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The Relationship Between the Online Banking Usage and Financial Decision-Making Processes among Financial Management Students in Rural Areas

Mark Jay M. Espiritu
National Teachers College and Lyceum of the Philippines

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Email of Corresponding Author: markjay.espiritu@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between online banking utilization and financial decision-making engagement among Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Financial Management students in a rural area. Anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Financial Socialization Theory, it employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative design. Data were gathered from 242 purposively selected students (from a population of 649) through an online, structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The instrument measured online banking utilization in terms of frequency of use, type of transactions, and perceived trust and security, and assessed financial decision-making processes through budgeting practices, saving behavior, and spending patterns; pilot reliability testing indicated strong internal consistency across subscales. Descriptively, respondents reported low overall frequency of online banking use (overall mean score = 2.04, "Rarely") but agreed that they use online banking for diverse transactions (overall mean score = 3.05, "Agree") and expressed confidence in platform trust and security (overall mean score = 3.02, "Agree"). Respondents also agreed that online banking supports budgeting (overall mean score = 3.01), saving (overall mean score = 3.03), and spending management (overall mean score = 2.98). Spearman's rank-order correlation showed significant relationships between online banking utilization and financial decision-making, with frequency of use exhibiting significant moderate negative associations (rs = -.276 to -.282, p = .000) and both transaction diversity (rs = .657 to .702, p = .000) and trust and security (rs = .753 to .823, p = .000) demonstrating strong to very strong positive associations. Overall, the findings highlight trust and security and broader transactional use as key correlates of stronger financial decision-making practices among students, supporting recommendations for more purposeful use of online banking and reinforcement of budgeting and saving competencies through instruction and institutional support. The study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by strengthening student financial capability development, and with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by underscoring the importance of secure, trusted digital financial systems. Its sustainability contribution is primarily socio-economic, educational, and institutional, as it supports more responsible financial behaviors, improved financial literacy formation, and safer participation in increasingly digital financial environments.

Keywords: Budgeting behavior; Financial decision-making; Online banking utilization; Saving behavior; Spending patterns; Spearman's rank-order correlation; Trust and security

1. Introduction

Rapid digitalization has reshaped how individuals access and manage financial services, making online banking and cashless transactions increasingly embedded in daily life. As digital financial tools become more accessible, they can support budgeting, saving, and transaction monitoring, yet they may also introduce risks such as impulsive spending, overreliance on convenience, and heightened exposure to fraud concerns. This "ease–risk" dynamic mirrors broader patterns of consumer behavior, where convenience and persuasive cues can shape purchasing decisions and spending discipline, particularly among students and young consumers (Santos, 2020). Within this context, the study examines how online banking utilization relates to financial decision-making engagement among Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Major in Financial Management students in rural areas, emphasizing the roles of digital financial literacy, platform trust and security, and perceived ease of use in shaping students' budgeting, saving, and spending patterns. Because rural communities often experience distinct economic conditions and livelihood structures, insights from local economic and community development settings underscore the importance of contextualized approaches to financial behavior and capability-building (Santos & Constantino, 2021; Galano & Santos, 2024; Santos et al., 2025).

Technology has transformed banking from branch-based transactions to mobile and web-based services that enable users to check balances, transfer funds, pay bills, and save using digital platforms. In the Philippines, digital banking use accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2021), with evidence of increasing customer movement toward digital banking due to speed and convenience (Gigante, Martin, and Marutani, 2022). This acceleration occurred alongside pandemic-era shifts in attitudes, compliance behaviors, and digital dependence among students and personnel, which also shaped how people assessed risk, trust, and institutional responsiveness (Santiago & Santos, 2022; Santiago et al., 2023; Santiago et al., 2023). Online banking has also evolved from limited early internet features to more comprehensive digital platforms that support faster and more secure transactions (Kaur and Arora, 2021), while service quality and satisfaction remain central to effective online banking experiences (Minhaj and Khan, 2025). In higher education environments, the quality of administrative services and institutional support systems likewise influences user confidence in digital processes, reinforcing how perceived service reliability can shape continued digital adoption and engagement (De Lara & Santos, 2024).

This shift aligns with broader financial inclusion goals, defined as enabling wider participation in financial services, especially among those needing them most (BSP, 2021). In parallel, consumer perspectives from microfinance services emphasize the need for clearer standards, stronger protection mechanisms, and trust-building measures to ensure that expanding access does not increase vulnerability—an issue that becomes more salient as more transactions move online (Binaluyo et al., 2025). At the student level, digital banking may support more hands-on money management while also shaping spending choices through frictionless payments and real-time access to funds, particularly among rural Financial Management students who increasingly rely on digital tools for everyday transactions (Ballo, 2024). This is consistent with evidence that decision-making in purchases can be influenced by situational drivers and perceived convenience, which may translate into digital spending patterns when financial tools reduce “payment friction” (Santos, 2020). Related consumer studies also highlight that preferences and acceptance patterns are shaped by access conditions, perceived value, and usability—factors that parallel perceived ease of use and perceived benefit in digital banking adoption (De Leon & Santos, 2025). Finally, community-facing institutional initiatives and extension-driven development underscore the practical value of targeted capability-building programs, suggesting that strengthening digital financial literacy and responsible use of platforms can be approached as a skills-development agenda that benefits both individuals and local communities (Constantino & Santos, 2025; Santos et al., 2025).

A consistent theme in the literature is the growing importance of digital financial literacy as a prerequisite for navigating fintech ecosystems and making informed decisions (Respati et al., 2023). The broader transition toward cashless and mobile payments is frequently associated with convenience and accessibility (Abdullah et al., 2021), while digitalization is linked with economic growth and the need for capabilities that support the effective use of digital financial products (OECD, 2022; Ferilli et al., 2024). Trust also appears as a key mechanism connecting behavioral intention and actual use, particularly in electronic payments (Pillai et al., 2021). Digital financial literacy is further characterized as a practical skill set involving online shopping, digital banking navigation, transaction execution, and error handling (Lyons & Kass-Hanna, 2021), and is positioned as foundational for maximizing digital tools such as e-wallets and digital banking (Melinda Gates Foundation, 2021). Technology-enabled student-support tools (e.g., web platforms, mobile applications, AI-enabled tools) may enhance financial literacy and well-being by simplifying processes and personalizing guidance for better financial choices (Koob et al., 2022). In banking-specific adoption and behavior, prior Philippine-focused work highlights that online services can improve cost tracking, bill payment efficiency, and budgeting discipline (Capistrano, 2021). Digital banking features such as automated saving transfers and real-time balance checking can support more regular saving behavior and improved financial awareness (Mercurio et al., 2022). At the same time, digital banking design can either stimulate impulsive spending or encourage more deliberate consumption depending on system features such as spending alerts, dashboards, and summaries (Arriola, 2025).

Globally, the shift to digital payments reflects a preference for faster, more efficient transactions (Abdullah et al., 2021) and underscores the growing relevance of digital financial literacy in the fintech era (Respati et al., 2023; OECD, 2022; Ferilli et al., 2024). Nationally, the Philippines experienced increased reliance on digital banking during the pandemic period (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2021) amid ongoing financial inclusion efforts (BSP, 2021). Locally, the study situates these developments among Financial Management students in rural areas, where online banking is increasingly used for practical daily needs while simultaneously raising concerns about how convenience, trust, and usage patterns shape budgeting, saving, and spending behaviors (Capistrano, 2021; Ballo, 2024).

The study is anchored on an integrated lens combining technology adoption and financial behavior perspectives. The Technology Acceptance Model explains technology uptake through perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, suggesting that users are more likely to adopt platforms they find convenient and simple (Davis, 1989). Complementing this, the Theory of Planned Behavior emphasizes how attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived control shape behavioral intention and action (Ajzen, 1991). Financial Socialization Theory further explains how engagement with financial tools contributes to learning and developing responsible money behaviors over time (Gudmundson and Danes, 2011). Conceptually, online banking utilization is treated as the independent construct reflected through frequency of use, types of transactions, and perceived trust and security, while financial decision-making engagement is reflected through budgeting practices, saving behavior, and spending patterns.

While existing literature links digital financial literacy, trust, and platform usability with digital banking adoption and financial behaviors (Respati et al., 2023; Lyons & Kass-Hanna, 2021; Davis, 1989; Capistrano, 2021), there remains a practical need to clarify how these relationships manifest among Financial Management students in rural areas, who are simultaneously technologically active and developing financial decision-making competencies. The study addresses this by directly examining whether online banking utilization—specifically frequency, transaction type, and perceived trust/security—relates to budgeting, saving, and spending engagement among rural Financial Management students, and whether the relationship is significant as framed in its stated hypothesis (Ho1; Ha1).

This study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by supporting education-driven capability building, particularly in strengthening digital financial literacy and responsible money management among students through curricula and targeted learning supports. It also contributes to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by emphasizing student financial behaviors and preparedness, which can enhance future workforce financial decision-making and promote responsible participation in economic systems. In relation to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), the study supports inclusive digital innovation by generating insights that may guide the development of more user-friendly, secure, and accessible digital banking platforms for young users. The study further connects with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) because trust, security, and responsible governance are essential to safe digital financial ecosystems, and its focus on security perceptions and institutional roles strengthens confidence in regulated financial systems. Finally, it reinforces SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by highlighting practical implications for schools, banks, and regulatory stakeholders, encouraging cross-sector collaboration in advancing responsible digital finance use and financial literacy.

The study contributes to socio-economic sustainability by supporting responsible financial decision-making practices that can reduce harmful spending habits and promote budgeting and saving discipline among students. It supports educational sustainability by informing how financial literacy and digital finance behaviors can be addressed through instruction and student development initiatives. It advances technological sustainability by offering an evidence base for designing digital banking systems that remain usable, trusted, and secure for young users. Finally, it supports institutional and community sustainability by clarifying how coordinated roles of educators, banks, and regulators can help shape safer and more responsible participation in increasingly digital financial environments.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to test the relationship between online banking usage and financial decision-making processes among Financial Management students in a rural area. This approach enabled the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, quantify relationships, and draw conclusions supported by statistical evidence (McLeod, 2025). The descriptive-correlational design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to determine the strength and direction of association between two variables—online banking use as the independent variable and financial decision-making processes as the dependent variable—without manipulating or controlling the variables (Bhandari,2021). A structured survey questionnaire was used to ensure that the gathered data were measurable and suitable for statistical analysis, supporting objective interpretation and generalizable findings within the sampled population.

2.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in a rural area, with the research setting defined by a learning environment where students have increasing exposure to digital financial services but may experience uneven access to financial infrastructure, stable internet connectivity, and consistent digital support systems compared with urban settings. The locale was selected to contextualize how online banking is used in a rural student population and how this usage may influence everyday financial decision-making behaviors such as budgeting, saving, and spending. The study specifically focused on Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Financial Management students enrolled from first year to fourth year levels within this rural setting, ensuring that respondents represented varying stages of financial education and differing levels of familiarity with formal financial concepts and digital banking practices.

2.3 Respondents

The respondents were BSBA-Financial Management students in the rural area. Participants were selected because they were expected to have sufficient familiarity, understanding, and experience with online banking that would allow them to provide relevant and meaningful responses aligned with the study objectives. The population consisted of 649 BSBA-Financial Management students distributed across year levels: 265 first-year, 175 second-year, 134 third-year, and 75 fourth-year students. From this population, a total sample of 242 students was determined using Raosoft with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The resulting sample allocation by year level was 99 first-year, 65 second-year, 50 third-year, and 28 fourth-year students. Purposive sampling was applied to intentionally include students who were knowledgeable about the topic and had experience using online banking, thereby ensuring that responses were directly relevant to the inquiry and could adequately support analysis of the relationship between online banking usage and financial decision-making processes.

2.4 Research Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure online banking usage and financial decision-making processes. The instrument gathered both quantitative and categorical data and was organized around key areas reflecting the study focus, including demographic profile, online banking usage and utilization, budgeting behavior, saving behavior, spending behavior, and perceived trust and security in online banking. The questionnaire used multiple-choice items and Likert-scale responses to enable comparability and statistical treatment. Online banking usage items focused on how frequently respondents engaged in online banking and the kinds of digital transactions they performed, including money management and bill payments. Financial decision-making items assessed budgeting practices, saving behavior, and spending patterns, including aspects related to expense management, spending awareness, impulse buying tendencies, and the effects of convenience on spending behavior. Trust and security items measured respondents' perceptions of safety, confidence in digital banking systems, and the adequacy of security measures and protections.

Instrument reliability was assessed through a pilot test involving 30 participants, with internal consistency evaluated using Cronbach's alpha in IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. The reliability results indicated strong internal consistency across subscales: online banking frequency of use ($\alpha = .967$), type of transaction ($\alpha = .958$), and security and trust ($\alpha = .970$), as well as financial decision-making subscales for budgeting behavior ($\alpha = .960$) and saving behavior ($\alpha = .935$), while spending behavior showed good reliability ($\alpha = .835$). These results supported the suitability of the instrument for measuring the intended constructs.

2.5 Data Collection

Data were gathered through an online survey administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed to the selected 242 respondents across first year to fourth year levels using social media platforms such as Facebook and Messenger, as well as through personal interactions. The instrument applied a structured Likert-scale format, with the first set of items answered using Always, Often, Rarely, and Never, while the remaining sections used Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree to obtain consistent and analyzable responses. To strengthen alignment with the study objectives, the questionnaire underwent validation with guidance from three professionals. A pilot test was conducted prior to full deployment, and collected data were reviewed and organized using Google Forms outputs and Excel before being prepared for statistical analysis with support from a statistician..

2.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis used both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques aligned with the study problems. Frequency and percentage distribution were applied to describe respondent demographics (sex and year level) and to identify the online banks used by the students. Mean and standard deviation were used to summarize online banking utilization in terms of frequency of use, types of transactions, and trust and security, and to describe engagement in financial decision-making processes in terms of budgeting, saving, and spending behaviors. To test the relationship between online banking usage and financial decision-making processes, Spearman's rank-order correlation was employed due to a reported violation of normality assumptions, making this non-parametric technique appropriate for the nature of the data and for identifying the strength and direction of association.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards focused on protecting participant rights, privacy, and well-being while ensuring integrity in the research process. Participants were provided with clear information about the study objectives, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and were informed of their right to refuse participation or withdraw at any time without penalty. Participation was strictly voluntary, and respondents were not coerced or unduly influenced. Confidentiality and privacy were ensured through anonymization and de-identification of responses, secure storage of data, and restricted access limited to the research team, except where disclosure might be legally required or requested by authorized ethics bodies. Measures were also described to minimize potential harm by reducing physical, psychological, or social risks and providing support contact information if needed. The study emphasized honesty and transparency by avoiding fraud, presenting truthful information about the research purpose, and declaring limitations and any competing interests, alongside clear procedures for secure data handling and retention in compliance with institutional guidelines.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Demographic Profile and Preferred Online Banks of Respondents

The sample was composed mostly of female respondents (55.56%), followed by males (40.74%), while 3.70% preferred not to disclose sex; most respondents were in the 1st year (40.74%), followed by 2nd year (26.75%), 3rd year (20.58%), and 4th year (11.93%). In terms of online banking platforms used, Maya Bank was most preferred (28.81%), followed by Unionbank Online (15.23%), BPI Mobile App (11.93%), GoTyme Bank (10.70%), and GCash (8.23%), while the rest of the platforms had lower reported usage. The profile indicates that the respondents were predominantly early-year college students and that the most-used platforms were newer digital banking options alongside established bank apps. This pattern suggests that students in the earlier years are already engaging with digital banking ecosystems, with preferences concentrated in a small set of widely adopted apps, reflecting practical platform choices for day-to-day transactions.

3.2. Level of Online Banking Usage

3.2.1 Frequency of online banking use

The findings indicate that respondents demonstrated generally low engagement with online banking for routine account monitoring and day-to-day financial management. Overall, the frequency of use was rated at a "Rarely" level (overall mean score = 2.04), suggesting that online banking is not yet embedded as a regular financial monitoring practice among the participants. Specifically, activities that reflect continuous financial awareness—such as checking account balances (M = 1.99), viewing recent transactions (M = 2.09), monitoring account activity (M = 2.12), and reviewing transaction histories (M = 2.14)—were consistently performed only on an occasional basis. Similarly, behaviors that signal more active management of finances through digital platforms, including using online banking to manage finances (M = 1.99), accessing accounts multiple times per week (M = 2.10), paying bills (M = 1.95), and transferring funds between accounts (M = 1.95), were likewise rated as infrequent. Collectively, these results suggest that although respondents have access to and awareness of online banking platforms, their utilization remains largely situational rather than habitual, with limited reliance on digital tools for continuous tracking, planning, and monitoring of personal finances. In practical terms, online banking appears to function less as a routine financial oversight mechanism and more as an option used only when necessary, implying a gap between platform availability and sustained behavioral integration in students' financial routines.

3.2.2 Online banking use in terms of type of transactions

In contrast to the low frequency of routine monitoring, respondents expressed agreement that they utilize online banking for a broad range of transaction-based activities (overall mean score = 3.05, "Agree"). This suggests that the value of online banking for the respondents is primarily anchored in its transactional functionality rather than in its monitoring and management capabilities. Respondents agreed that they use online banking for online purchases, savings-related activities, fund transfers, and bill payments (M = 3.10), and similarly affirmed that online banking is perceived as more convenient than physically visiting bank branches (M = 3.10). They also indicated consistent use of mobile banking for practical needs, including sending money to family or friends (M = 3.07), paying school fees or bills through online platforms (M = 3.04), and using digital banking particularly in cash-constrained situations (M = 3.12). Taken together, these results reinforce a clear usage pattern: even when online banking is not frequently accessed for regular checking and monitoring, it remains a preferred channel for completing necessary transactions efficiently and conveniently. This implies that online banking is integrated into respondents' financial behaviors in a task-oriented manner, where use is triggered by immediate transactional demands rather than sustained by ongoing account oversight and financial planning routines.

3.2.3 Online banking trust and security

With respect to perceptions of trust and security, respondents generally exhibited a favorable evaluation of online banking safeguards (overall mean score = 3.02, "Agree"). They expressed agreement that online banking platforms protect personal and financial information (M = 3.07) and that strong encryption strengthens platform reliability (M = 3.03), indicating a baseline level of confidence in the technical security mechanisms of digital banking services. At the same time, respondents acknowledged that security-related concerns—such as hacking and fraud—may influence the extent of their engagement with digital platforms (M = 3.02). They also affirmed that visible security controls, including two-factor authentication, transaction notifications, and biometric security, enhance their perceived safety when using online banking. This pattern points to a nuanced security stance: respondents recognize and value institutional and technological safeguards, yet remain attentive to potential vulnerabilities that may shape usage frequency and engagement intensity. In effect, trust in digital banking is present, but it operates alongside an ongoing awareness of perceived risks, suggesting that security perceptions may function both as an enabler of adoption and a constraint on deeper, more frequent utilization—particularly for users who may be cautious about exposure to online threats.

3.3. Financial Decision-Making Processes

3.3.1 Budgeting practices

The results indicate that respondents generally perceived online banking as a supportive mechanism for budgeting and day-to-day financial organization (overall mean score = 3.01, "Agree"). This perception was reflected in relatively strong agreement that online banking helps them allocate money appropriately for both academic and personal needs (M = 3.18), monitor their spending habits (M = 3.06), and track income and expenses more conveniently through digital banking records (M = 3.03). Respondents likewise agreed that online banking contributes to budgetary discipline by enabling them to adjust spending behaviors whenever they exceed planned limits (M = 3.02). Collectively, these findings suggest that the respondents recognize online banking not only as a transactional platform but also as an informational tool that enhances budgeting execution through visibility of financial activities. In practical terms, the availability of real-time balances, transaction histories, and digital summaries appears to strengthen respondents' perceived ability to plan, monitor, and regulate expenditures. This indicates that when students actively engage with online banking data, it may function as an enabling resource for more structured and intentional budgeting, reinforcing financial awareness and supporting decision-making anchored in observable financial information rather than in estimation or recall alone.

3.3.2 Saving behavior

With respect to saving behavior, respondents also reported favorable perceptions regarding the role of online banking in supporting consistent saving practices (overall mean score = 3.03, "Agree"). The responses suggest that digital banking systems are viewed as facilitating savings motivation and routine, as respondents agreed that online banking encourages them to save regularly (M = 3.08) and supports the regular setting aside of money for savings (M = 3.07). They further agreed that online banking enables them to monitor their savings progress (M = 3.05), and that it becomes easier to separate savings from money allocated for spending when using online banking features (M = 3.02). These results imply that respondents perceive online banking as a practical enabler of savings discipline by making saving behaviors more manageable, trackable, and psychologically reinforced through progress visibility. The perception of easier segregation between savings and spending suggests that online banking may support a more deliberate financial structure, where individuals are better positioned to protect savings from routine expenditures. As such, online banking appears to serve not merely as a storage or transfer tool, but as a mechanism that supports goal-oriented saving habits and reinforces both short-term consistency and longer-term financial self-regulation.

3.3.3 Spending patterns

In terms of spending behavior, the results show that respondents generally agreed that online banking influences their spending patterns (overall mean score = 2.98, "Agree"), indicating that digital financial platforms shape how students approach purchases and consumption decisions. Respondents agreed that the convenience associated with online banking can encourage them to spend more frequently (M = 3.02), suggesting that reduced transaction friction may increase purchasing opportunities or ease the decision to spend. At the same time, respondents also agreed that reviewing transactions can help them avoid impulsive purchases (M = 2.90) and increase awareness of their spending habits (M = 3.07), indicating that transaction visibility may contribute to reflective spending and better self-monitoring. In addition, they agreed that online banking makes spending control easier (M = 2.97), while also acknowledging that they may be more inclined to buy online because the absence of cash payment reduces the "physical" feeling of spending money (M = 2.97).

3.4. Relationship Between Online Banking Usage and Financial Decision-Making

3.4.1 Frequency of use and financial decision-making processes

The correlational results revealed statistically significant, moderate, negative associations between the frequency of online banking use and all measured dimensions of financial decision-making, namely budgeting behavior ($r_s = -.276$, $p = .000$), saving behavior ($r_s = -.274$, $p = .000$), and spending behavior ($r_s = -.282$, $p = .000$). These findings indicate that variations in how often students access online banking platforms are meaningfully linked to differences in their financial decision-making engagement. Substantively, the negative direction of the coefficients suggests that lower frequency of online banking utilization tends to coincide with weaker budgeting, saving, and spending practices, whereas more frequent engagement with online banking is associated with stronger financial decision-making behaviors. This relationship implies that regular interaction with digital banking platforms may expose students more consistently to account information, balances, and transaction histories, thereby reinforcing awareness and enabling more deliberate regulation of financial activities. In this sense, frequency of use appears to function as a behavioral marker of financial engagement: students who use online banking more often may be positioned to make more timely adjustments, monitor patterns, and respond to financial needs with greater intentionality.

3.4.2 Type of transactions and financial decision-making processes

Results further showed that the breadth or variety of online banking transactions performed by respondents had statistically significant and strong positive correlations with budgeting behavior ($r_s = .702$, $p = .000$), saving behavior ($r_s = .677$, $p = .000$), and spending behavior ($r_s = .657$, $p = .000$). This pattern indicates that students who utilize online banking for a wider set of financial functions—such as transfers, payments, purchases, and savings-related activities—tend to demonstrate stronger financial decision-making practices across all three behavioral domains. The strong coefficients suggest that transactional diversity is closely tied to more active and structured financial participation, where online banking becomes integrated into multiple components of money management rather than being limited to occasional use. This implies that broader transactional use may reflect deeper familiarity with digital financial tools and greater functional reliance on online banking, which can facilitate improved planning, better monitoring of cash flows, and more consistent execution of budgeting and saving practices, while also shaping spending behavior through both convenience and informational feedback mechanisms.

3.4.3 Trust and security and financial decision-making processes

Trust and security perceptions demonstrated the strongest relationships with financial decision-making outcomes, showing statistically significant positive correlations with budgeting behavior ($r_s = .753$, $p = .000$), saving behavior ($r_s = .823$, $p = .000$), and spending behavior ($r_s = .814$, $p = .000$). The magnitude of these coefficients—particularly for saving and spending—indicates very strong relationships, suggesting that students' confidence in the reliability, protection, and safety of online banking platforms is closely associated with higher levels of engagement in responsible financial practices. This pattern implies that trust and perceived security may operate as foundational conditions for meaningful digital banking use: when users believe that their personal and financial information is protected, they may be more willing to engage in transactions, monitor accounts, and utilize platform features that support budgeting and saving routines. Conversely, diminished trust may inhibit fuller engagement, limiting the potential benefits of digital banking for financial self-regulation. Overall, the findings emphasize that trust and security are not peripheral considerations but central determinants linked with stronger budgeting, saving, and spending behaviors, reinforcing the role of perceived platform safety as a critical enabler of effective digital financial decision-making among students.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study established that BSBA Financial Management students in a rural area demonstrate a mixed pattern of online banking use: overall usage frequency is low, yet students still utilize online banking to complete necessary transactions such as online purchases, fund transfers, and bill payments, while reporting confidence in platform security. The findings further indicate that online banking is perceived to support key financial decision-making processes (budgeting, saving, and spending), and that online banking and financial decision-making are meaningfully linked—frequency of use shows a moderate negative association, while transaction diversity and trust/security show robust to very robust positive relationships, with trust and security identified as the strongest predictor of effective financial decision-making.

Based on the findings, students are encouraged to use online banking more purposefully to strengthen financial stability through budgeting and saving and to continuously practice proper financial management for better decisions. Teachers are encouraged to reinforce budgeting and saving concepts and motivate students to adapt to online banking as a means of developing financial management skills. Businesses and establishments may adopt online banking as a payment option and use it for purchasing supplies and paying bills to improve transaction flexibility and efficiency. Future researchers are encouraged to further examine budgeting, saving, and spending habits, explore how financial decisions influence online banking usage, and consider comparative analysis between business and non-business students. Banks and financial institutions, particularly digital banks, are encouraged to adhere strongly to laws and regulations that shape students' financing decisions and patronage; likewise, government agencies (including DICT) are urged to protect digital banking information and ensure strict compliance with relevant laws to strengthen public trust, while BSP is encouraged to supervise and regulate banks (including digital banks) to reduce risks that may negatively affect financing decisions. Banking app developers are encouraged to continue strengthening security to minimize risks that may contribute to very low frequency of use.

This study is limited by its descriptive-correlational design and its focus on a single rural setting and respondent group, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings to students in other academic programs or to learners situated in different geographic or institutional contexts. In addition, the data were collected through self-reported survey responses, which may be influenced by respondents' personal perceptions, recall, and individual experiences in using online banking and managing their finances, thereby introducing potential response bias. Future research may strengthen and extend the evidence base by conducting multi-site studies across different universities and student populations, applying mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to examine changes in online banking utilization and financial decision-making behaviors over time, and exploring additional explanatory factors that may account for variations in budgeting, saving, and spending practices.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study complied with recognized ethical research standards by ensuring voluntary participation through informed consent, protecting respondent confidentiality and data privacy, minimizing potential risks, and maintaining integrity and transparency in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

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