volatility. SIPs are particularly suitable for students and early-career investors due to their affordability and flexibility (AMFI, 2023).

3.3.2 Net Asset Value (NAV)

Net Asset Value (NAV) represents the per-unit market value of a mutual fund, calculated by dividing the total market value of the fund's assets minus outstanding liabilities by the total number of units in circulation. NAV is recalculated at the close of each trading day, reflecting real-time portfolio valuations. It serves as the benchmark price for unit subscription and redemption transactions. Importantly, a higher NAV does not intrinsically indicate superior performance; investors should evaluate absolute and risk-adjusted returns over relevant time horizons (Bodie et al., 2018).

3.3.3 Risk and Return Profile

Mutual fund investments carry varying levels of market risk contingent on the asset class composition of the fund portfolio. Equity funds offer the potential for higher long-term returns commensurate with elevated market risk. Hybrid funds balance risk and return through combined equity–debt allocations. Debt and money market funds offer relative capital preservation with lower expected returns. Investors are advised to align fund selection with their financial objectives, investment horizon, and documented risk tolerance.

3.4 Types of Mutual Funds

Mutual funds are broadly categorised according to asset class, investment structure, and investment objective. Principal categories include:

Equity Funds: Invest primarily in equities; suitable for long-term capital appreciation; carry higher market risk.

Debt Funds: Invest in fixed-income instruments such as government bonds and corporate debentures; suitable for capital preservation and regular income.

Hybrid Funds: Combine equity and debt allocations to balance risk and return; suitable for moderate-risk investors.

Index Funds: Passively replicate market indices such as Nifty 50 or Sensex; characterised by lower expense ratios.

ELSS Funds: Equity Linked Savings Schemes offering tax benefits under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act; subject to a three-year lock-in period.

Liquid Funds: Invest in short-duration money market instruments; provide high liquidity and capital safety.

Sector Funds: Concentrate exposure in specific sectors such as banking, technology, or healthcare; carry sector-specific concentration risk.

3.5 Financial Literacy and Investment Behaviour Among Students

Financial literacy, defined as the ability to understand, evaluate, and apply financial information to make informed economic decisions (Huston, 2010; Lusardi, 2019), is the foundational determinant of investment behaviour. Among students, financial literacy is shaped by the interaction of formal education, family financial socialisation, social media influence, and peer group dynamics. Financially literate students demonstrate superior capacity for budgeting, savings management, debt avoidance, and long-term investment planning (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Students' investment behaviour is influenced by a confluence of factors including risk tolerance, income constraints, family investment culture, educational exposure, and digital platform accessibility. The proliferation of fintech applications has significantly lowered informational barriers to investment, yet without foundational financial literacy, digital access alone does not guarantee informed investment decision-making (Fernandes et al., 2014; Gambhire & Suganthiya, 2025).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The present study employs a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for systematically describing and analysing the characteristics of a phenomenon—in this instance, the level of mutual fund awareness and associated knowledge dimensions among students. Descriptive research design enables the identification of patterns, frequencies, and relationships within the sample data without manipulation of variables (Creswell, 2014).

4.2 Sources of Data

4.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from student respondents through a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire comprised multiple-choice items and Likert-scale items designed to capture: (a) demographic characteristics; (b) awareness of mutual fund concepts; (c) knowledge of specific mutual fund instruments and platforms; (d) sources of financial information; and (e) investment attitudes and behavioural intentions.

4.2.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were sourced from peer-reviewed academic journals, standard textbooks on investments and financial markets, regulatory publications from SEBI, annual reports and awareness campaign data from AMFI, reports from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), international reports from the OECD, institutional theses, and reputable financial news platforms and blogs.

4.3 Sampling Design

Table 2: Research Methodology Framework

Parameter	Details
Research Design	Descriptive Research
Sampling Method	Convenience Sampling
Sample Size	62 Students
Primary Data Tool	Structured Questionnaire (Google Forms)
Secondary Data	Journals, Books, SEBI Reports, AMFI Reports, Websites
Data Analysis	Simple Percentage Analysis and Graphical Representation
Inclusive Criteria	Students enrolled in undergraduate/postgraduate programmes at recognized universities in India
Exclusive Criteria	Non-student respondents; incomplete questionnaires

4.3.1 Sampling Methodology

Convenience sampling was employed given the practical constraints of the study. Respondents were selected from students accessible to the researchers at Visvesvaraya Technological University. While convenience sampling limits the generalisability of findings, it is widely employed in student-focused financial literacy research (Agarwala et al., 2015; Bapat, 2020; Movale & Shakya, 2025).

4.3.2 Sample Size

A total of 62 student respondents were included in the final analysis. Respondents were drawn from both Arts (n = 34; 55%) and Science (n = 28; 45%) streams to ensure cross-disciplinary representation.

4.3.3 Inclusive Criteria

Students currently enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programmes at Visvesvaraya Technological University or affiliated institutions.

Students who completed the questionnaire in its entirety.

4.3.4 Exclusive Criteria

Non-student respondents or working professionals.

Incomplete or substantially missing questionnaire responses.

4.4 Data Analysis Methods

Data were analysed using simple percentage analysis and graphical representation. Percentage analysis facilitates the straightforward interpretation of response distributions and is commonly employed in descriptive educational

and financial literacy research. Tables and figures are presented to enhance clarity and support visual interpretation of key findings.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Sample Distribution

5.1.1 Gender Distribution

Table 3: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	20	32%
Female	42	68%
Total	62	100%

The gender distribution of respondents reveals that female students constitute 68% ($n = 42$) of the total sample, while male students account for 32% ($n = 20$). This demographic skew towards female participation may reflect higher enrolment rates of female students in the study's target programmes or greater willingness among female students to engage with survey-based research. The predominance of female respondents is consistent with patterns observed in comparable student surveys in the Indian academic context (Bapat, 2020; Andrews & Rafeekamol, 2024).

5.1.2 Stream-wise Distribution

Table 4: Stream-wise Distribution of Respondents

Stream	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Arts	34	55%
Science	28	45%
Total	62	100%

Among the total respondents, 55% ($n = 34$) belong to the Arts stream, while 45% ($n = 28$) belong to the Science stream. This distribution reflects the composition of student enrolment in the surveyed departments and ensures representation across disciplines with varying levels of exposure to financial education. Arts stream students, particularly those enrolled in commerce and management programmes, are hypothesised to possess higher baseline financial awareness.

5.2 Awareness of Mutual Fund Concepts

5.2.1 Understanding of the Meaning of Mutual Funds

Table 5: Respondents' Understanding of the Meaning of Mutual Funds

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A pooled investment managed by professionals	38	61.3%
A type of bank account	10	16.1%
An insurance plan	8	12.9%
A government savings scheme	6	9.7%
Total	62	100%

A majority of respondents (61.3%; $n = 38$) correctly identified a mutual fund as a pooled investment vehicle managed by professional fund managers—the standard and accurate definition of a mutual fund. This finding indicates a moderate level of conceptual awareness among the student population. However, a non-trivial proportion of respondents exhibited conceptual misidentification: 16.1% ($n = 10$) characterised mutual funds as a type of bank account, 12.9% ($n = 8$) as an insurance plan, and 9.7% ($n = 6$) as a government savings scheme. These misidentifications highlight persistent gaps in foundational financial knowledge among a substantial minority of students, underscoring the need for targeted financial education interventions (Lusardi, 2019; Agarwala et al., 2015).

5.2.2 Awareness of Digital Investment Platforms

Table 6: Respondents' Awareness of Digital Platforms for Mutual Fund Investment

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Grow	43	69.4%
Paytm Money	9	14.5%
Zerodha	6	9.7%
Others (Zomato, Swiggy, etc.)	4	6.4%
Total	62	100%

Regarding awareness of digital platforms for mutual fund investment, a substantial majority of respondents (69.4%; $n = 43$) correctly identified Groww as a widely used platform for mutual fund transactions. A smaller proportion identified Paytm Money (14.5%) and Zerodha (9.7%) as relevant investment platforms, while 6.4% ($n = 4$) selected non-financial applications such as Zomato and Swiggy, indicating limited awareness of the digital investment ecosystem among a subset of respondents. These findings are consistent with recent research confirming Grow's dominant market position among Gen Z investors in India (Movale & Shakya, 2025; Gambhire & Suganthiya, 2025).

6. FINDINGS

The following key findings emerge from the data analysis:

Female respondents constitute the majority of the sample (68%), reflecting higher participation rates among female students in the surveyed programmes.

Arts stream students account for a slightly higher proportion (55%) of respondents compared to science stream students (45%).

A majority of students (61.3%) demonstrate correct understanding of the basic meaning of a mutual fund as a pooled, professionally managed investment vehicle; however, approximately 38.7% of respondents harbour conceptual misidentifications that impede investment decision-making.

Groww is the most widely recognised digital investment platform among student respondents (69.4%), consistent with the platform's established prominence among young Indian investors.

A notable minority of students (6.4%) confuse non-financial consumer applications with investment platforms, indicating significant gaps in platform-specific financial awareness.

Financial literacy among students is improving incrementally, driven by social media, digital platforms, and informal peer learning; however, detailed knowledge of investment procedures, risk assessment methodologies, SIP mechanics, and NAV interpretation remains limited.

The knowledge-behaviour gap documented in the broader literature is supported by the study's findings: students' conceptual awareness of mutual funds does not consistently translate into active investment participation or informed decision-making.

7. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study are broadly consistent with the prevailing body of empirical literature on financial literacy and mutual fund awareness among student populations (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014; Agarwala et al., 2015; Gambhire & Suganthiya, 2025). The moderate level of conceptual awareness observed—with 61.3% of respondents accurately defining mutual funds—mirrors findings from comparable studies in Indian and international contexts, suggesting that basic financial awareness has improved with the proliferation of digital media and informal information channels.

The persistent knowledge deficit among approximately 38.7% of respondents, who hold inaccurate conceptions of mutual funds, is particularly concerning in light of the expanded retail investor base in India. Misidentification of mutual funds as bank accounts or insurance instruments reflects a failure of both formal financial education and informal awareness initiatives to penetrate consistently across student demographics. This finding aligns with Chen and Volpe's (2002) observation that superficial awareness frequently coexists with substantive knowledge gaps.

The predominance of Groww as the recognised digital investment platform (69.4%) reflects the platform's effective market positioning and brand recognition among Gen Z investors. However, the 6.4% of respondents who associated non-financial platforms with mutual fund investment highlights the challenge of differentiating financial literacy signals within a high-noise digital information environment.

The gender distribution of the sample—68% female—presents an opportunity for further analysis of gender-differentiated financial literacy outcomes. While the present study's sample size precludes definitive gender-comparative conclusions, the literature suggests that female students may exhibit lower investment confidence despite comparable or superior financial literacy levels (Bapat, 2020). Targeted interventions addressing gender-specific barriers to investment participation could be a productive focus for future research and programme design. The study's findings support the theoretical frameworks reviewed in Section 2, particularly the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003). The role of peer influence, digital platform accessibility, and social media in shaping investment attitudes is evident in the student population's awareness profile. However, the translation of positive attitudes into sustained investment behaviour requires the cultivation of deeper financial literacy—particularly knowledge of risk management, NAV dynamics, and SIP mechanics.

8. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings and the broader literature, the following recommendations are proposed for enhancing mutual fund awareness and financial literacy among students:

Integration of Financial Literacy in Academic Curricula: Universities should incorporate mandatory financial literacy modules covering investment concepts, mutual fund categories, SIP mechanics, risk assessment, and digital platform navigation into undergraduate programmes across all disciplines, not exclusively business and commerce streams.

Institutional Financial Education Programmes: Educational institutions should organise regular investment awareness workshops, financial planning seminars, and guest lectures by certified financial advisors to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical investment decision-making.

Digital Media-Based Awareness Campaigns: Financial institutions, AMFI, and SEBI should collaborate with universities to deploy targeted digital awareness campaigns through platforms familiar to students (Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp) using simplified and engaging content formats including infographics and short-form video.

Mentorship and Investment Clubs: Universities should facilitate student-led investment clubs and peer mentorship initiatives that provide experiential learning opportunities, simulated portfolio management, and facilitated engagement with financial products under faculty supervision.

Early Investment Initiation Programmes: Financial institutions should design products specifically catering to student investors, with minimum SIP amounts of INR 100–500, zero entry load structures, and educational resources embedded within digital platforms.

Parent and Family Engagement: Given the documented influence of family networks on student investment behaviour, financial literacy initiatives should extend to parents and guardians through community-based financial education events and digital resources in regional languages.

9. CONCLUSION

The study on "Awareness of Mutual Funds Among Students" at Visvesvaraya Technological University yields several significant insights into the current state of financial literacy and investment awareness among the student population. While a majority of respondents demonstrate basic conceptual awareness of mutual funds and digital investment platforms, a substantial proportion continues to exhibit knowledge gaps regarding core investment concepts, risk assessment, SIP mechanics, and NAV interpretation. This knowledge-behaviour gap—wherein surface-level awareness does not translate into informed investment participation—represents the primary challenge for financial literacy advocates, educators, and policymakers.

The study confirms that digital media, peer networks, and family influence are the predominant channels through which students acquire investment awareness, underscoring the critical importance of leveraging these channels for structured, accurate financial education. The findings are consistent with the broader theoretical frameworks of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which predict that attitudes and social norms are necessary but insufficient determinants of investment behaviour without the foundational support of financial knowledge.

To close the knowledge-behaviour gap, a multi-pronged approach is required: the integration of financial literacy into formal academic curricula, institution-led investment awareness programmes, targeted digital media campaigns by regulatory authorities, and the creation of student-accessible investment products. Such interventions, grounded in the evidence synthesised in this study, hold the potential to foster a financially literate student population capable of making informed, confident investment decisions that contribute to their long-term financial security and to the continued deepening of India's capital markets.

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