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Financial technology utilization and financial management behavior of microfinance clients in Tarlac City

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Abstract

Aim: This study examined financial technology (FinTech) utilization and its relationship with the financial management behavior of microfinance clients, particularly their saving and spending practices.

Method: Using a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 370 eligible microfinance clients in Tarlac City through printed and online questionnaires. Participants were recruited through participating microfinance institutions and an online survey channel. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions, means, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression.

Results: The findings revealed a high level of FinTech utilization in terms of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. Respondents primarily used FinTech for bill payments, money transfers, and online shopping and demonstrated positive financial management behavior, particularly in their saving and spending practices. Correlation analysis showed a statistically significant positive relationship between FinTech utilization and financial management behavior ($r = .718$, $p < .001$). Simple linear regression further indicated that FinTech utilization was a statistically significant predictor of financial management behavior, with the model explaining 51.8% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .518$, $p < .001$).

Conclusion: FinTech utilization was significantly positively associated with financial management behavior among the respondents. Higher levels of FinTech utilization were statistically associated with higher reported financial management behavior. Given the descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional design, the findings represent associations and statistical predictive relationships rather than evidence of causation.

Keywords: *financial technology utilization; financial management behavior; saving behavior; spending behavior*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the global shift from branch-based transactions to digital payments, online banking, mobile applications, and other forms of financial technology (FinTech). This transition widened access to financial services and allowed households and enterprises to transact despite mobility restrictions. World Bank (2022) data further show that the pandemic contributed to a global increase in account ownership and digital-payment use, especially in developing economies where mobile channels can reduce distance and transaction-cost barriers.

Across Asia, FinTech development has been supported by high mobile and internet use, expanding digital platforms, regulatory innovation, and growing consumer demand. China, India, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea illustrate how digital payments, online banking, and platform-based financial services can reshape financial markets (Knoblauch, 2021; Yin et al., 2023). However, wider digital access does not by itself establish that users manage money more responsibly. The effect of FinTech depends on actual usage, perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, digital capability, and the purposes for which the technology is used.

In the Philippines, the digital-financial-services environment has expanded rapidly through electronic money accounts, mobile-banking applications, interoperable fund transfers, online payments, and QR-based merchant transactions. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP, 2025) reported that digital channels accounted for 57.4% of monthly retail-payment volume and 59.0% of value in 2024, with merchant payments and person-to-person transfers among the principal drivers. This national expansion means that services such as e-wallet payments, bank transfers,

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bill payments, online purchases, and other app-based transactions increasingly form part of everyday financial activity. Recent Philippine research likewise highlights the growing role of fintech-enabled platforms, including mobile wallets, QR payments, and digital financial systems, in expanding financial accessibility within rural banking and underserved markets (Sale & Calderon, 2026).

The growth of digital payments has occurred alongside continuing financial-inclusion gaps. The BSP's 2021 Financial Inclusion Survey showed that formal account ownership increased from 29% in 2019 to 56% in 2021, largely because of e-money accounts; nevertheless, 44% of adults remained without a formal account. Account ownership was lower among members of socioeconomic class E and respondents in North and Central Luzon, while cost, insufficient funds, documentary requirements, and limited knowledge remained important barriers. The same survey found that transactions involving microfinance nongovernmental organization (MF NGO) accounts were still conducted primarily over the counter and that only about one-third of MF NGO and cooperative account holders used their accounts for payments (BSP, 2022a). These findings show that national growth in digital finance coexists with unequal access and uneven use among financially vulnerable groups.

Microfinance institutions are important in this environment because they extend appropriately designed credit and related financial services to poor and low-income individuals and microenterprises that may not be adequately served by conventional banks. The Microfinance NGOs Act recognizes microfinance as a mechanism for poverty alleviation and financial inclusion and provides a regulatory framework for institutions serving this population (Republic of the Philippines, 2015). The BSP's National Strategy for Financial Inclusion 2022–2028 likewise prioritizes inclusive digital infrastructure, financial capability, consumer protection, and services responsive to vulnerable and underserved sectors (BSP, 2022b). In the Philippine financial sector, recent research further identifies fintech-enabled platforms as mechanisms for expanding financial accessibility while noting continuing challenges related to digital infrastructure and financial literacy (Sale & Calderon, 2026). Microfinance clients are therefore positioned at the intersection of formal financial inclusion and continuing economic vulnerability: they may use small loans and limited or irregular income to meet household, livelihood, and emergency needs while facing constraints related to affordability, documentation, digital literacy, trust, connectivity, fraud, and data security.

Tarlac City is the only city in the Province of Tarlac and had a population of 401,892 in the 2024 Census of Population (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025). The city provides the local setting for examining FinTech utilization and financial management behavior among microfinance clients. The study focuses on clients who use digital financial services, including e-wallets, mobile-banking applications, electronic fund transfers, online bill-payment facilities, digital purchases, and selected loan-payment channels.

Microfinance clients in Tarlac City constitute the population examined in the present study. The study focuses on their reported FinTech utilization and its relationship with saving behavior, spending behavior, and overall financial management behavior.

Against this background, the present study examined FinTech utilization among microfinance clients in Tarlac City in terms of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use, and determined its relationship with saving, spending, and overall financial management behavior. By locating the inquiry within a defined Philippine microfinance population, the study moves from the broader expansion of digital finance to the specific problem of how financially vulnerable clients use these services and whether such use is associated with responsible management of their resources.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Financial Technology (FinTech) refers to the use of digital technologies to improve financial services through greater accessibility, convenience, and efficiency. Innovations such as mobile banking, e-wallets, online lending, and digital payment systems have transformed how individuals save, spend, transfer, and manage money (Kagan, 2026). FinTech has also promoted financial inclusion by providing underserved populations with access to formal financial services (Adelaja et al., 2024; Asfaw, 2015).

FinTech utilization is commonly evaluated in terms of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a theoretical basis for understanding why individuals adopt and use technology (Davis, 1989). Studies show that individuals are more likely to adopt and continue using FinTech when digital financial services are convenient, accessible, affordable, and easy to navigate (Ryu, 2018; Alshathry & Almeshal, 2022). Financial literacy, trust, and perceived benefits have also been examined as factors associated with individuals' intentions to adopt financial services (Abdulmalik, 2026). These factors provide additional context for understanding financial-service adoption and engagement.

Financial management behavior refers to how individuals manage, save, spend, and plan their finances to achieve financial well-being (Wahyuni et al., 2023; Surwanti et al., 2024). Effective financial management is

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characterized by responsible saving, controlled spending, budgeting, and informed financial decision-making. Financial literacy and self-control are important factors associated with these behaviors, while recent Philippine evidence likewise highlights the role of financial literacy in effective financial management and financial resilience (Amado, 2026).

Savings contribute to financial security, emergency preparedness, and long-term financial stability (Batham et al., 2025). FinTech tools such as mobile banking and digital wallets encourage saving by providing accessible and secure financial platforms (Suri & Jack, 2016). Meanwhile, spending behavior reflects how individuals allocate money to meet their needs and wants. Although digital financial services enhance convenience, they may also encourage impulsive spending. However, features such as expense tracking and budgeting tools can promote more responsible spending habits (Rahman & Riad, 2023).

Previous studies have reported positive associations between FinTech use and various aspects of financial management, including access to financial services, saving, budgeting, and financial decision-making (Despard, 2023; Dhanalakshmi & Vanitha, 2024). Other studies have examined the roles of financial literacy, financial knowledge, and self-discipline in financial behavior (Farida et al., 2021).

The literature identifies frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use as relevant dimensions of FinTech utilization, while saving and spending represent important dimensions of financial management behavior. Previous studies have examined FinTech use and financial practices across various populations; comparatively fewer studies have focused on microfinance clients.

Synthesis of the Review and Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates the expanding use of financial technology in payments, financial services, and financial inclusion. Previous studies have examined relationships between FinTech use and financial activities such as saving, financial monitoring, budgeting, and spending. The literature also reports varying patterns of financial behavior across different user groups and contexts. Moreover, much of the existing literature has focused on general consumers and other population groups, with comparatively limited attention to microfinance clients. The present study addresses this gap by examining whether the frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use of FinTech are associated with the saving and spending behavior of microfinance clients. By focusing on microfinance clients, the study provides evidence on the relationship between FinTech utilization and financial management behavior within a defined Philippine microfinance setting.

Previous studies have established that FinTech can lower transaction barriers, broaden access to payments and accounts, and support saving, monitoring, budgeting, and other financial activities (Suri & Jack, 2016; Despard, 2023; Dhanalakshmi & Vanitha, 2024). Research based on the Technology Acceptance Model has also consistently identified perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as important conditions for adoption and continued use (Davis, 1989; Ryu, 2018; Alshathry & Almeshal, 2022). Philippine evidence has mainly documented national financial-inclusion conditions or examined adoption among broad consumer groups, including Generation Z and millennials (Debuque-Gonzales & Corpus, 2024; Belmonte et al., 2024).

The literature reviewed provides comparatively limited evidence on the relationship between FinTech utilization and financial management behavior among microfinance clients, particularly within a defined Philippine locality. Existing studies have commonly examined general consumers, students, younger users, or populations outside the Philippines. Limited evidence is available on the combined relationship of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use with saving behavior, spending behavior, and overall financial management behavior among microfinance clients (Farida et al., 2021; Rahman & Riad, 2023). Moreover, much of the cited empirical evidence concerns general consumers, students, younger users, or populations outside the Philippines. The literature reviewed provides comparatively little evidence that jointly measures frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use against both saving and spending behavior among clients of microfinance institutions, particularly within a defined Philippine locality. Thus, the underexamined issue is not merely whether microfinance clients can access FinTech, but whether and how their utilization is associated with the way they manage limited financial resources.

The present study addresses this population, contextual, and behavioral gap by examining 370 microfinance clients in Tarlac City and relating a composite measure of FinTech utilization to saving behavior, spending behavior, and overall financial management behavior. The findings provide localized evidence on FinTech utilization and financial management behavior among microfinance clients in the Philippine context.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 specifies FinTech utilization as the independent variable (X) and financial management behavior as the dependent variable (Y). FinTech utilization is represented by frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. Financial management behavior is represented by saving

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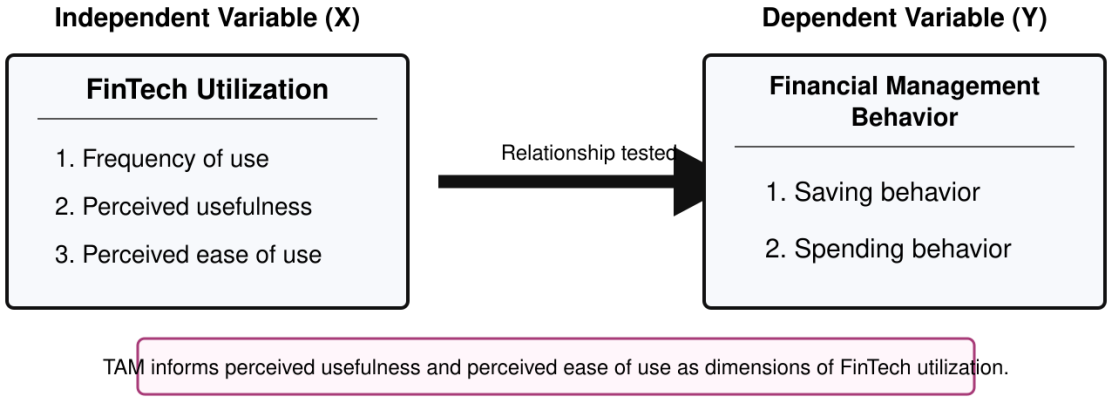
behavior and spending behavior. The directional arrow represents the relationship examined between FinTech utilization and financial management behavior through Pearson correlation and simple linear regression.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides the conceptual basis for including perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as dimensions of FinTech utilization (Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness reflects the degree to which clients believe that FinTech improves the performance of their financial activities, whereas perceived ease of use reflects the degree to which the technology can be used with minimal effort. Frequency of use represents clients' actual engagement with digital financial services. Consistent with the research objectives and hypotheses, the study first describes these dimensions and the two dimensions of financial management behavior, then uses Pearson correlation to test their relationships. For the simple linear regression, the three FinTech dimensions are combined into one composite independent variable, while saving and spending behavior are combined into one composite dependent variable; the dimensions are not treated as separate regression predictors.

As shown in Figure 1, TAM provides the conceptual basis for perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as dimensions of FinTech utilization, while the empirical framework examines the relationship between FinTech utilization and financial management behavior.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Linking FinTech Utilization to



Financial Management Behavior

Note. FinTech utilization is the independent variable, and financial management behavior is the dependent variable. The arrow represents the relationship assessed through correlation and simple linear regression. TAM supports perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as acceptance-related dimensions of FinTech utilization.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid expansion of financial technology has transformed the way individuals access and manage financial services. Through mobile banking, electronic wallets, digital payment systems, and other financial applications, individuals can conduct transactions more conveniently and access financial services with fewer traditional barriers. For microfinance clients, these technologies provide digital channels for financial transactions, account management, payments, transfers, and other financial activities.

Despite the expanding use of digital financial services, empirical evidence remains limited regarding the relationship between FinTech utilization and financial management behavior among microfinance clients. In particular, there is a need to examine whether FinTech utilization is significantly related to saving behavior, spending behavior, and overall financial management behavior among microfinance clients in Tarlac City.

In Tarlac City, it is necessary to examine how microfinance clients use financial technology and whether that use is associated with their saving and spending practices. Specifically, the study investigates FinTech utilization in terms of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use, and examines financial management behavior in terms of saving and spending practices. The study also determines whether significant relationships exist between FinTech utilization and the financial management behavior of microfinance clients.

The findings may provide useful information for microfinance institutions, financial service providers, managers, and other stakeholders in developing digital financial services and programs that support responsible financial management and financial inclusion.

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Research Objectives

To examine the utilization of financial technology and its relationship with the financial management behavior of microfinance clients in Tarlac City.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study aimed:

1. To describe the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
    - age;
    - gender;
    - civil status;
    - educational attainment;
    - income level;
    - occupational status; and
    - purpose of FinTech use.
2. To determine the level of financial technology utilization among microfinance clients in terms of:
    - frequency of use;
    - perceived usefulness; and
    - perceived ease of use.
3. To assess the financial management behavior of microfinance clients in terms of:
    - saving practices; and
    - spending practices.
4. To determine the relationship between financial technology utilization and saving behavior among microfinance clients.
5. To determine the relationship between financial technology utilization and spending behavior among microfinance clients.
6. To determine the relationship between financial technology utilization and the overall financial management behavior of microfinance clients.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
    a. age;
    b. gender;
    c. civil status;
    d. educational attainment;
    e. income level;
    f. occupational status; and
    g. purpose of financial technology use?
2. What is the level of financial technology utilization among microfinance clients in terms of:
    a. frequency of use;
    b. perceived usefulness; and
    c. perceived ease of use?
3. What is the level of financial management behavior among microfinance clients in terms of:
    a. saving practices; and
    b. spending practices?
4. Is there a significant relationship between financial technology utilization and saving behavior among microfinance clients?
5. Is there a significant relationship between financial technology utilization and spending behavior among microfinance clients?

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6. Is there a significant relationship between financial technology utilization and the overall financial management behavior of microfinance clients?

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between financial technology utilization and saving behavior among microfinance clients.

H2: There is a significant relationship between financial technology utilization and spending behavior among microfinance clients.

H3: There is a significant relationship between financial technology utilization and overall financial management behavior among microfinance clients.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine financial technology (FinTech) utilization and its relationship with the financial management behavior of microfinance clients in Tarlac City, Tarlac Province, Philippines. The descriptive component was used to describe the respondents' demographic profile and determine their level of FinTech utilization in terms of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use, as well as their financial management behavior in terms of saving and spending practices. The correlational component was used to determine whether significant relationships existed between FinTech utilization and the respondents' saving behavior, spending behavior, and overall financial management behavior.

Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of 20,000 microfinance clients served by five participating microfinance institutions in Tarlac City, Tarlac Province, Philippines. Eligible participants were microfinance clients who had experience using financial technology (FinTech) services, including mobile banking applications, electronic wallets, digital payment services, money transfers, bill payments, account management, and other digital financial transactions.

Participants were recruited through the participating microfinance institutions and an online survey channel. Enumerators invited eligible clients at selected microfinance offices to participate, while clients who preferred electronic participation were provided with a QR code and survey link. Participation was voluntary, and only clients who met the eligibility criteria and provided informed consent were included in the study.

The required sample size was determined using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator based on a population of 20,000, a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and a 50% response distribution. The calculation yielded a target sample of 377 respondents. A total of 370 completed questionnaires were retrieved and found eligible for analysis. All 370 valid responses were included in the final analysis, representing 98.14% of the calculated target sample of 377 respondents.

The study analyzed data from 370 eligible microfinance clients with FinTech-use experience recruited through the participating microfinance institutions and online survey channel.

Research Instrument

The study used a structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The instrument consisted of items developed and adapted from relevant literature and previous studies on FinTech utilization, saving behavior, and spending behavior. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of the cited studies, as follows:

Table 1

Variables, Indicators, and Sources Used in the Research Instrument

Variable	Indicators	Basis (Cited Studies)
Profile	Age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, monthly income, occupational status, purpose of FinTech use	Dhanalakshmi & Vanitha (2024); Belmonte et al. (2024)
FinTech Utilization	Frequency of use, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use	Davis (1989); Zalloum et al. (2019); Belmonte et al. (2024)

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Variable	Indicators	Basis (Cited Studies)
Saving Behavior	Budgeting, regular saving, financial planning	Surwanti et al. (2024)
Spending Behavior	Impulse buying, spending control, responsible spending	Despard (2023); Surwanti et al. (2024)

The questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part I gathered information on the respondents' demographic profile. Part II measured financial technology utilization in terms of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. Part III assessed saving behavior, while Part IV assessed spending behavior.

Three qualified experts with relevant expertise in microfinance, financial management, or related fields conducted content validation. A pilot test was subsequently conducted among respondents who possessed characteristics similar to those of the target participants but who were not included in the final sample.

The instrument's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The overall reliability coefficient was 0.86, indicating good internal consistency.

Data Collection

Data were collected from April 1 to June 15, 2026, in Tarlac City, Tarlac Province, Philippines. After the necessary permission had been obtained from the relevant microfinance institutions or authorized organizations, eligible respondents were invited to participate in the study.

The questionnaires were administered through printed copies and Google Forms. Printed questionnaires were personally distributed to eligible respondents, while the electronic version was made available through a secure Google Forms link and distributed through appropriate communication channels.

Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were informed of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained before participation.

Completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and eligibility before inclusion in the final dataset. The collected data were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher and other authorized individuals involved in the study.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Frequency and percentage distributions were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The mean was used to determine the level of FinTech utilization in terms of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use, as well as the respondents' financial management behavior in terms of saving and spending practices. Responses were measured using five-point Likert scales, with interpretations appropriate to each construct presented in Tables 2–5.

Table 2

Interpretation of the Frequency of FinTech Utilization Scale

Verbal description	Level of agreement	Range of mean
Never	1	1.0 - 1.49
Rarely	2	1.5 - 2.49
Sometimes	3	2.5 - 3.49
Often	4	3.5 - 4.49
Always	5	4.5 - 5.0

Table 3

Interpretation of the Perceived Usefulness of FinTech

Verbal description	Level of agreement	Range of mean
Not useful	1	1.0 - 1.49
Slightly useful	2	1.5 - 2.49
Moderately useful	3	2.5 - 3.49

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Verbal description	Level of agreement	Range of mean
Useful	4	3.5 - 4.49
Extremely useful	5	4.5 - 5.0

Table 4

Interpretation of the Perceived Ease of Use of FinTech

Verbal description	Level of agreement	Range of mean
Strongly disagree	1	1.0 - 1.49
Disagree	2	1.5 - 2.49
Neutral	3	2.5 - 3.49
Agree	4	3.5 - 4.49
Strongly agree	5	4.5 - 5.0

Table 5

Interpretation of the Financial Management Behavior Scale

Verbal description	Level of agreement	Range of mean
Strongly disagree	1	1.0 - 1.49
Disagree	2	1.5 - 2.49
Neutral	3	2.5 - 3.49
Agree	4	3.5 - 4.49
Strongly agree	5	4.5 - 5.0

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the direction and significance of the relationships between financial technology utilization and saving behavior, spending behavior, and overall financial management behavior.

Simple linear regression analysis was used to determine whether composite FinTech utilization significantly predicted overall financial management behavior. The dependent variable was overall financial management behavior, calculated as a composite of the saving- and spending-behavior measures. The sole independent variable (predictor) was composite FinTech utilization, calculated from the three measured dimensions: frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. These dimensions were combined to measure the overall FinTech utilization construct and were not entered as separate predictors. Accordingly, the fitted model was $Y = b_0 + b_1X + e$, where Y represents overall financial management behavior and X represents composite FinTech utilization. Model fit and statistical significance were evaluated using R, R^2, the F test, the unstandardized regression coefficient (B), standard error (SE), t value, and p value. This specification corresponds to Table 19, which reports one predictor ($df_1 = 1$), rather than a three-predictor multiple-regression model.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved human participants; therefore, appropriate ethical principles were observed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate microfinance institutions or authorized organizations, as applicable.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Before answering the questionnaire, respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their right to decline participation or withdraw without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before the collection of data.

The confidentiality and privacy of the respondents were protected. No personally identifying information was disclosed in the presentation or reporting of the findings. The data were used solely for academic and research purposes and were stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

The presentation of findings follows a table-first sequence, wherein each statistical result is presented in its corresponding table before the interpretation and discussion that follows.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age Distribution

Table 6
Age Distribution of the Respondents

AGE	FREQUENCY	%
20–29	78	21.08
30–39	114	30.81
40–49	115	31.08
50–59	34	9.19
60–69	29	7.84
Total	370	100

Table 6 shows that respondents aged 40–49 constituted the largest age group, with 115 respondents (31.08%), followed by those aged 30–39, with 114 respondents (30.81%). Respondents aged 60–69 constituted the smallest group, with 29 respondents (7.84%).

Gender Distribution

Table 7
Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Female	140	37.84
LGBTQ	104	28.11
Male	124	33.51
Not reported	2	0.54
Total	**370**	**100.00**

Table 7 presents the gender-related distribution of the respondents. Female respondents accounted for 140 (37.84%), LGBTQ respondents for 104 (28.11%), male respondents for 124 (33.51%), and respondents who did not report their gender for 2 (0.54%).

Civil Status

Table 8
Civil Status of the Respondents

CIVIL STATUS	FREQUENCY	%
Married	133	35.95
Single	237	64.05
Total	370	100

Table 8 shows that 237 respondents (64.05%) were single and 133 (35.95%) were married.

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Educational Attainment

Table 9
Educational Attainment of the Respondents

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	FREQUENCY	%
College Level	170	45.95
Graduate Degree	116	31.35
Vocational Level	84	22.70
Total	370	100

Table 9 shows that 170 respondents (45.95%) had reached the college level, 116 (31.35%) held a graduate degree, and 84 (22.70%) had attained a vocational qualification.

Average Monthly Income

Table 10
Average Monthly Income of the Respondents

MONTHLY INCOME	FREQUENCY	%
PHP 15,000 TO LESS THAN PHP 20,000	55	14.86
PHP 20,000 TO LESS THAN PHP 25,000	87	23.51
PHP 25,000 TO LESS THAN PHP 30,000	73	19.73
PHP 30,000 TO LESS THAN PHP 35,000	68	18.38
PHP 40,000 AND ABOVE	87	23.51
Total	370	100

Table 10 shows that 87 respondents (23.51%) reported a monthly income of PHP 20,000 to less than PHP 25,000, while another 87 respondents (23.51%) reported PHP 40,000 and above. The remaining respondents were distributed across the PHP 15,000 to less than PHP 20,000, PHP 25,000 to less than PHP 30,000, and PHP 30,000 to less than PHP 35,000 categories.

Occupational Status

Table 11
Occupational Status of the Respondents

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	FREQUENCY	%
Homemaker	3	0.81
Employed	146	39.46
Self-Employed	118	31.89
Working Student	103	27.84
Total	370	100

Table 11 shows that 146 respondents (39.46%) were employed, 118 (31.89%) were self-employed, 103 (27.84%) were working students, and 3 (0.81%) were homemakers.

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Purpose of Using FinTech

Table 12
Respondents' Purpose of Using FinTech

PURPOSE	FREQUENCY	RANK
Paying Bills	370	1
Sending Or Receiving Money	367	2
Online Shopping	361	3
Business Transactions	272	4
Saving/Investing	237	5
Loan Repayment	145	6

Table 12 shows that paying bills was the most frequently reported purpose of FinTech use, with 370 responses, followed by sending or receiving money (367), online shopping (361), business transactions (272), saving or investing (237), and loan repayment (145).

Utilization of Financial Technology / Frequency of Use of Financial Technology

Table 13
Respondents' Frequency of Using Financial Technology

FREQUENCY OF USE	MEAN	VD
I frequently use fintech applications (e.g., gcash, maya, and bank applications) for my financial transactions.	4.46	Always
I frequently use digital platforms to pay my monthly utility bills (e.g., electricity, water, and other household services).	4.39	Often
I prefer using e-wallets instead of cash when shopping or making purchases at the market.	4.32	Often
I frequently check my digital account balance or transaction history to monitor my financial resources.	4.26	Often
I frequently use fintech applications to send money to and receive money from family and friends.	4.35	Often
Composite Mean	4.36	Often

Table 13 shows that respondents often used FinTech for financial transactions, with a composite mean of 4.36. The highest-rated item was the use of FinTech applications, such as GCash, Maya, and bank applications, for financial transactions (M = 4.46), interpreted as "Always." The use of digital platforms to pay utility bills received a mean of 4.39, while sending or receiving money from family and friends received a mean of 4.35; both were interpreted as "Often." The use of e-wallets instead of cash when shopping received a mean of 4.32, also interpreted as "Often.".

Usefulness of Financial Technology

Table 14
Respondents' Perspective on the Perceived Usefulness of Financial Technology

PERCEIVED USEFULNESS	MEAN	SD	VD
Using fintech applications helps me manage my finances more efficiently and quickly.	4.39	0.56	Very Useful
Using digital financial tools saves me time and reduces the expenses associated with traveling to a bank.	4.55	0.57	Extremely Useful

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PERCEIVED USEFULNESS	MEAN	SD	VD
Using fintech applications makes paying my microfinance loan installments more convenient and efficient.	4.44	0.59	Very Useful
Using fintech applications helps me manage and control my financial tasks more effectively.	4.49	0.64	Very Useful
Using fintech applications helps me effectively manage and address my daily financial needs.	4.41	0.63	Very Useful
Composite Mean	4.46		Very Useful

Table 14 presents respondents' perceptions of the usefulness of FinTech in managing their financial activities. The composite mean was 4.46, interpreted as "Very Useful," indicating that respondents generally viewed FinTech as a valuable means of meeting their financial needs. The highest-rated item was the ability of digital financial tools to save time and reduce travel costs associated with visiting a bank (M = 4.55, SD = 0.57). Respondents also rated highly the ability of FinTech applications to help them manage and control financial tasks more effectively (M = 4.49, SD = 0.64) and the convenience and efficiency of paying microfinance loan installments (M = 4.44, SD = 0.59). The results show that respondents rated the identified FinTech functions highly in terms of usefulness, with a composite mean of 4.46, interpreted as "Very Useful."

Respondents also considered FinTech useful for addressing their daily financial needs (M = 4.41, SD = 0.63) and managing their finances more quickly and efficiently (M = 4.39, SD = 0.56). The results show consistently high ratings across the perceived-usefulness items, with means ranging from 4.39 to 4.55.

Ease of Use of Financial Technology

Table 15

Respondents' Perspective on the Perceived Ease of Use of Financial Technology

EASE OF USE	MEAN	SD	VD
I find the interface of my chosen fintech application easy to navigate.	4.37	0.59	Agree
It was simple for me to learn how to register and use the app.	4.34	0.661	Agree
The process of sending or receiving money is clear and uncomplicated.	4.34	0.628	Agree
I can easily find the specific features I need within the application.	4.36	0.658	Agree
I do not find the technical steps involved in using fintech confusing.	4.30	0.714	Agree
Composite Mean	4.34		Agree

Table 15 presents respondents' perceptions of the ease of using FinTech applications. The composite mean was 4.34, interpreted as "Agree," indicating that respondents generally found the applications easy to understand, navigate, and use when conducting financial transactions. The highest-rated item concerned the ease of navigating the interface of the selected FinTech application (M = 4.37, SD = 0.59).

The accessibility of specific features received a mean of 4.36 (SD = 0.66), while learning to register and learning to send or receive money each received a mean of 4.34. The statement indicating that respondents did not find the technical steps involved in using FinTech confusing received the lowest mean (M = 4.30, SD = 0.71), although it remained within the "Agree" category. The results indicate that respondents generally perceived FinTech applications as easy to use, with a composite mean of 4.34, interpreted as "Agree.".

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Financial Management Behavior / Saving Behavior

Table 16
Respondents' Saving Behavior

SAVING BEHAVIOR	MEAN	SD	VD
I regularly set aside a portion of my income for savings.	4.34	0.67	Agree
I create a financial plan or budget to help save money.	4.29	0.645	Agree
I arrange automatic transfers from transactional accounts to savings accounts to make saving consistent.	4.36	0.70	Agree
I use strategies, such as preparing shopping lists, to prevent unnecessary purchases.	4.34	0.60	Agree
I set aside money for retirement to ensure future security.	4.14	0.67	Agree
I save funds for specific purposes like buying a home, education, or vacations.	4.37	0.60	Agree
I save money in interest-bearing bank accounts, stocks, or other investment vehicles.	4.45	0.65	Agree
I use fintech tools to track or increase my savings.	4.30	0.71	Agree
I prioritize saving over unnecessary spending.	4.24	0.65	Agree
I feel confident in reaching my short-term and long-term savings goals.	4.35	0.56	Agree
Composite Mean	4.32		Agree

Table 16 presents the respondents' saving behavior, with a composite mean of 4.32, interpreted as "Agree." The results indicate that respondents generally practiced positive saving behaviors and demonstrated a responsible approach to financial management. The highest-rated item concerned saving through interest-bearing bank accounts, stocks, or other investment vehicles (M = 4.45, SD = 0.65). Respondents also reported saving for specific purposes, using automatic transfers to savings accounts, and preparing for short- and long-term financial goals. Saving for retirement received the lowest mean (M = 4.14, SD = 0.67), although it remained within the "Agree" category.

Spending Behavior

Table 17
Respondents' Spending Behavior

SPENDING BEHAVIOR	MEAN	SD	VD
I carefully plan my spending before making purchases.	4.27	0.64	Agree
I avoid impulsive buying by monitoring my finances.	4.31	0.67	Agree
I use fintech applications to track my daily or monthly expenses.	4.18	0.70	Agree
I spend within my means and adhere to my budget.	4.21	0.51	Agree
I make informed decisions when using credit or digital payments.	4.33	0.72	Agree
I am an impulsive buyer. (reverse-coded) (reverse coded)	4.14	0.83	Agree
I rely on credit without tracking the balance, which often results in interest charges. (reverse-coded) (reverse coded)	4.22	0.77	Agree
I pay for streaming services, applications, or gym memberships that i rarely or never use. (reverse-coded) (reverse coded)	4.28	0.70	Agree

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SPENDING BEHAVIOR	MEAN	SD	VD
I frequently order food for delivery or use tricycles instead of public transportation, which incurs additional service costs. (reverse-coded) (reverse coded)	4.38	0.77	Agree
I spend money to feel content or alleviate stress (e.g., retail therapy). (reverse-coded) (reverse coded)	4.28	0.80	Agree
Composite Mean	4.27		Agree

Table 17 presents the respondents' spending behavior, with a composite mean of 4.27, interpreted as "Agree." All negatively worded items were reverse-scored before the composite mean and inferential analyses were calculated; therefore, higher scores indicate more responsible spending behavior. The highest reverse-scored mean was recorded for the item concerning frequent food-delivery orders or the use of tricycles instead of public transportation (*M* = 4.38, *SD* = 0.77). Overall, the findings indicate that respondents generally controlled unnecessary expenses, monitored their finances, managed credit responsibly, and avoided impulsive purchases.

The use of FinTech applications to track daily or monthly expenses received the lowest mean among the positive statements (M = 4.18, SD = 0.70), but it remained within the "Agree" category. The reverse-coded statement concerning impulsive buying received a mean of 4.14 (SD = 0.83), indicating that respondents generally did not identify themselves as impulsive buyers. Table 17 shows a composite mean of 4.27, interpreted as "Agree." The highest-rated item was the reverse-coded statement concerning frequent food-delivery orders or the use of tricycles instead of public transportation (M = 4.38, SD = 0.77). The item concerning the use of FinTech applications to track daily or monthly expenses received the lowest mean among the positive statements (M = 4.18, SD = 0.70), although it remained within the "Agree" category.

Relationship Between Clients' FinTech Utilization and Their Financial Management Behavior

Table 18
Relationship Between Clients' FinTech Utilization and Their Financial Management Behavior

Correlations with FinTech Utilization			
Outcome	**Statistic**	**Value**	**Interpretation**
Saving Behavior	Pearson's r	.297	
	df	368	
	p value	< .001	
Spending Behavior	Pearson's r	.775	
	df	368	
	p value	< .001	
Financial Management Behavior	Pearson's r	.718	
	df	368	
	p value	< .001	

Table 18 shows the relationships between FinTech utilization and the dimensions of financial management behavior. FinTech utilization had a weak but statistically significant positive relationship with saving behavior (r = .297, p < .001). Thus, higher reported FinTech utilization was associated with higher reported saving-behavior scores among the respondents, supporting H1.

FinTech utilization also had a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with spending behavior (r = .775, p < .001). Thus, higher reported FinTech utilization was associated with higher reported spending-behavior scores among the respondents, supporting H2.

For overall financial management behavior, the Pearson correlation coefficient was r = .718, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between composite FinTech utilization and overall financial management behavior (p < .001). Thus, higher reported FinTech utilization was associated with higher reported overall financial management behavior among the respondents. This finding supports H3.

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Simple Linear Regression of Composite FinTech Utilization on Overall Financial Management Behavior

Table 19

Simple Linear Regression of Composite FinTech Utilization on Overall Financial Management Behavior

	Model Fit Measures			Overall Model Test		
Model	R	R^2	F	df1	df2	p
Simple linear regression	.720	.518	396.0	1	368	< .001
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p		
Intercept	1.642	0.1018	16.1	< .001		
Composite FinTech Utilization	.460	0.0231	19.9	< .001		

Note: Models estimated using a sample size of N = 370.

Table 19 presents the simple linear regression of composite FinTech utilization on overall financial management behavior. Overall financial management behavior was the dependent variable, while composite FinTech utilization—representing the combined measures of frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use—was the sole independent variable. The model produced R = .720 and R^2 = .518, indicating that the regression model explained 51.8% of the variance in overall financial management behavior.. The overall model was statistically significant, F(1, 368) = 396, p < .001. The intercept was B = 1.642 (SE = 0.1018, t = 16.1, p < .001), and composite FinTech utilization had a positive and statistically significant coefficient, B = 0.46 (SE = 0.0231, t = 19.9, p < .001).. The fitted regression equation was Overall Financial Management Behavior = 1.642 + 0.460(Composite FinTech Utilization). The coefficient represents the estimated change in the predicted financial management behavior score associated with a one-unit increase in composite FinTech utilization within the fitted model.

Conclusions

The study found that microfinance clients in Tarlac City reported frequent FinTech use and favorable perceptions of the usefulness and ease of use of FinTech services. Respondents also reported generally positive saving and spending behavior.

FinTech utilization was significantly positively associated with saving behavior (r = .297, p < .001), spending behavior (r = .775, p < .001), and overall financial management behavior (r = .718, p < .001).

Simple linear regression further showed that composite FinTech utilization was a statistically significant predictor of overall financial management behavior (B = 0.460, p < .001), with the model explaining 51.8% of the variance in the dependent variable (R^2 = .518).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Microfinance institutions may strengthen digital financial capability programs for their clients, with emphasis on budgeting, saving, expense monitoring, spending management, and the responsible use of digital financial services. Such programs may be integrated into existing client orientation, financial education, and support activities.
2. Microfinance clients may maximize appropriate FinTech features for managing their financial activities, particularly digital tools for transaction monitoring, expense tracking, budgeting, saving, bill payment, and money transfers. Clients may also maintain prudent financial practices when using convenient digital payment and credit facilities.
3. FinTech providers may continue improving the usability, accessibility, security, and functionality of digital financial platforms. Particular attention may be given to features that facilitate expense tracking, budgeting, saving, transaction monitoring, and other financial management activities.
4. Government agencies and financial-sector stakeholders may strengthen programs on digital financial capability, financial inclusion, and consumer protection for microfinance clients and other underserved populations. Partnerships among microfinance institutions, financial service providers, educational institutions,

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and relevant government agencies may be developed to expand access to appropriate digital financial education and services.

5. Future researchers may examine additional factors associated with financial management behavior, including financial literacy, digital literacy, financial self-efficacy, trust, income, and other relevant individual or contextual variables. Future studies may also employ longitudinal, mixed-methods, or experimental designs to provide further evidence regarding temporal relationships and potential causal mechanisms between FinTech utilization and financial management behavior.

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