

From Defensive Budgeting to Capital Preservation: Financial Management Practices among School Employees

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ABSTRACT

This present study investigated the financial management practices of employees at Eastern Visayas State University-Ormoc Campus, Ormoc City. It assessed how their socio-demographic characteristics influenced their spending, borrowing, saving, and investing practices. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design; structured questionnaires were used to collect data, and descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson's r, were used for analysis. The results revealed a fairly youthful workforce with low starting salaries, with 83.8% of the employees relying exclusively on their salaries. The results also showed that while employees made comparatively fewer investments ($M = 2.72$), they exhibited wise spending ($M = 3.37$) and saving ($M = 3.36$) practices through disciplined, defensive budgeting and price consciousness. In addition, they have shown an extreme aversion to debt ($M = 1.77$), strictly avoiding any credit networks and predatory lending sources, and used professional development and postgraduate education as investment tools ($M = 3.85$), instead of using the traditional financial market. Further, results revealed that married employees ($p = .047$) invest significantly more than their single counterparts, and those with a variety of sources invested ($p = .001$) more than those with a fixed salary. Similarly, age ($p = .021$) significantly influenced borrowing. In conclusion, despite their excellent financial management, employees tend to be defensive when it comes to saving money because they have few sources of income; it is highly advised that they reorganize to have a variety of revenue streams.

Keywords: Financial Management, Employees, Socio-Demographic Profile, Income Diversification, Debt Aversion, Capital Preservation.

INTRODUCTION

The financial structure of the current educational setting requires more than anything else that public and private individuals be financially literate. Among the group of paid employees, the institution-based educator stands out due to the need to develop the academic and social competencies of others, while they may have to deal with strict economic constraints in their personal lives. In developing nations such as the Philippines, educators' base salaries have long been unable to keep pace with inflation in goods, fuel, and housing (Tagapulot, 2024). Therefore, there is a tendency for the teacher to become confined to a stringent financial situation in which budgeting for survival is prioritized over long-term financial planning. To analyze how these individuals remain economically resilient, it is necessary to examine how they manage their money, that is, their spending, borrowing, saving, and investing behavior, in relation to their socio-demographic backgrounds.

The importance of financial management is not only a technique but also an intricate psychological and behavioral phenomenon, profoundly shaped by structure-related limitations, which is recognized in the personal finance literature (Am-una, 2026). Individuals who earn their living through institutional salaries have little room for financial mistakes. Ullah and Yusheng (2020) and Cabugas (2025) argued that the capability to spend money in a highly controlled manner, including monitoring all spending and focusing on essentials, is primarily what prevents one from experiencing household shocks.

In cases of budget deficits, consumer behavior tends to lean towards borrowing. There is a pattern in consumer finance that reveals a hidden weakness among government employees. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP, 2022) often notes that many Filipino government employees rely on borrowing to offset deficits in their purchasing power. The same has been noted by Mencias-Tabernilla (2023) and Maribao and Narido (2025), who state that short-term lending networks and salary loans from institutions can easily lead to habitual credit use among public school teachers amid high inflation. However, according to Sabri and Falahati (2012), reliance on borrowing needs to be offset by savings and wealth-accumulation efforts.

One of the biggest challenges facing the education sector is the shift from a cash-based model to one that emphasizes wealth creation. Savings and investments are inherent components of the financial life cycle process, according to conventional financial theory. The role of the educator is, nevertheless, structurally limited. Despite being financially literate and knowledgeable about financial issues, educators find it very challenging to participate in capital markets due to a lack of disposable surplus funds (Lim & Cordova, 2024). It is supported empirically by Estojero et al. (2025) and other local cases which show that although teachers exhibit high levels of financial skills in managing budgets on a day-to-day basis, they exhibit low behavioral scores in terms of making active investments and portfolio diversification due to their fear of risks (Maribao & Narido, 2025).

Reluctance to hold assets is associated with Hobfoll's resource conservation theory, which suggests that those who consistently lack resources become conservative with the resources they have, rather than taking risks to earn more (MDPI, 2026). As others invest in the capital market, most teachers reinvest their excess income in building their human capital through professional certification and master's degrees (Saripada et al., 2024; Capisonda-Porteza, 2024).

The above behavioral scenario is further complicated by the teachers' actual demographic profile. Economic decision-making does not occur in a vacuum and is influenced by factors such as age, marital status, the number of dependents, and additional sources of income, which alter an individual's economic and psychological risk-taking ability. An individual teacher without dependents has a different financial standing from his/her married colleague who is raising a family (Pandey et al., 2020). Although milestones like marriage and childbearing can serve as psychological triggers to motivate people to save for the future, they also increase household financial commitments, leaving less room for investment.

Ultimately, the baseline variable of income diversification has the greatest effect on the financial decision-making process. The limitation of relying solely on institutional income can bind an educator to a position of mere capital preservation. Alternatively, having secondary sources of income, such as farms, small businesses, or consulting, can alter a person's financial prospects, thus providing the security needed for a transition from preservation to investment (Garcia & Cagatao, 2023). By investigating the specific points of intersection between demographic variables and financial behavior, the research aimed to shed light on the economic life of an institutional educator as he/she strives for financial security.

Research questions:

This study aimed to determine the relationship between the socio-demographic profiles and the financial management practices of institutional educators. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What is the socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of: age, gender, civil status, years of work experience, job position, number of children, gross monthly income, and sources of income?
- What is the status of the financial management practices of the respondents along the dimensions of: spending practices; borrowing practices; saving practices; and investing practices?
- Is there a significant difference in the financial management practices of the respondents when grouped according to their socio-demographic profiles?
- Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' socio-demographic profiles and their financial management practices?

Research Hypotheses

To address the inferential objectives of this study, the following null hypotheses (H_0) were tested at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance:

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the spending, borrowing, saving, and investing practices of the respondents when grouped according to their socio-demographic profiles.

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile variables of the respondents and their respective financial management practices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive research methodology, which involved analyzing and mapping the socio-demographic characteristics and financial management behavior of school educators in terms of spending, borrowing, saving, and investing.

Respondents and Sampling Technique

The population comprised teacher and staff members at Eastern Visayas State University -Ormoc Campus, Ormoc City, who were selected to form an initial sample of $N=68$ based on purposive sampling considerations of different institutional positions, ages, and incomes.

Instruments

The main tool for collecting data was a self-reporting questionnaire adapted from the works of Guillermo et al. (2018). It consisted of two major parts: part one contained basic demographic characteristics such as age, civil status, number of children, and additional sources of income, while part two contained 5-point Likert Scale questions on four major types of financial behavior, such as spending, borrowing, saving, and investing. Behavioral averages were then evaluated using index scores ranging from "Never Practiced" (1.00-1.80) to "Always Practiced" (4.21-5.00). A panel of three experts determined content validity, and a pilot study with 10 to 15 faculty members assessed reliability. The Cronbach's alpha of the instrument in this study was 0.817.

Data collection procedure

After obtaining ethical approval from the College Heads and the Institutional Ethics Review Committee, researchers started gathering data from the participants via an online survey through Google Forms, which took place from November 9 to December 12, 2024. Participants were selected for the study using a university chat group. The informed consent form appeared on the first page of the online survey as the introductory part of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers considered ethical considerations throughout the entire research process. All the participants signed informed consent forms. Participants understood the purpose of the research and that they could take part in the survey voluntarily. To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of private economic and personal information, researchers adhered strictly to the confidentiality policy of the country's data protection regulations. We removed all individual identifiers from the data during coding.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the data in SPSS in two ways. We calculated descriptive statistics to describe respondents' characteristics and behaviors. These included means, standard deviations, percentages, and frequencies. We used inferential statistics, such as the independent-samples t-test and one-way ANOVA for continuous

variables and the Kruskal-Wallis test for categorical variables, to analyze differences between demographic variables. Additionally, we examined correlations between respondents' attributes using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Spearman Rank Correlation.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. It revealed a relatively young and institutionalized workforce (N=68), with most being early-career teachers and staff, and an equal distribution of gender (52.9% females) and marital status (51.5% married) as shown in Table 1. Interestingly, the demographic structure shows that a majority of the respondents were teachers (64.7%) with 11 to 20 years of teaching experience, while more than 35.3% have been staff members for over 21 years. Consistent with the age structure and marital statuses of most respondents, 44.1% of the sample have no children. The workforce was economically dependent on institutional earnings, with 87.9% earning less than Php 30,000 in gross per month, and 83.8% relying solely on their earnings as their source of income.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Characteristics	F	Percent
Age		
30 and younger	33	48.5
31 - 40	20	29.4
41 and older	15	22.1
Gender		
Male	32	47.1
Female	36	52.9
Civil Status		
Single	33	48.5
Married	35	51.5
Years of Work Experience		
10 years or less	2	2.9
11 – 20 years	42	61.8
21 years or more	24	35.3
Job Position		
Teacher	44	64.7
Staff	24	35.3
Number of Children		

None	30	44.1
1- 2	30	44.1
3 or more	8	11.8
Gross Monthly Salary		
Php 10,000 and below	15	22.1
Php 10,001 – Php 20,000	18	26.5
Php 20,001 – Php 30,000	27	39.7
Php 30,001 and above	8	11.8
Sources of Income		
Salary	57	83.8
Salary and Farming	3	4.4
Salary and Business	6	8.8
Salary, Farming and Business	2	2.9

Status of Financial Management Practices of the Respondents

Table 2 depicts the spending practices of the respondents. It yielded a grand mean of 3.37 (SD = 1.00), suggesting that they “sometimes practiced” wise spending habits (Table 2). The top-rated variable indicates that they “always practiced” considering the cost of the goods they buy (M = 4.22, SD = 1.02). On the other hand, items related to managing cash surpluses were only “sometimes practiced,” such as using surpluses for consumer goods (M =3.26), keeping unspent money on hand (M =3.00), sharing leftover money with social circles (M =2.99), and having unspent money before the next payday (M =2.94). Importantly, the lowest mean (M = 2.44, SD = 1.18) indicates that respondents “seldom practiced” spending their entire income before the next paycheck. Overall, the above indicators suggest that while respondents paid close attention to price and the basics, their ability to ensure a continuous cash surplus was only moderate and inconsistent, reflecting the financial difficulties evident in their baseline salaries.

Table 2: Status of Spending Practices among Respondents

Spending Practices	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I keep track of records of all my expenses.	3.49	1.15	Often Practiced
2. I had unspent money from previous earnings before the receipt of next income.	2.94	.896	Sometimes Practiced
3. I used the unspent money to buy consumer goods.	3.26	.940	Sometimes Practiced
4.The unspent money remains on hand.	3.00	1.01	Sometimes Practiced

5. I share my unspent money with friends and relatives in need.	2.99	.906	Sometimes Practiced
6. I cut down on my expenses to make both ends meet in anticipation of uncertain income.	3.62	1.01	Often Practiced
7. I spend money on the necessary basic needs and save the rest.	4.03	.962	Often Practiced
8. I spend everything until the next receipt of income.	2.44	1.18	Seldom Practiced
9. I prepare a list of necessary things I want to buy.	3.75	.895	Often Practiced
10. I consider the price of commodities I buy.	4.22	1.02	Always Practiced
Grand Mean	3.37	.997	Sometimes Practiced

Legend: 1.00 -1.80 Never, 1.81 -2.60 Seldom, 2.61 - 3.40 Sometimes, 3.41 -4.20 Often, 4.21 - 5.00 Always

Regarding their borrowing practices, it had a grand mean of 1.77 (SD = 1.06), implying that institutional debt reliance was “never practiced” as a general rule. The data demonstrates a highly resilient aversion to formal and predatory lending systems, with respondents reporting that they “never practiced” borrowing money for daily needs (M = 1.76), taking out bank or financial institution credit (M = 1.74), borrowing to pay off maturing debts (M = 1.71), or utilizing credit cards (M = 1.60) as presented in Table 3. Similarly, leveraging credit for institutional cooperatives (Mean = 1.66), capital investments (M = 1.66), or turning to high-interest, predatory informal systems like the “5-6” lending scheme (M = 1.50, SD = 0.99) were also “never practiced”. The sole outlier in the dataset indicates that employees “seldom practiced” borrowing money from informal personal networks, such as relatives, friends, and acquaintances, when facing a cash crunch before the next payday (M = 2.53, SD = 1.03). The results show that the respondents were extremely debt-averse and preferred defensive behavior and cost-saving strategies to taking on debt, relying more on social security than on borrowing frameworks when faced with liquidity problems.

Table 3: Status of Borrowing Practices among Respondents

Borrowing Practices	Mean	SD	Qualitative description
1. I borrow money from relatives, friends, and acquaintances when I run out of money before I receive my next income.	2.53	1.03	Seldom Practiced
2. I use a credit card whenever I run out of money.	1.60	1.08	Never Practiced
3. I borrow cash on bank credit and other financial institutions.	1.74	1.14	Never Practiced
4. I borrow money from our cooperative whenever I don't have money for food and other personal and family needs.	1.66	1.07	Never Practiced
5. I borrow money to buy things for my daily needs.	1.76	1.08	Never Practiced
6. I borrow money for capital investment.	1.66	.956	Never Practiced

7. I resort to “5'6” scheme in borrowing.	1.50	.985	Never Practiced
8. I borrow to pay currently maturing debts.	1.71	1.17	Never Practiced
Grand Mean	1.77	1.06	Never Practiced

Legend: 1.00 -1.80 Never, 1.81 -2.60 Seldom, 2.61 - 3.40 Sometimes, 3.41 -4.20 Often, 4.21 - 5.00 Always

Moreover, saving practices resulted a grand mean of 3.36 (SD = 1.23), suggesting that savings behaviors were ‘sometimes practiced’ overall (Table 4). The data underscores a powerful psychological commitment to wealth accumulation, as evidenced by the highest-rated item showing that respondents were “always practiced” in being highly interested in saving (M = 4.47, SD = 0.84). This internal drive manifests in active, defensive cash-preservation habits, with respondents “often practiced” in buying only what was needed and important (M = 4.15), regularly setting aside a portion of their income (M = 3.74), saving extra income channels (M = 3.71), and cutting down on daily expenses to ensure they can save (M = 3.56). However, their actual storage mechanisms fluctuate; they “sometimes practiced” keeping savings in a commercial bank (M = 3.13) or maintaining an informal "piggy bank" at home (M = 2.85, SD = 1.47). Institutionalized saving methods through their employer were least utilized, with respondents “seldom practiced” maintaining a savings deposit in their cooperative (M = 2.44) or initiating automated cooperative savings through salary deductions (M = 2.19, SD = 1.55). Synthesizing the results shows that respondents have high levels of financial literacy and saving attitudes, but due to their low incomes, they primarily rely on self-sacrifice rather than on organizational support for their savings.

Table 4: Status of Saving Practices among Respondents

Saving Practices	Mean	SD	Qualitative description
1. I save a part of my income regularly.	3.74	1.10	Often Practiced
2. I cut down expenses so as to save something.	3.56	1.08	Often Practiced
3. I buy only what is needed and important in order to save.	4.15	.981	Often Practiced
4. I maintain a “piggy bank” at home for my saving.	2.85	1.47	Sometimes Practiced
5. I started saving in cooperative through salary deduction.	2.19	1.55	Seldom Practiced
6. I am interested in saving.	4.47	.837	Always Practiced
7. I maintain a savings deposit in our cooperative.	2.44	1.53	Seldom Practiced
8. I keep my savings in the bank.	3.13	1.38	Sometimes Practiced
9. I save my extra income.	3.71	1.17	Often Practiced
Grand Mean	3.36	1.23	Sometimes Practiced

Legend: 1.00 -1.80 Never, 1.81 -2.60 Seldom, 2.61 - 3.40 Sometimes, 3.41 -4.20 Often, 4.21 - 5.00 Always

Lastly, the grand mean of the respondents' investing practices was 2.72 (SD =1.34), indicating that wealth-building through investment was only "sometimes practiced" overall. The data clearly shows that respondents heavily prioritize human capital development over financial market vehicles, as the highest-rated item demonstrates that they "often practiced" viewing post-graduate significantly: respondents only "sometimes practiced" real estate investment (M = 2.97) and intentional education or special training as their primary investment (M =3.85, SD =1.15) as shown in Table 5. Beyond professional advancement, strategic financial placement drops investment planning (M =2.74). Traditional business and institutional capital avenues were marginalized, with respondents reporting that they "seldom practiced" investing in personal business ventures like farming or lending (M =2.49), expanding their share capital or savings within their workplace cooperative (M = 2.28), or participating in stocks and securities (M = 2.00, SD = 1.29). Synthesizing these results with those in the rest of the financial management table, a clear behavioral pattern emerges: these respondents have extremely strong cost awareness and a complete disdain for debt, yet were trapped in a defensive financial position. Due to their financial surpluses being restricted and having chosen to invest their efforts in personal professional growth instead of capital markets, they depended largely on their ability to climb up the salary scales through higher education for the purpose of earning wealth in the long run.

Table 5: Status of Investing Practices among Respondents

Investing Practices	Mean	SD	Qualitative description
1. I like to invest in real estate.	2.97	1.56	Sometimes Practiced
2. I invest in stocks and securities.	2.00	1.29	Seldom Practiced
3. My investment is in my business (i.e. farming, lending, stocks).	2.49	1.36	Seldom Practiced
4. My post graduate education/special training is my investment.	3.85	1.15	Often Practiced
5. I invest in our cooperative through savings deposit or adding to my share capital.	2.28	1.42	Seldom Practiced
6. I practice intentional investment.	2.74	1.25	Sometimes Practiced
Grand Mean	2.72	1.34	Sometimes Practiced

Legend: 1.00 -1.80 Never, 1.81 -2.60 Seldom, 2.61 - 3.40 Sometimes, 3.41 -4.20 Often, 4.21 - 5.00 Always

Differences in Financial Management Practices b Respondents' Socio-Demographic Variables

A comparison of the two groups showed that marital status and sources of income significantly affect individuals' behavior toward financial management practices. A two-sample t-test showed a statistically significant difference in investments by civil status ($t = -2.02$, $p = .047$), with an effect size of $d = -.483$. Moreover, one-way ANOVA showed significant differences in income sources regarding savings practices ($F = 2.93$, $p = .040$, $\eta^2 = .121$) and investing practices ($F = 11.7$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .353$). Although income sources have a medium effect on saving practices, this factor was highly influential for investments and accounts for more than 35% of the variability in respondents' behavior. The indicators above show that although family obligations affect investments, diversifying income sources helps individuals save money.

Because the omnibus F-test was significant for both saving and investing practices by sources of income, a post-hoc Tukey HSD test was performed for pairwise comparisons. The post-hoc analysis revealed no

significant differences among the four groups of savings ($p > .05$). This result often occurs because the F-test has more power to detect overall differences among groups than individual pairwise comparisons (the latter must account for familywise error correction). Based on the inspection of the sample means, Respondents who receive their money through salary showed the lowest level of savings ($M = 3.24$, $SD = .756$), while those who get their money through salary with farming and business demonstrated the highest level of savings ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.10$). However, investing practices showed significant differences; the respondents who rely solely on salary ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .698$) showed significantly lower income than those with salary and business ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .994$, $p = .001$), and those with salary, farming, and business ($M = 4.50$, $SD = .707$, $p = .001$). These statistics largely support the baseline profile, since only a minority of respondents have diversified income sources, such as farming or other businesses. This means respondents who earned more were financially free to do more than maintain a defensive cash position. In conclusion, financial diversification was the most important factor influencing teachers' financial success.

In addition, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant differences in respondents' financial behaviors by age, years of working experience, number of children, and gross monthly salary ($p > .05$).

Table 6: Significant Differences in the Financial Management Practices of the Respondents when Grouped According to Profile

Profile Variable	Financial Practice	F/T - value	p-value	Effect size (d/η^2)	Level of Significance
Civil Status	Investing	-2.02*	0.047	-.483	Significant
Sources of Income	Saving	2.93*	0.040	.121	Significant
Sources of Income	Investing	11.7**	0.001	.353	Highly Significant

Note: $p < .05$ (*), $p < .01$ (**). Only differences where $p < .05$ are included. "Highly Significant" refers to $p < .01$.

Relationship between the Respondents' Socio-Demographic Profiles and their Financial Behaviors

The Spearman Rank correlation analysis shows that, of all demographic profile variables analyzed, only age was significantly correlated with one financial behavior variable, with a weak positive correlation with borrowing ($r = .280$, $p = .021$). This means older people tend to borrow more often or in larger amounts. On the other hand, age was not significantly correlated with any of the remaining three financial behaviors: spending, saving, and investing ($p > .05$). In addition, none of the following variables: work experience, number of children, and sources of income – had a statistically significant relationship with any of the four financial behavior variables, as the p-values of all of these are above the critical significance level of $p = .05$.

Table 7: Correlation Matrix Between the Respondents' Socio-Demographic Profiles and Their Financial Management Practices

Profile Variable	Spending	Borrowing	Saving	Investing
Age	$r = .089$, $p = .469$	$r = .280$, $p = .021^*$	$r = .068$, $p = .581$	$r = .050$, $p = .688$
Work Experience	$r = .060$, $p = .629$	$r = .145$, $p = .237$	$r = .094$, $p = .447$	$r = -.083$, $p = .505$

No. of Children	r=.061, =.620	p	r=.120, =.331	p	r=.015, =.902	p	r=.215, =.078	p
Sources of Income	r=.053, =.667	p	r=.230, =.059	p	r=.208, =.089	p	r=.162, =.188	p

Note: $p < .05$ (*), $p < .01$ (**). “Highly Significant” refers to $p < .01$.

DISCUSSIONS

The financial management practices and demographic relationships observed among the respondents are well supported by the modern personal finance literature. They represent a structural characteristic of employees across the globe and especially in the Philippines. The high level of discipline of the employees and defensive consumption, along with a strong psychological urge to save, are similar to the conclusions of Ullah & Yusheng (2020), Pandey et al. (2020), and Cabugas (2025) on the importance of regular expense control and list-based purchases in the framework of successful household financial welfare. This structural defense mechanism is strongly supported by recent local research findings from Del Rosario (2026) and Sinahon, R. A. & Mananquil, V. G. (2026). It shows that although Filipino employees typically have above-average cognitive literacy in budgeting and cash-tracking, external conditions such as consumer inflation and stagnant wage brackets force them to spend very frugally.

However, the employees' adamant resistance to formal borrowing presented an interesting contradiction to the general national trends observed. While organizations such as Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP, 2022) and Mencias-Tabernilla (2023) frequently emphasized the heavy reliance of consumers on borrowing and the salary loan dependence of the people who strived to enhance their purchasing power, the employees tend to avoid borrowing from any institutions and use either informal social networks or decide to cover all the costs they have (Sabri & Falahati, 2012; Maribao & Narido, 2025).

Furthermore, the preference for postgraduate education as their first choice of "investment" is clear evidence that these employees prefer investing in human capital rather than seeking gains in the capital markets to enhance their economic basis. The aforementioned behavior is well substantiated by the strong connections between sources of income and the ability to invest. Moreover, it is supported by Saripada et al. (2024), Lim and Cordova (2024), Garcia (2025), and Perote et al. (2026), who noted that employees have the lowest scores in investing and diversification due to a structural lack of surplus disposable capital.

The aforementioned actions aligned with Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources theory (as explained by MDPI, 2026). The said theory brings out the habit of people with little resources to put more effort into mitigating risks and developing a career than investing in an uncertain stock market. Lastly, despite the employees' financial discipline, they cannot generate wealth due to the lack of multiple income sources.

However, this research has some critical limitations despite contributing important insights into employees' economic behavior. This research is conducted on a limited population of only 68 people from a single educational organization, thereby failing to provide generalizable findings applicable both nationally and regionally. On the methodological side, there is an issue of social desirability bias due to the use of closed-ended Likert-scale questions, which measure financial behavior quantitatively. Furthermore, this methodology does not permit deeper probing, as it captures only financial behaviors, not the motivations behind them. Also, the financial behavior of the respondents is specific to their context, as it depends on geographic location, salary systems, and the economy.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the study concludes that the employees maintain a very high degree of cognitive financial discipline. However, structural factors significantly limit their financial mobility. Their ability to consistently generate a positive cash balance is limited by their defensive financial stance, even though they remain thrifty and avoid

any formal, informal, or predatory borrowing. Their defensive financial position is related to their profile: the vast majority rely solely on an institutional wage with no income diversification. As a result, post-graduation education and human capital development become the primary investment choices of the employees, instead of investing in unstable financial markets and considering career advancement within their organization as the best way to increase their wealth. Ultimately, the study concludes that demographic transitions, such as marriage serve as the psychological triggers for long-term financial planning. Still, achieving income diversification and breaking away from single-salary reliance are crucial for true financial empowerment; the pivot from defensive budgeting to proactive asset accumulation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the findings and analyses made through the study, the following recommendations were made to improve the financial situation, asset allocation, and financial stability of the teacher-respondents:

- The institution must move from providing only basic financial literacy to offering seminars focused on capital markets and investing in mutual funds and real estate, enabling teachers to shift from just preserving capital to growing their wealth.
- Since the employees rarely use cooperative savings and automatic deductions, the institution must rethink its benefits system by adding incentives for their cooperatives to make it easier for teachers to automatically invest a portion of their salaries.
- . Since depending solely on their salary hinders their ability to invest, it is recommended that employees find ways to earn secondary sources of income using their expertise to do consultation, tutoring, and entrepreneurial ventures.
- While being price-sensitive and cost-conscious is laudable, the employees must complement their investment in postgraduate education through small but calculated investments in passive financial instruments such as Pag-IBIG.
- As the main reason for inaction in investing is reliance solely on salary, employees need to work on developing another source of income by using their expertise.
- While being price-sensitive is positive, employees should make small investments in passive financial instruments (Pag-IBIG MP2, index funds) to protect themselves from inflation while studying for a master's degree.
- Future researchers should conduct studies using mixed methods, incorporating focus groups or interviews, to obtain information about the motivations behind such strong debt avoidance.
- Future researchers should recruit a larger sample size and compare differences in financial behavior between teachers working in public and private institutions across various regions.

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