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Beyond Account Ownership: Financial Inclusion, Digital Banking Use and Inclusive Development in Jalgaon District, Maharashtra

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Abstract: ***The study draws on the conceptual discussion, literature and tabulated analytical material contained in the supplied thesis document. Jalgaon provides a relevant setting because its economy combines agriculture, commodity trade, small enterprises, services and urban activity, while its settlement structure includes a substantial rural population. The source material reports an dataset of 540 observations. Within that dataset, 75.2% of respondents are classified as financially included; 73.9% report insurance awareness; 60.7% report access to a Kisan Credit Card; and 43.0% report self-help group linkage. The article's principal contribution is an integrated framework that connects access, usage, capability, product suitability, consumer protection and livelihood outcomes. It argues that district level inclusion strategies should combine reliable last mile infrastructure with financial literacy, assisted digital services, responsible agricultural credit and stronger customer grievance mechanisms. Before journal submission, all data must be replaced with verified primary observations and the statistical analysis rerun.***

Keywords: Financial inclusion, digital banking, UPI, cooperative banking, rural finance, financial literacy, Jalgaon, inclusive growth

1. Introduction

Financial inclusion has become a central concern in development policy because access to appropriate financial services can influence how households save, borrow, make payments, manage risks and participate in economic activity. The development significance of formal finance, however, cannot be reduced to the opening of accounts. An account that remains inactive, a loan that is unavailable when needed, an insurance product that is poorly understood, or a digital channel that customers cannot safely operate may provide little practical protection or opportunity. The relevant policy question is therefore not simply whether a financial institution is present, but whether individuals can access and use suitable services regularly, affordably and with confidence.

The literature increasingly distinguishes access from usage and outcomes. Allen et al. (2016) examine the foundations of account ownership and use, while Demirgüç Kunt and Klapper (2013) emphasize variation in the use of financial services across and within countries. Sarma (2008) conceptualizes inclusion through a multidimensional index, and Sarma and Pais (2011) connect financial inclusion with development. These approaches support an understanding of inclusion as a continuum extending from physical and procedural access to active use of savings, payments, credit and risk management products.

This distinction is particularly important in Jalgaon District in north-western Maharashtra. The district has a large rural settlement base alongside urban and commercial centres. The source document reports a 2011 Census population of 4,229,917, an area of approximately 11,765 square kilometres, 1,513 villages and 20 towns. Its economy is associated with agriculture and commodity activity, including banana, cotton, pulses and other crops, as well as trade, industry and services (District Administration, Jalgaon, 2026). The resulting financial needs are diverse. Cultivators require seasonal working capital, irrigation and equipment finance, insurance and payment services; traders and micro-enterprises need working capital and digital transaction facilities; wage earners and households require savings, remittances, pensions and emergency finance.

The district's institutional environment includes commercial banks, regional rural banking channels and cooperative institutions. The source document identifies the Jalgaon District Central Cooperative Bank, Maharashtra Gramin Bank and Jalgaon Janta Bank, in addition to several commercial banks. Cooperative institutions may be well placed to use local knowledge and community relationships, but their contribution depends on governance, risk management, technology, capital strength and service quality. Their presence alone cannot establish that excluded groups receive suitable services.

Digital banking has altered the geography of access. ATMs, mobile banking, internet banking, business correspondents and UPI based payments can reduce travel and transaction costs. Yet digitalization may create new barriers for customers with limited connectivity, devices, digital literacy or confidence. Concerns about fraud, failed transactions and the protection of personal information can also discourage adoption. The World Bank's Global Findex work distinguishes account ownership from the use of payments, savings and borrowing, reinforcing the need to measure actual engagement (Demirgüç Kunt et al., 2022).

Against this background, the article examines the conceptual and district-specific dimensions of financial inclusion in Jalgaon, reviews the patterns contained in the source tables, and develops policy implications for inclusive and responsible finance. Its focus is financial inclusion and digital banking rather than a CAMEL based assessment of cooperative-bank balance sheets. The source thesis contains a separate CAMEL oriented research proposal, but the available statistical tables primarily concern household

financial inclusion and do not provide the bank-level financial statements needed to test CAMEL performance.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Background

2.1 From access to effective use

Financial inclusion is commonly framed as access to useful and affordable financial products and services delivered responsibly by formal providers. The conceptual emphasis on suitability matters because account ownership is only an initial step. Demirgüç Kunt and Klapper (2013) show why the use of accounts and services must be examined alongside access. Allen et al. (2016) similarly treat ownership and use as related but distinct dimensions. In an applied district study, this requires attention to account purpose, transaction frequency, savings behaviour, credit availability, insurance awareness and customers' experience of service delivery.

Sarma's (2008) index based approach provides a multidimensional foundation for measuring inclusion, while Gupte et al. (2012) discuss the computation of a financial inclusion index for India. Chakravarty and Pal (2013) propose an axiomatic approach to financial inclusion measurement. These contributions caution against relying on a single indicator such as branch density or account numbers. A district can record extensive institutional presence while residents still face affordability, documentation, distance, language or service quality barriers.

2.2 Financial inclusion, poverty and development

The relationship between financial inclusion and development operates through several channels. Savings facilities can help households accumulate resources and manage shocks; credit can finance productive investment; payments can lower transaction costs; and insurance can reduce exposure to specified risks. Honohan (2004) reviews links among financial development, growth and poverty, while Cull et al. (2014) synthesize evidence on financial inclusion and development. Park and Mercado (2015) examine the relationship between inclusion, poverty and income inequality in developing Asia. These studies do not imply that access to finance automatically reduces poverty. Outcomes depend on the availability of productive opportunities, the terms of finance, household capabilities and the wider institutional environment.

Evidence from India underscores the role of institutional outreach. Burgess and Pande (2005) analyse the rural banking expansion and its implications for poverty, while Burgess, Pande and Wong (2005) examine banking for poor populations. Bruhn and Love (2014) show that improved access to finance can have real economic effects in a different national context. Such work provides a rationale for district level research that studies the quality and distribution of services rather than assuming uniform effects.

2.3 Digital financial services and capability

Mobile money and digital payments can reduce the costs of transferring and managing money. Jack and Suri (2014) analyse risk sharing and transaction costs associated with Kenya's mobile money expansion, and Suri and Jack (2016) examine long-run poverty and gender impacts. These findings are context specific, but they demonstrate mechanisms through which digital finance may influence household resilience. In India, UPI and mobile banking have widened the range of digital payment options, yet technology adoption remains conditioned by network reliability, access to devices, user confidence, security awareness and effective grievance redressal.

Digital financial inclusion should therefore be understood as a socio-technical system rather than as an application or payment interface alone. The source document draws on CGAP's emphasis on the combined importance of platforms, agents and customer access devices (CGAP, 2026). A customer may need an assisted channel to complete an initial transaction, understand a failed payment or report fraud. Financial literacy must include not only interest and repayment but also safe authentication, password protection, suspicious-message recognition and complaint procedures.

2.4 Gender, livelihoods and cooperative finance

Gender and livelihood conditions can shape access to formal finance. Ashraf et al. (2010) examine the effects of a commitment savings product on women's empowerment in the Philippines, while Kaur and Kapuria (2020) investigate determinants of rural financial inclusion in India with attention to gender. Self-help groups can provide a collective route into savings and credit, but group linkage should not be equated automatically with women's control over financial resources. A stronger assessment considers account use, decision-making authority, enterprise activity and the member's ability to access funds independently.

Cooperative banks are relevant in Maharashtra because of the state's established cooperative tradition and the importance of agricultural and local enterprise finance. Their community proximity and knowledge of borrowers can help address information barriers. At the same time, governance, professional management, asset quality, capital adequacy and technology remain important to their sustainability. The source document identifies these concerns and refers to CAMEL as a framework for evaluating capital adequacy, asset quality, management efficiency, earnings and liquidity. However, household level inclusion tables cannot substitute for audited bank-level financial statements. This article therefore discusses cooperative institutions as part of the delivery ecosystem without claiming to measure their CAMEL performance.

2.5 Research gap

The literature provides national, cross-country and state level perspectives, while district level work can reveal how financial access interacts with local settlement patterns, agricultural cycles and institutional arrangements. Studies cited in the source include Kharate and Chaudhari (2016) on

financial inclusion in an unbanked area of Jalgaon and Sandanshive (2019) on financial inclusion in Jalgaon District. The present article builds on the district context by integrating access, digital usage, awareness, agricultural finance and consumer capability. Its empirical contribution is limited by the status of the supplied dataset; the framework and district specific synthesis are intended to guide a subsequent verified field study.

3. Study Area and Analytical Framework

Jalgaon is situated in the north western part of Maharashtra and is associated with the Tapi River system and tributaries including the Girna and Waghur. The district's agricultural and commercial profile creates a varied demand for financial services. Banana and cotton are prominent crops in the source material, alongside soybean, jowar, wheat, pulses and other commodities. Agricultural households require finance at different points in the production and marketing cycle, while traders, processors, transport operators and small retailers require working capital and payment facilities.

The district's spatial pattern matters because 1,513 villages and 20 towns create different conditions of proximity and service delivery. Distance to a branch is only one aspect of accessibility. Transport costs, opening hours, queues, agent cash availability, staff responsiveness, language, documentation and digital connectivity may determine whether a nominally available service is usable. The source document notes Marathi, Ahirani, Hindi and English as languages used in the district, underscoring the importance of clear and locally intelligible communication.

The analytical framework adopted here has six interrelated dimensions: (i) institutional and physical access; (ii) actual use of accounts and payment channels; (iii) access to savings, credit, insurance and pension products; (iv) financial and digital capability; (v) service quality, trust and consumer protection; and (vi) household and livelihood outcomes. These dimensions are mutually reinforcing. Access can facilitate use, but capability and trust shape whether use is sustained. Product suitability and responsible lending influence whether financial participation improves resilience or creates debt stress.

4. Objectives and Research Questions

The article has four objectives: (1) to synthesize the district specific economic and institutional context relevant to financial inclusion in Jalgaon; (2) to examine the illustrative patterns reported in the supplied tables on account use, digital banking, insurance awareness, agricultural credit and self-help-group linkage; (3) to interpret the relationship between digital financial-service use and the inclusion classification reported in the source; and (4) to develop policy implications for accessible, responsible and inclusive financial services.

The analysis is guided by the following questions: How should financial inclusion be assessed beyond account ownership in a rural urban district? Which dimensions of digital use appear most closely associated with the illustrative inclusion classification? What barriers may limit the conversion of institutional availability into sustained usage? How can banks and cooperative institutions better align services with agricultural, household and micro-enterprise cash flows?

5. Methodology

5.1 Research design and source material

The article uses a district focused descriptive and analytical design based on the material contained in the supplied thesis document. The source includes conceptual discussion, a literature list, district context, questionnaire-oriented variables and 50 tables. The source methodology describes a structured questionnaire and a nominal sample of 540 respondents, with descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. Crucially, the source text explicitly states that the dataset used for the tables is simulated and that the statistical conclusions are illustrative rather than empirical findings from actual Jalgaon respondents. The present article retains that qualification and does not describe the 540 observations as verified survey responses.

The source document also contains inconsistencies in some table headings and cross tabulation labels. Consequently, the article selects only those indicators whose labels and values are sufficiently clear in the source and avoids interpreting misaligned cross-tabulations. No attempt is made to reconstruct missing respondent level records, infer unreported variables or claim causal effects. All reported percentages and test statistics below are reproduced as illustrative source outputs and require re-estimation using authentic data.

5.2 Variables and analytical procedures

The descriptive indicators retained include the overall inclusion classification, insurance awareness, Kisan Credit Card access, self-help group linkage, loan repayment adequacy and reported change in satisfaction with banking services. The digital use analysis focuses on the UPI cross tabulation and the source reported chi-square tests for ATM, mobile, UPI and internet banking. The source reports Pearson chi-square statistics, degrees of freedom and p-values. Values printed as 0.000 are conventionally reported here as $p<0.001$; a p-value is not literally zero.

A 5% significance threshold is used only to reproduce the decision convention in the source. The chi-square test assesses whether two categorical variables are statistically associated; it does not establish causation. Effect sizes, confidence intervals, expected cell counts and the underlying contingency tables should be supplied in a final empirical version. Because the respondent level dataset is unavailable and the tables are simulated, no new statistical tests or effect size estimates are calculated in this article.

5.3 Data integrity and ethical reporting

A central methodological requirement is to distinguish demonstration data from observed evidence. The supplied thesis itself states that the simulated results are illustrative and should be replaced or recalculated when actual field data

become available. Accordingly, the numerical findings are labelled illustrative throughout. They must not be submitted to a journal as primary empirical results. A publishable empirical version will require documented sampling procedures, questionnaire validation, informed consent procedures, anonymized respondent records, reproducible analysis and accurate institutional or ethics disclosures where applicable.

6. Results: Illustrative Patterns in the Source Tables

The source tables report an overall inclusion classification of 406 respondents (75.2%) as included and 134 (24.8%) as not included, out of a simulated total of 540. This suggests, within the constructed dataset only, that a substantial majority is classified as included. It should not be interpreted as a district prevalence estimate. The classification itself also requires a transparent operational definition: the final study should specify whether inclusion means account ownership, active account use, use of at least one digital channel, or a composite measure.

Indicator reported in source	Illustrative count / percentage	Interpretive note
Financially included	406 / 540 (75.2%)	Source classification; operational definition requires clarification
Not classified as included	134 / 540 (24.8%)	Illustrative residual group
Insurance awareness	399 / 540 (73.9%)	Awareness does not establish policy ownership or coverage
Kisan Credit Card access	328 / 540 (60.7%)	Access reported in source; adequacy and timeliness not established
Self-help-group linkage	232 / 540 (43.0%)	Linkage does not establish active participation or control
Loan repayment adequacy: adequate	217 / 540 (40.2%)	Subjective/source category; repayment burden requires deeper analysis
Banking-service satisfaction improved	299 / 540 (55.4%)	Perceived change, not an independently validated service-quality scale

The product-awareness indicators reveal why inclusion should be treated as multidimensional. Insurance awareness is reported by 73.9% of the simulated sample, while KCC access is reported by 60.7%. These indicators refer to different stages of financial participation. Awareness may be a prerequisite for informed choice, but it does not demonstrate affordability, enrollment or successful claims. KCC access may indicate a route to agricultural credit, but it does not establish that the limit is adequate, that credit is disbursed at the right time or that repayment schedules match crop cash flows.

Self-help-group linkage is reported for 43.0% of the constructed sample. This is potentially relevant to women's savings and collective credit, but the source table does not establish the gender composition of group members, the frequency of meetings, loan use, enterprise outcomes or women's control over funds. These should be measured in a field study rather than inferred from a linkage percentage.

The source reports that 40.2% rated loan repayment as adequate, 34.3% as partly adequate and 25.6% as inadequate. The distribution points to the importance of borrower-level affordability and repayment experience. A responsible inclusion agenda should not equate higher loan penetration with improved welfare. It should examine the total debt portfolio, interest and fees, repayment timing, income volatility and whether households borrow from additional sources to service existing obligations.

The reported change in banking-service satisfaction is also mixed: 55.4% are recorded as improved, 32.0% as no change and 12.6% as declined. This suggests that institutional access and customer experience should be examined separately. A service may be technically available while remaining difficult to use because of queues, unclear communication, failed digital transactions or weak complaint resolution.

6.1 Digital banking and the inclusion classification

The most pronounced illustrative pattern concerns UPI use. The source cross-tabulation reports that 108 of 124 frequent users (87.1%) are classified as included, compared with 91 of 168 respondents who never use UPI (54.2%). Among occasional users, 207 of 248 (83.5%) are classified as included. The gap between frequent users and non-users is substantial within the constructed dataset, although the cross-sectional table cannot establish whether UPI use increases inclusion, whether already included respondents are more likely to use UPI, or whether both are influenced by other factors such as income, education, smartphone access or connectivity.

UPI use category	Included	Not included	Total	Included (%)
Frequently	108	16	124	87.1
Occasionally	207	41	248	83.5
Never	91	77	168	54.2
Total	406	134	540	75.2

The source reports a Pearson chi-square statistic of 58.329 with 2 degrees of freedom and $p<0.001$ for UPI use and the inclusion classification. It also reports significant associations for ATM use ($\chi^2=36.913$, df=2, $p<0.001$), mobile banking ($\chi^2=58.028$, df=2, $p<0.001$) and internet banking ($\chi^2=43.656$, df=2, $p<0.001$). These results are consistent with the descriptive pattern that active engagement with digital and self-service channels is associated with the source's inclusion classification. They must nevertheless be treated as illustrative because the dataset is simulated.

Relationship tested in source	Pearson χ^2	df	p-value as reported	Source decision
ATM use and inclusion	36.913	2	<0.001	Significant
Mobile banking and inclusion	58.028	2	<0.001	Significant
UPI use and inclusion	58.329	2	<0.001	Significant
Internet banking and inclusion	43.656	2	<0.001	Significant
DBT awareness and inclusion	4.640	2	0.098	Not significant
KCC access and inclusion	57.774	1	<0.001	Significant
Agricultural loan and inclusion	0.114	1	0.736	Not significant
SHG linkage and inclusion	0.984	1	0.321	Not significant

The same source reports non-significant relationships for several demographic and institutional variables, including age (χ^2=4.247, df=2, p=0.120), education (χ^2=5.376, df=4, p=0.251), occupation (χ^2=2.978, df=4, p=0.562), annual income (χ^2=1.372, df=4, p=0.849), residence (χ^2=0.641, df=4, p=0.958) and distance from a bank (χ^2=0.151, df=1, p=0.698). These findings should not be interpreted as proof that demographic or spatial inequalities do not exist. The absence of statistical significance in a simulated dataset is not evidence of equivalence, and the underlying measurement and coding require verification.

7. Discussion

The source material supports a useful conceptual distinction between institutional presence and effective financial participation. Jalgaon has a varied banking environment and a large rural settlement base, but physical presence does not guarantee that customers can access suitable services. The costs of travel, time away from work, documentation, language, service quality and digital connectivity can shape the practical value of a banking outlet. This supports the multidimensional approaches advanced by Sarma (2008), Demirgüç-Kunt and Klapper (2013), and Allen et al. (2016).

The illustrative UPI pattern suggests that the use of digital payment channels may be an important marker of broader financial participation. Frequent UPI users in the source table have a higher inclusion classification than non-users. One possible explanation is that digital payments provide repeated opportunities to interact with formal accounts and build familiarity with banking services. Another possibility is selection: customers who already have active accounts, stable connectivity, smartphones or higher digital capability may be more likely to use UPI. A third possibility is that both use and inclusion reflect other socioeconomic factors. A valid empirical study should test these alternatives using multivariable analysis and a clearly defined inclusion index.

The results also underline the difference between awareness and effective access. Insurance awareness is relatively high in the illustrative table, but awareness alone does not show whether households own suitable policies, understand exclusions or can complete claims. Similarly, KCC access does not reveal whether credit is adequate, timely or affordable. In an agricultural district, loan design should reflect the timing of cultivation expenditure and market receipts. Banana, cotton and other crop systems have different input requirements, production cycles and price risks. A standard repayment schedule may not fit all borrowers.

The mixed loan repayment responses point to the need for responsible credit. Credit can finance productive activity and smooth consumption, but excessive or poorly timed borrowing can worsen vulnerability. Financial institutions should assess cash flows, existing debt, crop and market risks, and repayment capacity. The aim should be sustainable productive finance rather than loan-volume expansion. The World Bank (2014) emphasizes that financial inclusion must be considered in relation to the quality and consequences of financial access.

Digital expansion should also be accompanied by consumer protection. Users need accessible instructions on authentication, fraud prevention, transaction confirmation and complaint reporting. Failed transactions and unresolved grievances can erode trust. Assisted channels and human support remain important for older persons, first time users and people with limited digital skills. A blended model that combines digital convenience with physical service points is more likely to be inclusive than a strategy based exclusively on app adoption.

Finally, the district's linguistic and occupational diversity requires locally appropriate communication. Farmers, traders, informal workers, salaried households, women, youth and older persons do not have identical financial needs. Financial education should therefore be practical and tailored to actual decisions: comparing loan costs, understanding insurance, planning seasonal savings, using UPI safely, recognizing fraud and accessing grievance redressal. Educational institutions, self-help groups, agricultural extension systems and local bodies can complement bank-led awareness programmes.

8. Policy and Institutional Implications

First, banks and cooperative institutions should adopt a usage centred inclusion strategy. Performance monitoring should distinguish accounts opened from accounts actively used, and should record the frequency and purpose of transactions, savings activity, credit access, insurance coverage and customer complaints. Inactive accounts should prompt customer outreach and product redesign rather than being counted as completed inclusion. Second, last-mile delivery should be strengthened through reliable branches, business correspondents and assisted digital services. Third, agricultural finance should be aligned with crop calendars and borrower cash flows. Banks should assess the adequacy and timeliness of KCC limits, access for small and marginal cultivators, and the constraints faced by tenants and informal cultivators. Loan products for irrigation, farm equipment, storage and value chain activities should be supported by realistic repayment structures and transparent terms. Fourth, financial literacy should be continuous and task-based. Programmes should address savings, interest, loan obligations, insurance claims, pension products, digital

payment safety and fraud reporting. Information should be communicated in locally understood languages and formats. Women's inclusion initiatives should assess control over accounts and funds, not simply account ownership or SHG membership. Fifth, customer protection and trust should be treated as core elements of inclusion. Banks should publicize simple complaint channels, provide clear timelines for resolving failed transactions and unauthorized debits, and ensure that customers can obtain assistance without digital fluency. Institutions should monitor complaint patterns as indicators of service quality. Sixth, cooperative banks should strengthen governance and financial risk management. Board oversight, internal audit, credit appraisal, NPA monitoring, provisioning, liquidity management, cybersecurity and staff capability are central to sustainable inclusion. A separate bank level CAMEL study should use audited annual-report data for each selected institution and a consistent five-year period, with explicit ratio definitions and comparative benchmarks.

9. Limitations and Future Research

The principal limitation is decisive: the statistical dataset in the supplied thesis is explicitly described as simulated. The values in this article are therefore illustrative and cannot support claims about the actual prevalence or determinants of financial inclusion in Jalgaon. Some source tables also contain mismatches between headings and category labels, and certain correlation outputs are reported as not estimable. The present article avoids relying on those questionable tables, but the original respondent-level data and questionnaire would still need to be audited before any empirical submission. A future field study should use a transparent sampling frame covering rural, semi-urban and urban locations and should report the selection of talukas, villages, households and respondents. The questionnaire should distinguish account ownership, account activity, formal savings, formal and informal borrowing, insurance ownership, pension participation, DBT receipt, ATM use, mobile banking, internet banking and UPI use. Financial inclusion should be operationalized through a validated multidimensional index, with reliability and validity testing. A separate cooperative-bank financial-health paper should collect audited annual financial statements for each selected bank over the stated five-year period. It should calculate CAMEL indicators using transparent formulae, account for regulatory changes and macroeconomic shocks, and distinguish bank level evidence from household level perceptions. Combining these two datasets without a clear multilevel design would weaken construct validity.

10. Conclusion

Financial inclusion in Jalgaon should be assessed as effective participation in a range of suitable financial services, not merely as the presence of bank branches or ownership of accounts. The district's agricultural, commercial and demographic diversity creates differentiated needs for seasonal credit, savings, insurance, digital payments, pensions and enterprise finance. Institutional reach, product suitability, financial capability, trust and consumer protection jointly determine whether formal finance can support household resilience and inclusive development.

The supplied thesis material provides a useful district context and a broad set of variables for a future empirical investigation. A stronger financial inclusion strategy for Jalgaon will combine reliable physical and digital access, agricultural finance aligned with livelihood cycles, continuous financial education, gender-responsive services, responsible lending and effective grievance redressal. Cooperative banks can play an important role, provided that community reach is supported by sound governance and financial sustainability. Future research based on authentic primary data and audited institutional records can establish the actual extent of inclusion and the financial health of the district's cooperative banking institutions.

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