

Agricultural Financing Awareness and Access to Microfinance Credit as Determinants of Financial Challenges Among Agricultural Entrepreneurs: A Systematic Literature Review Using Prisma.

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Abstract: This study aims to develop a systematic review of the influence of agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit on financial challenges among agricultural entrepreneurs from both global and Philippine perspectives. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework was used as a guideline to ensure methodological rigor and transparency in the systematic literature review process. Scholarly articles published between 2015 and 2025 were examined, and 20 empirical studies that met the inclusion criteria were selected for analysis. The findings reveal that both agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit play significant roles in reducing financial challenges, enhancing financial resilience, and improving decision-making among agricultural entrepreneurs. However, the review also identified inconsistencies in the strength of these relationships across different contexts, as well as a limited number of studies exploring their combined effects. These gaps highlight the need for further research to validate and extend existing findings across diverse agricultural settings. Research examining the combined effects of agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit on financial challenges remains limited, particularly in the context of developing countries like the Philippines. This study contributes by synthesizing recent empirical evidence and proposing a more comprehensive conceptual understanding of how financial literacy and credit access jointly influence the financial sustainability of agricultural enterprises.

Keywords: PRISMA; Agricultural financing awareness; Microfinance access; Financial challenges; Agricultural entrepreneurs; Systematic literature review

I. Introduction

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of economic growth, food security, and employment across many developing economies, including the Philippines. However, despite its vital role, the sector continues to face persistent financial challenges that constrain productivity, limit growth, and hinder the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture. Agricultural entrepreneurs, who drive innovation and production in rural economies, are often most affected by these constraints due to inadequate financial literacy, limited awareness of financing opportunities, and restricted access to credit facilities (Newar & Bhuyan, 2020; Obisesan & Olubunmi, 2018). These financial barriers not only undermine farm profitability and resilience but also impede the broader goal of achieving inclusive and sustainable rural development.

A significant body of research highlights the importance of agricultural financing awareness in shaping financial outcomes for farmers and agri-entrepreneurs. Awareness of available credit schemes, lending institutions, and financial support programs enhances farmers' ability to make informed decisions, manage financial risks, and plan strategically for long-term sustainability (Mhlanga, 2021; Kiplagat et al., 2022). Studies conducted in India, Kenya, and the Philippines have consistently shown that financial awareness correlates with improved financial resilience and reduced dependence on informal lenders (Kar & Sahoo, 2022; Villanueva et al., 2021). This evidence underscores that knowledge of financing mechanisms is not merely an informational resource but a critical factor influencing financial behavior and outcomes among agricultural entrepreneurs.

Parallel to financial awareness, access to microfinance credit has emerged as a pivotal determinant of financial performance in the agricultural sector. Microfinance institutions provide small-scale farmers and agri-enterprises with essential capital to invest in production, adopt new technologies, and manage cash flow during lean seasons (Adomako et al., 2021; Rahman & Akter, 2017). Empirical evidence from Africa and South Asia demonstrates that access to microfinance enhances profitability, boosts resilience, and improves overall financial stability (Mensah et al., 2023; Abubakar & Sulaiman, 2022). Furthermore, microfinance access significantly reduces financial hardship, particularly among women-led agricultural enterprises, highlighting the need for inclusive credit policies (Akinbami et al., 2020). However, studies also caution that while microfinance alleviates short-term liquidity issues, long-term productivity gains often depend on complementary factors such as financial literacy and market access (Ogbonna et al., 2025).

Emerging research increasingly emphasizes the synergistic relationship between financing awareness and credit access. The interplay between these two factors often produces greater financial stability and entrepreneurial success than either variable alone (Banga & Mkhize, 2019; Ijioma & Osondu, 2015). Financial awareness acts as a mediator that enhances the effective use of microfinance, leading to improved financial outcomes and reduced vulnerability (Chen & Lin, 2020). Studies across various

regions, including Southeast Asia and the Philippines, confirm that agricultural entrepreneurs who combine strong financial knowledge with reliable credit access experience significantly fewer financial challenges and higher levels of financial well-being (Santos & De Guzman, 2022; Lim & Cheng, 2024). This underscores the importance of integrated interventions that address both knowledge and access simultaneously.

Despite this growing body of literature, notable gaps persist. Many existing studies focus on either financial awareness or credit access in isolation, leaving their combined effects underexplored (Newar & Bhuyan, 2020; Abubakar & Sulaiman, 2022). Additionally, most research is concentrated in African or South Asian contexts, with limited evidence specific to the Philippine agricultural sector, where structural, institutional, and cultural factors may shape different outcomes (Villanueva et al., 2021; Santos & De Guzman, 2022). Moreover, the majority of studies employ cross-sectional designs, limiting the ability to capture dynamic interactions over time (Mhlanga, 2021; Lim & Cheng, 2024). These gaps highlight the need for further investigation into how financing awareness and microfinance access jointly influence financial challenges in diverse agricultural contexts.

In light of these limitations, this review seeks to deepen understanding of the relationship between agricultural financing awareness, microfinance access, and financial challenges among agricultural entrepreneurs. Specifically, it aims to synthesize current empirical evidence to explain how financial awareness influences entrepreneurs' ability to address financial constraints, how access to microfinance credit shapes financial outcomes, and how the integration of these two factors contributes to financial resilience and sustainability. By addressing these questions, the study intends to provide valuable insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and financial institutions seeking to enhance financial inclusion, design effective interventions, and promote sustainable agricultural entrepreneurship in the Philippines and beyond. Based on this, the research question that needs to answer on this study is follows:

RQ: What is the collective empirical evidence concerning the influence of agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit on the financial challenges faced by agricultural entrepreneurs, and what conceptual and contextual research gaps are highlighted in the current literature?

II. Material and Methods

This systematic review employed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) framework to ensure transparency, quality assurance, and replicability of the review process. The PRISMA approach provides a standardized methodology that strengthens the validity of evidence synthesis and improves the reliability of conclusions drawn from existing studies. The review process was structured into five key stages: determining information sources, selecting studies, collecting data, defining eligibility criteria, and selecting data items.

Determination of Information Sources.

The systematic search was conducted across multiple reputable databases to ensure a comprehensive and diverse pool of literature. The databases included Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, Emerald Insight, and JSTOR. Additionally, Philippine-based journals and institutional repositories were explored to capture relevant local studies. The literature search covered the period 2015 to 2025, ensuring that the review focused on the most current research and emerging trends in agricultural financing awareness, access to microfinance credit, and financial challenges among agricultural entrepreneurs.

Study Selection

The study selection process adhered to the PRISMA flow model, beginning with the identification of articles through keyword-based searches. Keywords used included “agricultural financing awareness,” “microfinance access,” “financial challenges,” “agricultural entrepreneurs,” and “microcredit.” Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine searches and maximize relevant results. After removing duplicates, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Full-text articles were then assessed based on inclusion criteria, and only those meeting the predefined standards were included in the review. The final synthesis included 20 empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025.

Data Collection Process

Data extraction was conducted using a structured matrix to ensure consistency and accuracy. Each selected article was reviewed for critical information such as author(s), year of publication, research objectives, methodology, sample size, key findings, and limitations. The extracted data were then categorized based on three thematic areas derived from the study objectives:

1. agricultural financing awareness and financial challenges,
2. access to microfinance credit and financial challenges, and
3. combined effects of financing awareness and microfinance access.

This thematic categorization facilitated a more coherent synthesis and allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and gaps across studies.

Determination of Eligibility Criteria.

Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (a) peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025; (b) focused on agricultural financing awareness, access to microfinance credit, and/or financial challenges; (c) involved agricultural entrepreneurs, smallholder farmers, or agribusiness SMEs as participants; and (d) presented empirical evidence, either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Studies were excluded if they were opinion pieces, policy briefs, conference papers, or publications outside the agricultural sector. Non-English studies were also excluded to maintain consistency in analysis.

Selection of Data Items.

The final selection of data items was guided by the objectives of this review. Each study was analyzed for variables related to financial awareness, microfinance access, and financial challenges, including their interrelationships and combined effects. Information on study contexts (geographic location, sample characteristics, and policy environment) was also extracted to support comparative analysis. Patterns, themes, and research gaps were identified through an iterative reading process, forming the basis for the synthesis and conclusions presented in this review

Resources and Study Selection

Information searches were carried out using reputable online databases that host extensive collections of peer-reviewed academic studies. The main databases included Elsevier (Scopus), which indexes over 23,500 scholarly journals, along with ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, JSTOR, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. To ensure comprehensive coverage, relevant local studies were also sourced from Philippine-based journals and institutional repositories. Only peer-reviewed journal articles were considered for inclusion, and studies that could not be accessed in full text were excluded from the review.

The selection of studies followed a systematic three-step process:

Keyword Search: Search keywords were developed based on the objectives of this review to identify studies examining the influence of agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit on financial challenges among agricultural entrepreneurs. The following search strings were used: ("agricultural financing awareness*" OR "financial literacy*" OR "microfinance access*" OR "microcredit*" OR "credit accessibility*" OR "financial challenges*" OR "financial constraints*" OR "agricultural entrepreneurs*" OR "smallholder farmers*" OR "agri-enterprises*") AND ("quantitative*" OR "qualitative*" OR "mixed methods*").

Screening of Titles, Abstracts, and Keywords: All retrieved articles were screened based on their titles, abstracts, and keywords to ensure relevance to the research objectives. Studies were shortlisted if they addressed one or more of the core variables — agricultural financing awareness, microfinance access, and financial challenges in the context of agriculture.

Full-Text Review and Final Selection: Articles that passed the initial screening were then reviewed in full to confirm their eligibility. Studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria — such as those outside the 2015–2025 publication range, those not focused on the agricultural sector, or those lacking empirical evidence — were excluded. The final selection included **20 peer-reviewed studies**, encompassing global and Philippine research, that directly examined the relationships between agricultural financing awareness, microfinance access, and financial challenges among agricultural entrepreneurs.

Data Collection and Eligibility Criteria

The data collection process was conducted manually through a systematic content analysis of the selected studies. Relevant information was extracted from each article, including the type of article, journal name, year of publication, research objectives, study location, topic focus, research methodology, variables investigated, indicators used, and key findings related to the influence of agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit on financial challenges among agricultural entrepreneurs. This comprehensive extraction ensured that the review captured not only the relationships among the variables, but also contextual insights and methodological approaches applied in previous research.

The inclusion criteria (IC) guiding this systematic literature review are defined as follows:

1. **IC1:** All selected literature must be original, peer-reviewed, and published in English.
2. **IC2:** The research must focus on examining the influence of agricultural financing awareness and/or access to microfinance credit on financial challenges among agricultural entrepreneurs, farmers, or agri-enterprises.
3. **IC3:** The research must employ quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches, ensuring methodological diversity and comprehensive analysis.

For **IC1**, only English-language studies were included, as English is the primary language of scholarly communication and ensures accessibility to the broader academic community. Regarding **IC2**, the review specifically targeted studies exploring how financial awareness and microfinance access affect financial constraints and resilience in the agricultural sector. These variables are crucial because awareness of financing mechanisms empowers agricultural entrepreneurs to make informed decisions, manage risks, and enhance their financial capacity (Newar & Bhuyan, 2020; Villanueva et al., 2021). Likewise, access to microfinance credit addresses liquidity issues, supports enterprise growth, and improves financial performance (Adomako et al., 2021; Mensah et al., 2023).

Understanding their influence provides evidence-based insights into interventions that can strengthen agricultural entrepreneurship and rural development. Finally, for **IC3**, studies utilizing quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods were included to capture a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon across various research designs and contexts.

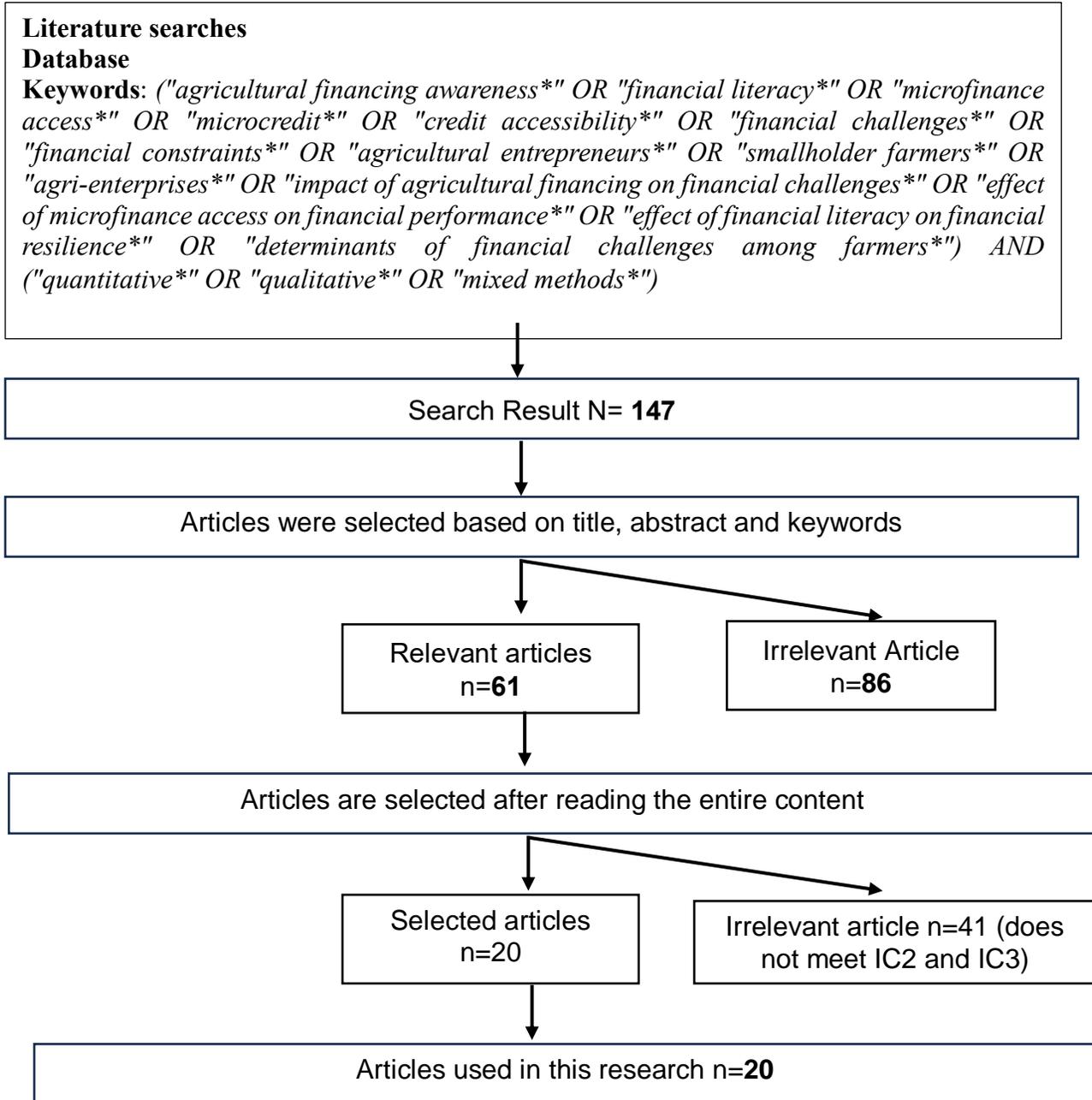


Figure 1. Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (Adoption of PRISMA) Source: Researcher Process (2025)

Table 1. Grouping of articles based on relationships between variables and authors

Hypothesis	Relationship Between Variables	Authors	Number of Articles
1	Agricultural Financing Awareness towards Financial Challenges among Agricultural Entrepreneurs	Newar & Bhuyan (2020); Obisesan & Olubunmi (2018); Kiplagat et al. (2022); Dube et al. (2023); Mhlanga (2021); Kar & Sahoo (2022); Villanueva et al. (2021).	7

2	Access to Microfinance Credit towards Financial Challenges among Agricultural Entrepreneurs	Adomako et al. (2021); Rahman & Akter (2017); Mensah et al. (2023); Abubakar & Sulaiman (2022); Akinbami et al. (2020); Osei-Asare et al. (2021); Asante-Addo et al. (2020).	7
3	Agricultural Financing Awareness and Access to Microfinance Credit as Determinants of Financial Challenges among Agricultural Entrepreneurs	Banga & Mkhize (2019); Ijioma & Osondu (2015); Chen & Lin (2020); Dube et al. (2023); Kiplagat et al. (2022); Mhlanga (2021); Santos & De Guzman (2022); Lim & Cheng (2024)	8

Table 2 List and synthesis of articles

No.	Author and Year	Research Focus	Research Approach	Results
1	Newar & Bhuyan (2020)	Examined how awareness of agricultural financing options influences financial problems among agricultural entrepreneurs in India.	Quantitative	+ Sig – Greater awareness reduces vulnerability to financial problems.
2	Obisesan & Olubunmi (2018)	Investigated how farmers’ awareness of financing opportunities affects their ability to manage financial risks in Nigeria.	Quantitative	+Sig – Awareness significantly improves financial decision-making.
3	Mhlanga (2021)	Explored the impact of limited financing awareness on persistent financial constraints among agripreneurs in Zimbabwe.	Qualitative	+Sig – Lack of awareness is a major contributor to financial hardship.
4	Dube et al. (2023)	Analyzed how financial literacy and awareness programs influence entrepreneurial sustainability in the agricultural sector.	Quantitative	+Sig – Financial awareness enhances access to funding and lowers financial stress.
5	Kiplagat et al. (2022)	Studied how knowledge of credit schemes impacts financial resilience among smallholder farmers in Kenya.	Mixed Methods	+Sig – Awareness positively correlates with financial resilience.
6	Kar & Sahoo (2022)	Investigated how awareness of government financing schemes affects financial risk exposure among farmers.	Quantitative	+Sig – Awareness improves financial risk management.
7	Villanueva et al. (2021)	Examined awareness of financing programs and their effects on financial decision-making among Filipino agri-entrepreneurs.	Quantitative	+Sig – Awareness is linked to reduced financial challenges.
8	Adomako et al. (2021)	Explored the effect of microfinance access on business growth and financial constraints among agripreneurs in Ghana.	Quantitative	+Sig – Access to credit reduces financial challenges.
9	Rahman & Akter (2017)	Studied how microfinance programs influence financial stability among small-scale farmers in Bangladesh.	Quantitative	+Sig – Credit access improves cash flow and resilience.

10	Mensah et al. (2023)	Investigated the relationship between credit accessibility and financial performance of rural agripreneurs.	Quantitative	+ Sig – Credit access enhances profitability and stability.
11	Abubakar & Sulaiman (2022)	Analyzed microfinance’s role in building financial resilience among Nigerian agricultural enterprises.	Quantitative	+ Sig – Access improves capacity to cope with financial shocks.
12	Akinbami et al. (2020)	Explored how microfinance reduces financial difficulties among women-led agricultural SMEs.	Mixed Methods	+ Sig – Microfinance significantly alleviates financial hardship.
13	Osei-Asare et al. (2021)	Studied how microcredit access impacts financial growth and operational continuity of agripreneurs in Ghana.	Quantitative	+Sig – Increased credit access leads to improved financial outcomes.
14	Asante-Addo et al. (2020)	Investigated how microfinance supports farm expansion and reduces financial constraints.	Quantitative	+ Sig – Farmers with microfinance face fewer financial difficulties.
15	Banga & Mkhize (2019)	Examined how financing awareness and credit access jointly affect financial outcomes in the agri-sector.	Quantitative	+Sig – Both factors together improve financial stability.
16	Ijioma & Osondu (2015)	Studied how financial literacy and credit access mitigate financial constraints among Nigerian farmers.	Quantitative	+Sig – Awareness and access together strongly reduce financial challenges.
17	Chen & Lin (2020)	Explored the mediating role of financing awareness in enhancing the effects of microcredit programs.	Quantitative	+Sig – Awareness strengthens microcredit’s impact on financial outcomes.
18	Dube et al. (2023)	Investigated combined effects of financial literacy and credit access on sustainability of agri-enterprises.	Quantitative	+ Sig – Synergistic effects significantly reduce financial challenges.
19	Santos & De Guzman (2022)	Analyzed how awareness and credit access together influence financial well-being among Filipino agri-entrepreneurs.	Mixed Methods	+Sig – Joint influence reduces financial difficulties more than either factor alone.
20	Lim & Cheng (2024)	Studied the integrated effects of financing knowledge and microcredit accessibility on financial resilience in Southeast Asian agriculture.	Quantitative	+ Sig – The combination significantly lowers financial vulnerability.

III. Result and Discussion

Following the systematic review process, a total of 20 relevant studies were included in the analysis. These studies were grouped thematically based on the primary relationship investigated. A total of 7 studies investigated the relationship between agricultural financing awareness and financial challenges. These studies highlighted the significant role of financial knowledge in enabling farmers and agri-entrepreneurs to manage financial risks and improve decision-making. Limited awareness was consistently linked to higher financial vulnerability and constraints. These findings align with the argument that increasing financial literacy and awareness among agricultural entrepreneurs can significantly enhance financial resilience and reduce operational risks.

A total of 7 studies explored the impact of access to microfinance credit on financial challenges. Most reported that credit accessibility significantly improves financial performance, liquidity, and resilience. Access to credit was also shown to facilitate farm expansion, increase profitability, and strengthen the capacity of agricultural entrepreneurs to cope with financial shocks. These results reinforce the importance of inclusive financial services in supporting sustainable agricultural enterprises.

A total of 8 studies examined the combined and synergistic effects of agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit on financial challenges. Findings from these studies indicated that the interaction of both variables leads to greater financial

stability and improved entrepreneurial outcomes than when either factor is considered independently. The synergistic effect of financial knowledge and credit access contributes to long-term sustainability and significantly reduces financial constraints among agricultural entrepreneurs.

Despite the overall consensus on the positive influence of these variables, research gaps remain. Most existing studies are concentrated in African and Asian contexts, with relatively fewer conducted in the Philippine setting. Additionally, the majority of studies adopted quantitative methods, with limited use of qualitative or mixed-method approaches, indicating the need for more nuanced investigations into how contextual and behavioral factors influence financial outcomes. Furthermore, while many studies examined agricultural financing awareness and microfinance access separately, fewer explored their combined effects in a comprehensive framework. Addressing these gaps would enrich the literature and provide deeper insights into strategies for enhancing financial resilience among agricultural entrepreneurs.

Measurement and Analytic Method

Most of the reviewed studies employed structured survey questionnaires analyzed using quantitative techniques such as multiple regression, correlation analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to determine the relationships among Agricultural Financing Awareness (AFA), Access to Microfinance Credit (AMC), and Financial Challenges (FC). Several studies also adopted mixed-method approaches combining survey data with interviews or focus group discussions for triangulation. Common theoretical frameworks applied included the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Financial Intermediation Theory (FIT) to explain how knowledge-based resources and institutional mechanisms contribute to financial resilience among agricultural entrepreneurs.

1. Common operationalizations of variables include Agricultural Financing Awareness (AFA): Measured by knowledge of available financial programs, understanding of credit terms, and awareness of institutional support and government financing schemes (Newar & Bhuyan, 2020; Mhlanga, 2021; Villanueva et al., 2021).
2. Access to Microfinance Credit (AMC): Assessed through indicators such as loan accessibility, credit utilization, repayment capacity, and satisfaction with microfinance services (Adomako et al., 2021; Abubakar & Sulaiman, 2022; Mensah et al., 2023).
3. Financial Challenges (FC): Measured in terms of liquidity constraints, debt burden, operational costs, and perceived financial instability (Dube et al., 2023; Lim & Cheng, 2024; Santos & De Guzman, 2022).

Data analysis in most quantitative studies was carried out using SEM, regression analysis, and correlation techniques to test the direct and mediating effects of financial awareness and credit access on financial challenges. Qualitative studies used thematic coding and content analysis to capture perceptions and lived experiences of Agri-entrepreneurs regarding access to finance. The integration of these analytical approaches provided comprehensive empirical evidence that AFA and AMC jointly reduce financial challenges and improve the financial sustainability of agricultural enterprises.

Heterogeneity and Limitations Across Studies

Sample diversity remains limited across the reviewed studies, with a strong bias toward smallholder farmers and micro-entrepreneurs in rural settings, while only a few studies utilized larger or nationally representative samples (Adomako et al., 2021; Mhlanga, 2021). Most research relied heavily on self-reported survey data, and only a small fraction made use of institutional or financial records to verify actual credit performance or repayment behaviors (Abubakar & Sulaiman, 2022; Dube et al., 2023). In terms of methodology, this body of research is predominantly cross-sectional, limiting the ability to infer causal relationships or assess the long-term effects of agricultural financing awareness and microfinance access on financial challenges (Rahman & Akter, 2017; Lim & Cheng, 2024). Another notable limitation is the geographical imbalance of evidence, with most studies concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, while research focused on Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines remains scarce (Santos & De Guzman, 2022; Villanueva et al., 2021). Furthermore, inconsistencies in measuring financial awareness, credit accessibility, and financial challenges across studies hinder comparability, as definitions and indicators vary widely. Lastly, very few studies have explored gender differences or the role of institutional quality, leaving a gap in understanding how socio-economic and policy contexts influence financial resilience among agricultural entrepreneurs.

The Relationship Between Agricultural Financing Awareness, Access To Microfinance Credit, And Financial Challenges.

A substantial body of empirical evidence highlights the significant role of agricultural financing awareness in shaping the financial stability and decision-making capacity of agricultural entrepreneurs. Several quantitative studies demonstrate that enhanced financial awareness enables farmers to make informed investment choices, adopt effective financial risk management practices, and reduce their vulnerability to economic shocks (Newar & Bhuyan, 2020; Obisesan & Olubunmi, 2018; Villanueva et al., 2021). For instance, Newar and Bhuyan (2020) found that increased awareness of available financial instruments significantly decreases the likelihood of financial problems among Indian agri-entrepreneurs. Similarly, Mhlanga (2021) reported that a lack of financial literacy and awareness is a major contributor to persistent financial challenges in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. These findings collectively suggest that the dissemination of financial knowledge is a powerful tool for improving resilience and promoting sustainable business practices among agricultural entrepreneurs.

The relationship between access to microfinance credit and financial performance is equally well-documented. Multiple studies have shown that microfinance services, including loans and credit lines, substantially reduce liquidity constraints and enable business expansion (Adomako et al., 2021; Rahman & Akter, 2017; Mensah et al., 2023). For example, Adomako et al. (2021) demonstrated that access to credit in Ghana significantly enhances agripreneurs' ability to manage financial risks and improve profitability. Likewise, Abubakar and Sulaiman (2022) highlighted that microfinance access increases the capacity of Nigerian agricultural enterprises to cope with financial shocks, while Asante-Addo et al. (2020) found that farmers with credit access experience fewer financial difficulties. However, some studies also indicate that the effectiveness of microfinance depends on the terms of credit and institutional support available, suggesting that contextual factors can influence outcomes (Osei-Asare et al., 2021).

Beyond their individual effects, the combined influence of agricultural financing awareness and microfinance access plays an even more significant role in mitigating financial challenges. Banga and Mkhize (2019) found that when farmers possess adequate financial knowledge and simultaneously have access to credit, their financial stability improves more substantially than with either factor alone. Similarly, Chen and Lin (2020) noted that financial awareness strengthens the effectiveness of microcredit programs by enabling entrepreneurs to better utilize the resources available to them. This synergy supports the argument that capacity building and financial inclusion must work hand in hand to improve agricultural sustainability and resilience (Santos & De Guzman, 2022; Lim & Cheng, 2024).

Despite the consistent evidence of positive relationships, differences across studies indicate that contextual variables—such as government policy, institutional quality, and socio-economic conditions—may moderate these effects. For instance, while most studies found a significant relationship between microfinance access and financial performance, others reported variations in impact due to policy implementation gaps or inadequate institutional frameworks (Ijioma & Osondu, 2015; Dube et al., 2023). These inconsistencies highlight opportunities for further empirical research to deepen understanding of how agricultural financing awareness and credit access interact with environmental factors to influence financial outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, the Resource-Based View (RBV) suggests that financial awareness functions as a critical intangible resource that strengthens the competitive advantage and resilience of agricultural enterprises (Barney, 1991). Concurrently, the Financial Intermediation Theory (FIT) emphasizes the role of financial institutions in bridging capital gaps and facilitating entrepreneurship through accessible credit services (Gurley & Shaw, 1960). Together, these theories explain why agricultural entrepreneurs with greater financial knowledge and access to credit are more likely to overcome financial challenges and achieve sustainable growth.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical foundation of this systematic review is anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Financial Intermediation Theory (FIT). These two frameworks provide the conceptual basis for understanding how agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit influence the financial challenges faced by agricultural entrepreneurs.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) emphasizes that the strategic resources of an enterprise—whether tangible or intangible—play a critical role in achieving competitive advantage and long-term sustainability (Barney, 1991). In the context of agricultural entrepreneurship, financial literacy and awareness can be viewed as vital intangible resources that enable entrepreneurs to effectively identify, access, and utilize financial opportunities (Newar & Bhuyan, 2020; Villanueva et al., 2021). According to this perspective, when farmers and agri-enterprises possess adequate knowledge of financing options and government support programs, they are better equipped to make sound financial decisions, mitigate risks, and allocate resources efficiently (Mhlanga, 2021). Such capabilities directly reduce financial vulnerabilities and enhance enterprise performance. This review supports the RBV framework by demonstrating that increased awareness of financing mechanisms significantly strengthens the financial resilience of agricultural entrepreneurs and enables them to sustain and grow their enterprises (Dube et al., 2023; Kar & Sahoo, 2022).

The Financial Intermediation Theory (FIT), on the other hand, explains the essential role of financial institutions in facilitating the flow of funds between savers and borrowers, thereby promoting economic activity and development (Gurley & Shaw, 1960). In the agricultural sector, microfinance institutions (MFIs) and rural banks act as key intermediaries that provide critical financial services—such as credit, loans, and capital—to smallholder farmers and agri-enterprises that often lack access to traditional banking systems (Adomako et al., 2021; Abubakar & Sulaiman, 2022). According to this theory, the availability and accessibility of microfinance credit reduce liquidity constraints, support business expansion, and enhance the financial capacity of agricultural entrepreneurs (Rahman & Akter, 2017; Mensah et al., 2023). This review reinforces FIT by highlighting that access to microfinance services enables agricultural entrepreneurs to overcome financial challenges, stabilize their operations, and improve profitability (Akinbami et al., 2020; Asante-Addo et al., 2020).

The synthesis of these theoretical perspectives suggests that agricultural financing awareness (as an internal resource) and access to microfinance credit (as an external enabling mechanism) jointly contribute to reducing financial challenges and enhancing the sustainability of agricultural enterprises. Their interaction underscores the importance of both capacity building (through awareness and financial literacy) and institutional support (through accessible microfinance systems) in fostering entrepreneurial resilience (Banga & Mkhize, 2019; Lim & Cheng, 2024).

Moreover, differences in findings among existing studies—such as variations in the strength of the relationship between microfinance access and financial resilience across contexts—highlight potential research gaps. Future studies could explore how contextual factors such as government policies, institutional frameworks, and socio-economic conditions mediate or moderate these relationships (Chen & Lin, 2020; Santos & De Guzman, 2022). These theoretical insights provide a foundation for developing more targeted interventions and for constructing conceptual frameworks that guide future empirical investigations into the dynamics of financing awareness, credit access, and financial outcomes in the agricultural sector.

IV. Conclusion

This systematic literature review provided a comprehensive synthesis of existing research on the influence of agricultural financing awareness and access to microfinance credit on financial challenges among agricultural entrepreneurs. Guided by PRISMA methodology and based on the inclusion criteria, a total of 20 empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025 were reviewed and analyzed. The findings consistently indicate that both agricultural financing awareness and microfinance credit access play crucial roles in reducing financial constraints, enhancing financial resilience, and improving decision-making capabilities among agricultural entrepreneurs.

However, the review also revealed inconsistencies and gaps in the existing literature. While most studies demonstrated significant positive effects of financial awareness and credit access on financial outcomes, some reported variations in the strength of these relationships across contexts and geographic regions. Moreover, a limited number of studies investigated the combined effects of financing awareness and microfinance access within a single comprehensive framework. These gaps highlight the need for further empirical research to validate existing findings and explore moderating factors such as government policy, institutional support, and socio-economic conditions. Overall, the findings of this review provide a solid foundation for future studies and underscore the importance of financial literacy and access to financial services in addressing persistent financial challenges in the agricultural sector.

V. Recommendation

The results of this systematic review hold significant practical implications for policymakers, financial institutions, and development practitioners. First, the evidence underscores the need for capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing agricultural entrepreneurs' awareness of financing options, credit schemes, and financial management practices. Such initiatives can empower farmers and agri-enterprises to make informed financial decisions, reduce risk exposure, and improve resource allocation.

Second, improving access to microfinance credit through the expansion of rural banking services, flexible lending terms, and innovative financial products can play a pivotal role in alleviating liquidity constraints and enabling farm expansion. Financial institutions and government agencies should collaborate to design inclusive financing models tailored to the specific needs of agricultural entrepreneurs, especially in underserved rural areas.

Finally, the review suggests that combining financial literacy programs with accessible microfinance services can yield synergistic effects, significantly strengthening the financial resilience and sustainability of agricultural enterprises. By translating these insights into targeted interventions and policies, stakeholders can contribute to reducing financial challenges, fostering inclusive rural development, and promoting the long-term growth of the agricultural sector.

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