

Dimensions of Loan Dependency among Government Employees of the Municipality of Sulop, Davao Del Sur: An Exploratory Factor Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Loan dependency is a symptom of poor financial health that can harm a person's physical and mental health. This research intends to explore the dimensions of loan dependency among government employees. This study utilized a quantitative, non-experimental research method employing the Exploratory Factor Analysis technique involving 100 government employees from the Municipality of Sulop, Province of Davao del Sur. A researcher-made questionnaire was developed from in-depth interviews with ten government employees with different government positions, including a literature review and related studies have been employed. To validate the questionnaire, researchers used Cronbach's Alpha. The questionnaire scored .856 on Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items, accepting the set questionnaire as reliable. Using the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), 19 item statements passed within the threshold of >0.40. The result shows that- accessibility and affordability, financial needs and responsibilities, specific purchases and investments, and personal goals and aspirations are the dimensions that make government employees dependent on loans.

Keywords: Loan dependency, government employees, exploratory factor analysis, Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Loan dependency is a symptom of poor financial health that can harm a person's physical and mental health. As cited by Mabignay et al. (2022), having low economic well-being due to reliance on loans endangers the psychological and physical health of an employee, resulting in low confidence and regressing productivity in the workplace, and more frequent absenteeism, delays, as well as lack of focus.

In Zimbabwe, the low salary received among civil servants has caused an optimistic shift towards utilizing loan programs. Government employees are being paid comparatively lower wages than private companies, well below the poverty criterion. The incapability of Zimbabwean civil servants to reach the basic standard of living and the low quality of life they experience necessitates them to look for external funding, making

borrowing a preferred option (Zhongming et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, indebtedness has also been a serious concern among Filipinos (Flores et al., 2023). According to the data of the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023), as of 2020, around 15% of Filipino households have taken out loans from formal monetary firms such as cooperatives, banks, and lending companies. The most common types of loans taken by Filipino households were for business or enterprise (45.5%), followed by home renovation or repair (24.6%), and purchase of household appliances or furniture (22.1%). Government human resources in the Philippines are among the most frequent patrons of loans and other monetary programs and services. Their most common reasons for obtaining loans are to cover their basic expenses and urgent necessities. Their job's gross incomes are insufficient for them to survive, making it strenuous to meet their financial responsibilities (Bitton & Tarroza, 2018).

In the Davao region, most public employees depend on borrowing money to cope with their financial constraints. While other workers commonly wait for their salary schedule, some low-earner personnel wait for their loan renewal since their salary is already loaned to lending institutions. These civil servants are left with no option but to apply for a salary loan with particular interests to survive. As they became loan-dependent, paying their debtors and lending companies became their priority over sustaining their family's basic needs (Lagura & Ligan, 2018). On the other hand, other government employees in Davao City availed themselves of formal loans due to their wants; they applied for loans even if they were not necessary and always used their credit cards (Grate et al., 2018).

At present, more research focuses on the factors influencing indebtedness among public school teachers; however, there needs to be a model that would scientifically elucidate the reasons for loan dependency among civil servants. Hence, this undertaking aims to fill this gap in the existing literature and could be employed to provide more evidence-based interventions.

The study's findings will provide supplementary literature to determine the underlying factors that push government employees to become loan-reliant. This research will also help government agencies address the prevailing areas that burden the government's workforce and help them develop more strategic and rational policies that would aid in the culture of loan dependency among government employees.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to determine the dimensions of loan dependency among government employees of the Municipality of Sulop, Province of Davao del Sur. This undertaking aimed to develop a simplified model to scientifically elucidate why most government employees became reliant on government loans. In this sense, the constructs of high loan reliance among the public workforce supported by different literature and studies would be measured and identified as indicators of loan dependency.

Statement of the Problem

The fundamental objective of this study was to explore the dimensions of loan dependency among government employees. Specifically, it aimed to achieve the following:

1., What is the socioeconomic profile of the respondents in terms of:

Age;

Sex;

Civil Status;

Government Position;

Monthly Salary; and

Years of Government Service?

2. What are the dimensions of loan dependency among government officials of the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur?

3. What framework best illustrates the dimensions of loan dependency among government employees?

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded on the theory of **Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** (1954), particularly on the Safety and Security stage and the **Risk Theory by Knight** (1921).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs includes Safety as the second stage. After meeting the physiological level—Safety and security arise where man secures every aspect of his life, including his job, food, objects, and properties, to have a safe environment (Hopper, 2020). The theory is used to relate it to the decision-making process of the respondents as they decide whether to take a loan while fulfilling their means of security and satisfaction.

On the other hand, Knight defines 'risk' as a situation in which the possibility of a consequence can be identified, and hence the result can be expected. Uncertainty, on the other hand, pertains to a scenario whose probability cannot be determined. According to Herbert A. Simon, individuals are rational when considering risks and uncertainty. He argued that making a decision means choosing among alternative courses of action. In context to the study, government employees' attitudes and decisions toward entering loans might be influenced by their risk perception and their assessment of potential risks and rewards associated with loan availing, which is why they engage in a decision-making process beforehand. Factors that may contribute government employees' risk management and decision-making process include financial literacy, income stability, and perceived loan repayment ability (Smith & Smith, 2019).

Factors influencing government workers' risk management and decision-making procedures include income stability, financial literacy, and perceived capacity to pay the debt (Smith & Smith, 2019). Government workers utilized different decision-making approaches when dealing with loan applications. These include considering the possible gains of having a loan, such as meeting urgent monetary needs and attaining personal goals, contrary to the observed risks involved. As emphasized in this theory, risk evaluation is consistently considered before deciding (Brown & Campbell, 2018). This theory explains how public employees evaluate detriments, make debt decisions, and the aspects that influence their loan reliance behaviors.

Conceptual Framework

This research presents a model that illustrates different dimensions of loan dependency among government employees in the chosen research locale. Further, the scale is labeled as Factor 1...n, which pertains to the factors that cannot be immediately gauged or perceived. Meanwhile, the center depicts the main subject or variable surrounded by suggested factors.

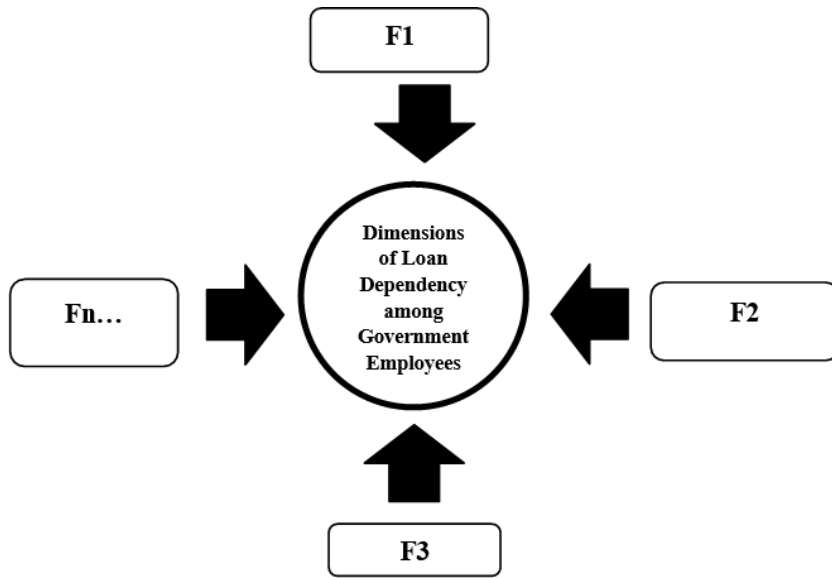


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHOD

This undertaking utilized a quantitative, non-experimental research method using an Exploratory Factor Analysis technique (EFA). A non-experimental research method allows the researcher not to control variables. Instead, it lets them see how the data are linked and describe the results (O’Dwyer & Bernauer, 2013).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a multivariate statistical tool that intends to explore a simplified series of hypotheses, including factors, dimensions, and variables that can determine the covariation seen among a group of measured variables (Watkins, 2018). Further, Exploratory Factor Analysis is carried out to identify or explore a standard structure in a particular set of data that seeks to determine the correlation between factors and constructs and is imperative in creating a new model or theory. Therefore, for this undertaking, EFA is a suitable tool to identify the dimensions of loan dependency among government employees (Fuentes & Gono, 2023)

Locale of the Study

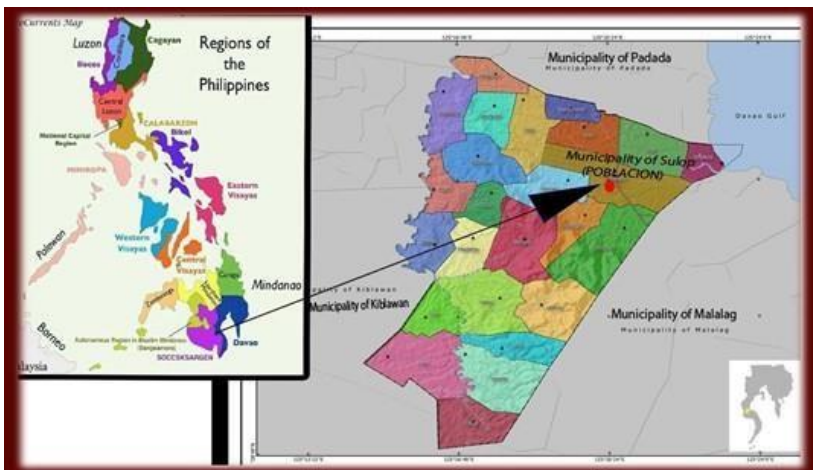


Figure 2. Geographical Map of the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur

The locale of this study was the Municipality of Sulop, Province of Davao del Sur. Sulop is a third (3rd) class municipality in Davao del Sur, Philippines. Based on the 2020 census, it has a population of 35,151 people. It comprises 5.2% of the total populace of Davao del Sur (Philippine Statistics Authority, 13 2021). It has a land territory of 155.26 square kilometers, constituting 7.17% of Davao del Sur's total land area.

The Municipality is about 17 kilometers away from Digos City, the capital of the provincial government of Davao del Sur. It is situated halfway between two primary growth centers of Mindanao: Davao City and General Santos City. It consists of twenty-five (25) barangays whose population relies mainly on agriculture as their means of livelihood (Commission on Audit, 2020).

Sampling Technique

The study's respondents were regular government employees from the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur government agencies, who were selected through a simple random technique. The researchers selected 100 respondents since there were 25 total item questionnaires; as a rule of thumb, in Exploratory Factor Analysis, per item is equivalent to 4-6 respondents. A simple random technique is a sampling procedure wherein each person of a population size has a tantamount opportunity to be chosen through an unbiased selection method (Cekim & Kadilar, 2020).

The respondents selected were those in the government service for at least one year with plantilla positions who could avail themselves of any government loan programs. The respondents must be employees of any government offices located in the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur. The exclusion criteria for this undertaking were those employees not working in the government and those non-regular public employees. The latter refers to the job order or contract-of-service government workers not eligible for government loans intended for regular civil servants.

Data Collection Technique

In accumulating the necessary data, the researchers utilized a research-made survey questionnaire obtained from the in-depth interview findings, different pieces of literature, and related studies that suit the objectives of this undertaking. A 5-point Likert scale was used for the respondents to answer the survey quickly and provide their degree of agreement in five points. The item questionnaires were validated through Cronbach's Alpha test, obtaining a score of .0856, which means the instruments were reliable and internally consistent.

The 5-point Likert scale comprises the following points and descriptions- (1) Never; the item described as a dimension of loan dependency is never manifested. (2) Seldom; the item pertained as a 15 dimension of loan dependency is seldom manifested. (3) Sometimes, the question explained as a dimension of loan dependency is sometimes manifested (4) Often; the item pointed as a dimension of loan dependency is often manifested (5) Always; the item referred to as the dimension of loan dependency is always manifested. The first part of the questionnaire is composed of the socioeconomic profile of the respondents, such as age, sex, civil status, government position, monthly salary, and years of government service. The second portion of the survey questionnaire was the study's variable, consisting of the dimensions that characterized loan dependency among government employees.

Statistical Technique

Exploratory Factor Analysis. This inferential statistics was utilized to identify the dimensions of loan dependency among government employees of the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Profile of the Respondents

The survey findings reveal a diverse socioeconomic profile of 100 government employee respondents in the Municipality of Sulop. The age distribution ranged from 21 to 65 years, with the majority (34%) falling between 41 to 50 years old. Female participants constituted 63%, while 37% were male. In terms of civil status, 71% reported being married, with 29% indicating they were single. The government positions held by respondents spanned managerial, supervisory, and administrative roles, with service durations ranging from 1 to 40 years, and 40% reporting 11 to 20 years of service. The monthly salary distribution varied, with 43% earning P25,001 to P40,000, 35% receiving P10,001 to P25,000, and 11% earning P40,001 to P55,000.

Dimensions of Loan Dependency among Government Officials

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Adequacy.	Measure of Sampling	.842
Bartlett's Test Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	951.394
	of Df	171
	Sig.	.000

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Table 1 shows the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which is used to determine if factor analysis is appropriate for this research (Matore et al., 2019). A score of 0.842 suggests that the sample size is **meritorious**, indicating sufficient and strong correlation among variables, qualifying it for exploratory factor analysis. A score of 0.80 and above in KMO signifies an adequate sample size for factor analysis (Lee et al., 2017). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, with a degree of freedom of 171 and a p-value of .000, reveals a significant difference in the correlation matrix, suggesting that factor analysis is the most appropriate approach to identify dimensions of loan dependency among government employees. The p-value of 0.000 signifies that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected (Fuentes & Gono, 2023).

Table 2. Factor Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Item21	.784						
Item23	.771						
Item18	.747						
Item22	.731						
Item17	.683						
Item25	.672						
Item24	.664						
Item15	.659						
Item19	.597						
Item16	.591						

Item8	.561					
Item6	.546					
Item5	.534					
Item20	.532					
Item3	.505					
Item2						
Item1						
Item11		.549				
Item12		.507				
Item4						
Item7			.641			
Item13						
Item10				.589		
Item14				-.494		
Item9						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

a. 7 factors extracted. 13 iterations required.

Table 2 displays the 25 original survey items subjected to principal axis factoring for common factor analysis. This technique modifies the correlation matrix to measure each item’s correlation with others to determine latent variables in the dataset. In this study, factor rotation, conducted four times, simplifies the factor paradigm for more straightforward analysis, resulting in 19 qualifying items after eliminating those with factor loadings <0.4 (Lee Chan & Idris, 2017). Factor loadings exceeding 0.5 categorize variables under a factor, emphasizing the importance of measuring a particular construct if the loading is 0.6 or higher (Watkins, 2018). Six items failing to meet required coefficient values during rotation were excluded from the analysis. Subsequently, dimensions were named based on the nature of items loaded into their corresponding factors to enhance understanding of each factor’s characteristics.

Table 3. Extracted Dimensions of Loan Dependency among Government Employees

Item	Extracted Dimensions	Loading
	<i>Factor 1. Accessibility and Affordability</i>	
18	I don’t need to pay over the counter because of the Automatic Payroll Deduction of monthly amortizations for government loans.	.862
22	My permanent position in the government gives me confidence that I will succeed in paying my loan.	.769
21	It is easier to qualify for government loans as a government employee.	.761
17	The documentary requirements can be issued right away by the Human Resource Office.	.745
23	It is easy to comply with the documentary requirements.	.739
15	I could afford to pay my government loan with my monthly salary.	.712
25	The approval process is fast and hassle-free.	.643
24	It is a privilege I can use whenever I need money.	.615
19	There are only a few requirements needed in the application process	.584

16	The interest rate is lower than loans offered by non-government lending companies.	.535
Factor 2: Financial Needs and Responsibilities		
3	I need to pay hospital bills for a family member.	.714
8	I need to sustain my family's basic needs.	.704
10	I have a limited source of income	.581
5	I need to support my children's education.	.518
Factor 3: Specific Purchases and Investments		
7	I want to purchase a house and a lot	.792
2	I want to renovate our house	.623
12	I want to buy new gadgets/appliances	.583
Factor 4: Personal Goals and Aspirations		
11	I want to travel	.601
14	I want to expand my business	.509

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix with Grouped Attributes of Accessibility and Affordability

Factor	Attributes	Loadings
Accessibility and Affordability	18. I don't need to pay over the counter because of the Automatic Payroll Deduction of monthly amortizations for government loans.	.862
	22. My permanent position in the government gives me confidence that I will succeed in paying my loan.	.769
	21. It is easier to qualify for government loans as a government employee.	
	17. The documentary requirements can be issued right away by the Human Resource Office.	.745
	23. It is easy to comply with the documentary requirements.	.739
	15. I could afford to pay my government loan with my monthly salary.	.712
	25. The approval process is fast and hassle-free.	.615
	24. It is a privilege I can use whenever I need money.	.584
	19. There are only a few requirements needed in the application process.	.535
	16. The interest rate is lower than loans offered by non-government lending companies.	

Table 4 reveals the first dimension of government employees' loan dependency as "accessibility and affordability", explaining 36.743 percent of the variance. The dependence stems from the easy access and affordability of government loan programs designed for public employees, offering quick approval and lower interest rates compared to private lenders. Fausto (2019), emphasized the favorable environment for civil servants to access loan programs, citing that formal lending requirements, such as pay slips, are easily

met by government employees. This accessibility and affordability align with financial inclusion principles supported by Llanto and Rosellon (2017) and Debuque-Gonzales and Corpus (2021) benefiting low to middle-income government earners in the Philippines.

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix with Grouped Attributes of Financial Needs and Responsibilities

Factor	Attributes	Loadings
Financial Needs and Responsibilities	item 3 – I need to pay hospital bills for a family member.	.714
	item 8 – I need to sustain my family’s basic needs.	.704
	item 10 – I have a limited source of income	.581
	item 5 – I need to support my children’s education.	.518

Table 5 reveals that a significant factor driving government employees to depend on loans is their shared financial needs and responsibilities driven by limited income sources, affecting particularly sole breadwinners. This prompts many to turn to government loan programs for basic needs and supporting their children’s education. The financial strain arises from the perception that expenses exceed income which has led to heavy reliance on loans, as observed by Kata & Leszczyńska (2021). Beasley (2022) emphasized the resulting financial struggles, pushing individuals to increase borrowing to cope with challenges, including medical expenses. During health emergencies, loans become a lifeline for government employees to cover hospital bills, especially when government health insurance is insufficient (Ferrer, 2017). These challenges, often beyond one’s control and stemming from personal emergencies, economic downturns, or calamities highlight the pragmatic need for loans (Ferrer, 2017).

Table 6. Rotated Component Matrix with Grouped Attributes of Specific Purchases and Investment.

Factors	Attributes	Loadings
Specific purchases and investments.	I want to purchase a house and lot	.792
	I want to renovate our house	.623
	I want to buy new gadgets/appliances.	.583

Table 6 shows that certain government employees opt for loans to meet their future investment needs, such as acquiring houses and lots, home renovations, and the latest gadgets. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory, particularly addressing safety concerns, extends beyond emergencies to include behavior like purchasing items that provide safety, convenience, and comfort, as noted by Hopper (2020). In this context, purchasing a house and lot is recognized as offering comfort and safety to government employees. Moreover, purchasing a house and lot can be viewed as an investment, given the current significance of real estate, with its market value on the rise (Yang & Pan, 2020). However, such purchases and investments are inherently ‘risk-taking behavior,’ as Li et al. (2020) described, aligning with the Risk Theory by Knights, where decisions are made even when uncertain outcomes are present. Thus, obtaining credit loans for specific purchases and investments constitutes a significant decision despite the uncertainties about their future outcomes.

Table 7. Rotated Component Matrix with Grouped Attributes of Personal Goals and Aspirations

Factor	Attributes	Loadings
Personal Goals and Aspirations	Item 11 – I want to travel.	.601
	Item 14 – I want to expand my business.	.509

Table 7 unveils that some government employees opt for loans to fulfill personal goals and aspirations, including travel (loading of 0.601) and business expansion (loading of 0.509), aligning with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. This highlights their pursuit of self-fulfillment beyond immediate financial needs with broader motivations influencing decision-making, as per the Risk Management and Decision-Making Theory. While seeking security is fundamental for well-being, the desire for goals and aspirations requires financial resources causing some to turn to loans for funding. This idea resonates with Maslow’s higher-level needs like self-actualization (Fallatah & Syed, 2017). These findings indicate that loans play a role in enabling individuals to invest in passions or achieve long-term goals. For example, Higgins et al. (2019) demonstrated in their study that employee loans for business investments can be a viable source for small business owners’ expansion. Factor 4, Personal Goals and Aspirations emphasized the human factor in loan decisions where personal goals and aspirations play a significant role.

Framework Developed based on the Findings of the Study

Illustrated in Figure 2 is the thematic framework that depicts the four categorized dimensions influencing loan dependency among government employees in the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur. These factors are accessibility and affordability, financial needs and responsibility, specific purchases and investments, and personal goals and aspirations.

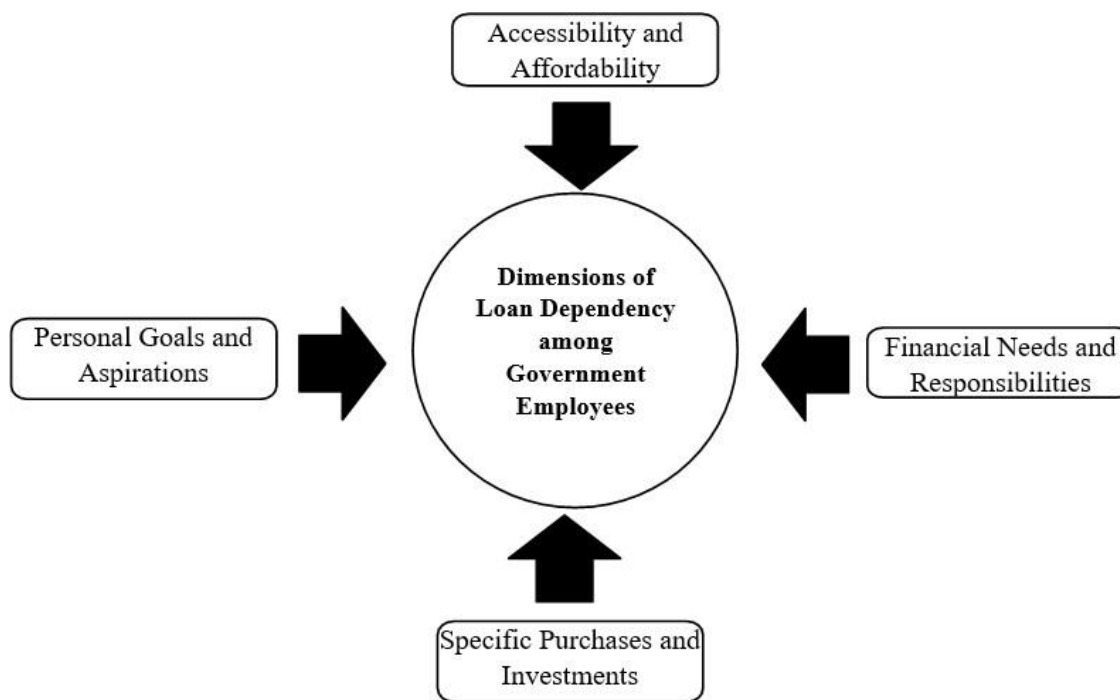


Figure 2: Thematic Framework on the Dimensions of Loan Dependency among Government Employees of the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur

CONCLUSION

In this comprehensive research on loan dependency among government employees in the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur, four distinct dimensions emerged as central factors influencing their borrowing behavior. The first dimension revolves around the accessibility and affordability of government loan programs, with respondents finding it easy to qualify and fulfill documentary requirements, thanks to their status as public employees. The second dimension highlights the impact of financial needs and responsibilities, prompting some government employees to rely on loans to meet family needs and support

their children's education, especially during economic downturns and health emergencies. The third dimension centers on specific purchases and investments, as respondents often apply for loans to finance housing, renovations, or the acquisition of gadgets and appliances they cannot afford outright. Lastly, the fourth dimension underscores personal goals and aspirations, with government employees seeking loans to pursue ambitions such as travel or business expansion.

These dimensions reflect the interplay of external and internal factors shaping loan dependency, aligning with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, where individuals employ various alternatives, including loans, to satisfy diverse needs and wants. Additionally, the findings resonate with the safety and security stage of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as individuals secure their employment, food, and assets to create a safe environment. The study also considers Knight's Risk Theory, acknowledging that employees' attitudes toward loans are influenced by their risk perspective, income stability, financial literacy, and perceived capacity to repay debts. Overall, this research provides a clustered construct that comprehensively outlines the dimensions of loan dependency among government employees in the Municipality of Sulop, Davao del Sur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government Institutions. Government institutions, such as National Government Agencies (NGAs), Local Government Units (LGUs), and Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs), should prioritize the implementation of financial literacy programs for their employees. These programs, encompassing seminars or workshops on long-term financial planning, debt management, and budget planning, would provide government employees with essential financial management knowledge, enabling them to make informed financial decisions and reduce their reliance on loans. Incentives such as housing assistance and livelihood programs for dependents can further reduce the need for loans, and competitive annual salary increases can alleviate financial stress.

Philippine Congress. Based on the study's findings, financial needs and responsibilities are significant factors in government employee loan dependency. The researchers recommend that the Philippine government, specifically the Senate and House of Representatives, enact legislation or a Magna Carta to institutionalize legal protection for civil servants. Such provisions include financial safeguards to strengthen rank-and-file government employees' economic well-being and security, potentially including TESDA training programs for dependents and scholarship privileges for their children.

Government Financial Institutions. While government financial institutions like GSIS, Pag-IBIG, and the Land Bank of the Philippines offer easy loan access, the researchers recommend strategic changes. These institutions should institute a loan policy that rationalizes application and eligibility requirements, limiting the number of applications and deductions to prevent a debt trap among government employees. Implementing these changes, such as thorough financial statement checks during application, would contribute to the financial security of government employees.

Government Employees. Government employees are encouraged to attend financial literacy programs, workshops, or seminars to enhance their financial literacy and cultivate better financial habits. Exploring government-sponsored financial assistance programs, such as scholarships and subsidies, as alternative funding sources can help them avoid unnecessary loans.

Private Financial Institutions. The existence of private financial institutions allows government employees to have flexible borrowing. The researchers recommend that private financial institutions conduct a thorough background check on applicants such as financial records and history. This could be a reassurance to both parties.

Future Researchers. Future researchers are urged to extend the study's locale by including government employees from other municipalities or cities within the Davao region. Additional items on the questionnaire from related literature and in-depth interviews with civil servants could provide more insights. Additionally, future researchers may utilize other mixed methods in acquiring and interpreting data, broaden the study's scope to include informal loan programs, and consider employing confirmatory factor analysis to validate the study's findings further.

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