

UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA

SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

**ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF PERSONAL FINANCIAL DEBT ON EMPLOYEE JOB
PERFORMANCE. A CASE STUDY OF SOLWEZI GENERAL HOSPITAL**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE AWARD OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

2025

DECLARATION

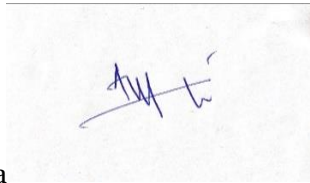
I, **Priscovia Kalaba Zimba, Student ID: MAHRM 23119527** do hereby declare that this paper is my creative work and it has been submitted with my Supervisor's approval as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Arts in Human Resource Management by the the University of Lusaka.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to express my deepest gratitude to God Almighty for the strength, health, and wisdom granted throughout this research journey. Special thanks are due to my supervisor, Dr. Able Mwambela, for the invaluable guidance, feedback, and encouragement provided throughout every phase of this study. I also extend heartfelt appreciation to the management and staff of Solwezi General Hospital for their cooperation and willingness to participate in this study.

I am particularly thankful to my family and friends for their unwavering support and patience during this demanding academic pursuit.

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my beloved family, whose love, sacrifices, and support have been the cornerstone of my academic journey. To every healthcare worker who tirelessly serves the community while silently navigating personal challenges, this work is also for you.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BoZ – Bank of Zambia

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

COR – Conservation of Resources

HR – Human Resources

MOH – Ministry of Health

MOUs – Memoranda of Understanding

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

ZCTU – Zambia Congress of Trade Unions

ZamStats – Zambia Statistics Agency

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ABSTRACT

Research Aims: This study aimed to investigate the impact of personal financial debt on employee job performance, focusing on Solwezi General Hospital in Zambia. Three specific objectives guided the research: to assess the level of individual financial debt among employees, to determine its effect on job performance, and to explore the relationship between economic stress and employee productivity.

Design/methodology/approach: This study employed a mixed-methods approach, collecting data from 186 respondents via structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise financial behaviours and workplace outcomes, while inferential techniques, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression, tested relationships between variables.

Research Findings: The findings revealed that personal financial debt is widespread among employees, with high incidences of mobile money loan usage, salary deductions for repayment, and borrowing for daily expenses. These financial pressures were linked to considerable emotional stress. Although regression analysis showed low predictive strength, qualitative data highlighted behavioural signs of anxiety, such as absenteeism, reduced focus, interpersonal conflict, and demotivation. Employees recognised that financial burdens impeded their ability to perform optimally, particularly in team-based tasks and during periods of peak workload. The study was framed within the context of the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. COR Theory explained the observed resource depletion and stress behaviours, while Maslow's framework illustrated how unmet financial needs hindered higher-level workplace engagement. Together, these frameworks provided a solid foundation for understanding the psychological mechanisms linking debt and job performance.

Theoretical Contribution/Originality: The study recommends implementing financial wellness programmes, in-house counselling services, partnerships with ethical credit providers, salary advance schemes, and integrating financial literacy into employee training programmes. However, the insights generated offer significant contributions to policy and practice in Zambia's healthcare system and beyond. The research emphasises the importance of institutional strategies that promote financial stability as a means to enhance employee wellbeing and organisational productivity.

Keywords: Financial debt, performance, wellness, financial literacy, financial stability, organisational productivity.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The interplay between personal financial debt and employee job performance is a significant issue with profound implications for both individuals and organisations. Ozyuksel (2022) highlights the pervasive nature of financial stress, revealing that a considerable portion of the workforce wrestles with the burdens of debt. This struggle can manifest as psychological strain, negatively impacting their productivity and overall work performance (Adams *et al.*, 2024).

Employees burdened by financial instability often find it increasingly challenging to maintain focus, leading to more significant distractions and a reduced ability to engage fully in their duties (Ryu & Fan, 2022). The gravity of financial concerns can also lead to higher absenteeism rates, as individuals may need time away from work to manage and resolve their economic issues.

This convergence of stress and distraction creates a perfect storm, significantly undermining productivity levels. The evidence is compelling: personal financial challenges can adversely affect not only individual performance but also the overall effectiveness of organisations as a whole (Adams *et al.*, 2024; Archuleta *et al.*, 2023; Friedline *et al.*, 2021). In this context, addressing financial literacy and support within the workplace becomes essential for fostering a healthier and more productive work environment.

Furthermore, the essence of this subject is crucial for addressing the complex challenges related to workplace mental health. Researchers such as Despard, Friedline, and Martin-West (2020) emphasise that financial difficulties can cause significant stress and anxiety among employees, leading to a marked decline in morale and a troubling increase in turnover rates. By thoroughly exploring this intricate relationship, organisations can uncover invaluable insights and develop effective strategies that not only improve talent retention but also promote a more supportive and dynamic workplace culture (Ryu and Fan, 2022). By prioritising the creation of a healthy work environment, businesses can establish a nurturing space where employees genuinely feel valued and engaged. This, in turn, greatly enhances their overall well-being and productivity, transforming the workplace into a flourishing ecosystem where both individuals and the organisation can thrive together.

In summary, delving into the intricate relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance is vital, not only for the well-being of individual workers but also for the overall efficiency and success of organisations. By placing a strong emphasis on financial health, companies can foster a more engaged, focused, and productive workforce. This holistic approach not only enhances employees' lives but also drives the organisation towards more remarkable achievements, creating a mutually beneficial environment that thrives on the well-being of all its members (Archuleta *et al.*, 2023).

In light of the essential literature reviewed, it is imperative to investigate the intricate relationship between personal financial debt and its influence on employee job performance at Solwezi General Hospital. This study aims to examine the impact of financial pressures on staff productivity, motivation, and overall well-being within this critical healthcare institution. By developing a more comprehensive understanding of this relationship, we can uncover significant insights into the challenges faced by employees and the potential implications for patient care and organisational effectiveness.

1.2 Background of Study

The relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance has become a growing concern in recent years, particularly in developing economies like Zambia. Personal debt levels have risen sharply across African countries, driven by increased access to microloans, mobile credit platforms, and high consumer spending patterns. In Zambia, data from the Bank of Zambia (2022) revealed that household credit grew by over 20% between 2019 and 2022, with civil servants and healthcare workers among the most indebted groups. The escalation of debt among employees has raised concerns about the impact of financial strain on job performance, particularly in essential service sectors such as healthcare. The financial well-being of healthcare workers is crucial because their roles require cognitive acuity, emotional stability, and sustained engagement to ensure high-quality patient care.

Empirical evidence suggests that financial distress can significantly undermine job performance by impairing decision-making and increasing psychological strain. A study by Adams *et al.* (2024) found that personal financial stress among public sector workers in sub-Saharan Africa correlated with increased absenteeism, reduced work output, and higher incidences of workplace errors. Similarly, research by Archuleta *et al.* (2023) highlighted how financial anxiety leads to burnout

and disengagement, particularly in high-pressure environments such as hospitals. Resource limitations and workforce shortages already strain the healthcare sector in Zambia. When financial debt adds to this burden, it not only jeopardises employee welfare but also compromises the efficiency of service delivery. As such, understanding the financial pressures faced by healthcare professionals is vital for developing interventions that support their well-being and improve institutional performance.

Socially and economically, Zambia's workforce is experiencing heightened financial vulnerability. According to the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats, 2023), over 45% of employed Zambians live below the poverty line, and nearly 60% have no formal savings. These figures reflect a systemic issue in which low wages, inflationary pressures, and inadequate financial education converge to leave workers financially vulnerable. Healthcare workers, who often shoulder family responsibilities and care for extended dependents, are particularly vulnerable to such economic pressures. Ryu and Fan (2022) argue that financial instability not only reduces morale but also disrupts workplace engagement, resulting in a ripple effect that extends across teams and departments. Therefore, this study situates itself within a broader socio-economic reality in which personal financial debt is both a symptom and driver of workplace inefficiency.

Legally, Zambia has made strides in consumer credit regulation through instruments such as the Bank of Zambia Consumer Protection Guidelines (2021) and the Financial Literacy Strategy (2022–2026). These frameworks aim to promote responsible lending and improve public understanding of financial management. However, their implementation remains inconsistent, particularly within the public service sector. Many healthcare workers, including those at Solwezi General Hospital, continue to access loans from informal and digital lenders who fall outside the regulatory scope. This leaves them vulnerable to exploitative interest rates and unsustainable repayment terms. As Despard et al. (2021) point out, the absence of robust debt management frameworks within workplaces further exacerbates employee stress, ultimately impairing their ability to perform effectively. This legal gap underscores the need for workplace-specific interventions that integrate financial education, debt counselling, and employee wellness strategies.

In conclusion, the interplay between rising personal financial debt and declining employee performance presents a pressing challenge within Zambia's healthcare sector. By focusing on

Solwezi General Hospital, this study seeks to investigate how financial strain among employees affects their job productivity, motivation, and overall workplace engagement. In doing so, it aims to contribute to the broader discourse on employee well-being, highlight systemic socio-economic vulnerabilities, and advocate for stronger institutional and legal responses to financial distress in Zambia's public workforce.

1.3 Statement of Problem

In Zambia, a growing concern has emerged regarding the impact of personal financial debt on employee job performance. Despite the critical role healthcare professionals play in delivering essential services, many are burdened by significant levels of personal debt, which poses a threat to their well-being and productivity. Financial stress, driven by debt, can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and a decline in the quality of care provided to patients.

The existing body of literature highlights notable gaps in our understanding of how personal financial debt affects employee job performance. Although several studies—such as those conducted by Despard *et al.* (2020), Adams *et al.* (2024), Archuleta *et al.* (2023), and Friedline *et al.* (2021)—have explored the broad relationship between financial stress and workplace productivity, only a few delve deeply into the complex mechanisms that connect financial obligations with an employee's ability to perform their responsibilities proficiently. In this context, the present study aims to investigate the specific ways in which financial burdens may influence an employee's job performance, examining whether such financial obligations hinder their capacity to fulfil work-related duties effectively despite the weight of these economic pressures.

Understanding the subtleties of these dynamics is crucial, as personal debt does not merely burden individuals; it can also trigger a chain reaction of negative consequences in the workplace. Employees facing financial difficulties may increasingly find themselves absent, feeling overwhelmed and distracted, which often results in sick days. Moreover, their levels of engagement can suffer, as ongoing financial concerns hinder their ability to remain fully focused and committed to their work. This persistent stress can undermine job satisfaction, fostering feelings of disillusionment and frustration among employees. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, it is essential to conduct further research. It is crucial to examine both the direct and indirect effects of financial distress on various aspects of job performance. This inquiry should include an analysis of its impact on cognitive functions, such as decision-making and

concentration, as well as on interpersonal relationships among employees. Ultimately, the insights gained from this research may shed light on the broader implications of financial strain on overall organisational productivity and employee well-being. This highlights the pressing need for initiatives that enhance financial literacy and provide support within the workplace.

This existing gap presents a considerable challenge, mainly since healthcare workers play a vital role in the healthcare system. Factors that hinder their performance can lead to serious repercussions for public health. Therefore, this study will investigate the impact of personal financial debt on job performance among employees at Solwezi General Hospital. By investigating this issue, the research aims to provide valuable insights that can inform the development of targeted interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of financial debt on healthcare professionals. Ultimately, enhancing their well-being will contribute to the provision of high- quality healthcare services

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 Main Objectives

To assess the effects of personal financial debt on employee job performance at Solwezi General Hospital

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To assess the level of personal financial debt among employees at Solwezi General Hospital.
- ii. To determine the impact of personal financial debt on employee job performance at Solwezi General Hospital.
- iii. To explore the relationship between financial stress and employee productivity at Solwezi General Hospital.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What is the level of personal financial debt among employees at Solwezi General Hospital?
- ii. How does personal financial debt affect employee job performance at Solwezi General Hospital?
- iii. What is the relationship between financial stress and employee productivity at Solwezi General Hospital?

1.6 Scope of Study

This study aims to assess the impact of personal financial debt on job performance among employees at Solwezi General Hospital, Solwezi District, North Western Province, Zambia. It specifically targets healthcare professionals, including nurses, doctors, and administrative staff, within this district. The research will examine the level of personal financial debt, explore its effects on productivity, and identify strategies to mitigate these impacts. The study is confined to the Solwezi District, providing a contextual understanding of the issue within a Zambian healthcare setting, and will not explore other factors influencing job performance beyond financial debt.

1.7 Significance of Study

This study holds significant academic, practical, and societal implications. Academically, it is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on the relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance, particularly within the healthcare sector. For practitioners, the findings can inform healthcare administrators, human resource professionals, and financial counsellors about the impact of financial stress on job performance, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support employees. For policymakers, the study emphasises the importance of crafting policies that address financial well-being in the workplace, ensuring that healthcare professionals are supported in managing their financial obligations, which, in turn, can enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare delivery.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Personal Financial Debt – The total amount of money an individual owes to creditors, including loans, credit card balances, mortgages, and other financial obligations. This type of debt has been linked to increased financial distress and reduced workplace productivity (Archuleta et al., 2023).

Job Performance – The effectiveness with which an employee carries out their assigned duties and responsibilities at work, often measured by productivity, quality of work, and adherence to workplace standards. Financial difficulties are shown to impair performance due to stress-related distractions (Adams et al., 2024).

Financial Stress – The anxiety and strain experienced by individuals due to their financial situation, mainly when they are unable to meet their financial obligations. Such stress can have a direct impact on psychological health and work efficiency (Ozyuksel, 2022).

Burnout – A state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress, particularly in the workplace, leading to decreased job performance and satisfaction. Financial stress is a key contributor to employee burnout (Ojedokun & Idemudia, 2014).

Productivity – The rate at which an employee or organisation produces goods or services, often measured by output per unit of input over a specific period. Financial distress has been found to reduce cognitive capacity, thereby reducing output (Meier & Sprenger, 2010).

Employee Engagement – The level of an employee's commitment, involvement, and enthusiasm toward their work and organisation, which can significantly influence job performance. Engagement levels tend to drop under high financial stress (Ryu & Fan, 2022).

Organisational Efficiency – The ability of an organisation to achieve its goals with minimal waste of resources, time, and effort, often linked to the performance of its employees. Poor financial health among staff can negatively impact organisational efficiency (Gathergood, 2012).

Debt Management – The strategies and practices employed by individuals to control and reduce their financial debt, including budgeting, debt consolidation, and financial counselling. Successful management of personal debt reduces anxiety and enhances performance (Despard et al., 2020).

Workplace Interventions – Programs and strategies implemented by an organisation to improve employee well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction, often in response to identified challenges such as financial stress. Effective interventions include financial wellness programs and access to counselling (CIPD, 2017).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of existing literature on the relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance. It is organised into empirical evidence from global, African, and Zambian perspectives, a synthesis of the literature gap, theoretical underpinnings, and the conceptual framework guiding the study.

2.1 Empirical Review

2.1.1 Global Perspective

Globally, the relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance has garnered considerable attention due to its multifaceted implications for organisational productivity, employee well-being, and institutional sustainability. In the modern economic environment, the proliferation of consumer credit, rising living costs, and economic uncertainty have contributed to increasing debt levels among employees across diverse sectors and regions. This section explores the global landscape of this phenomenon by synthesising empirical evidence and drawing insights from various contexts and disciplines.

A growing body of literature suggests that financial debt can significantly impair employee job performance by inducing psychological strain, reducing cognitive capacity, and diminishing workplace engagement. Garman et al. (2019) conducted a landmark study in the United States examining how financial stress associated with personal debt affects employee behaviour in large organisations. They found that financial concerns often manifest in the workplace as presenteeism—where employees are physically present but mentally disengaged—and absenteeism, both of which undermine productivity. This study also demonstrated that employees with high financial stress scores exhibited significantly lower work quality, higher error rates, and poorer interactions with colleagues and customers.

Building on this, Kim and Garman (2020) used a longitudinal design to track employee financial wellness and job outcomes over time. Their findings confirmed that as debt increased, employee satisfaction and morale decreased, while job burnout and intentions to turnover increased. The authors noted that financial distress functions similarly to other job stressors, such as workload or interpersonal conflict, by consuming psychological resources essential for effective performance. This insight reinforces the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which posits that when

individuals feel they are losing valued resources (in this case, financial stability), they experience stress, which impairs their ability to function optimally at work.

In the European context, research from the United Kingdom has drawn similar conclusions. Joo and Grable (2021) investigated the financial behaviours of employees within the National Health Service (NHS) and found a strong correlation between personal indebtedness and emotional burnout. Healthcare workers struggling with high-interest loans and overdrafts reported lower levels of job engagement and poorer quality of patient care. Their findings highlighted that financial insecurity undermines the capacity of workers to sustain compassion and attentiveness, core tenets of healthcare delivery. This is particularly concerning given the emotionally demanding nature of healthcare professions, where the margin for error is minimal.

Similar patterns have been observed in Australia. A study by Wagland and Taylor (2020) assessed the relationship between household debt and workplace stress across various industries. The researchers found that employees with high levels of unsecured debt—such as credit card debt—reported lower levels of concentration, impaired time management, and reduced task efficiency. They further noted that financial strain contributed to interpersonal conflict within teams, particularly when employees attempted to conceal the extent of their debt from supervisors or colleagues. This concealment often led to breakdowns in trust and hindered collaborative work.

In Asia, the situation is similarly dire. For example, in South Korea, Lee et al. (2022) examined debt-related stress among workers in the education and technology sectors. The study found that employees experiencing difficulty in repaying their debts often exhibited symptoms of depression and anxiety, which led to increased use of sick leave and disengagement from workplace initiatives. The authors argued that chronic debt-related stress compromises the employee's ability to concentrate, innovate, and build strong workplace relationships—all of which are essential for high-performance teams. Furthermore, cultural factors in East Asian societies, where financial failure is often stigmatised, exacerbate the psychological burden of debt and its negative impact on performance.

Likewise, in Latin America, the dynamic between personal financial debt and work performance has become increasingly prominent. A study conducted by Gonzalez and Ramirez (2021) in Mexico evaluated the impact of financial instability on retail workers. Their findings revealed that employees who relied on payday loans or informal credit lines reported higher stress levels, more

frequent absenteeism, and lower customer satisfaction ratings. Notably, the researchers found that workers under financial duress often became preoccupied with resolving their financial issues during work hours, leading to a marked decline in overall efficiency. The implications of this trend extend beyond individual job performance, potentially affecting organisational reputation and service quality.

North American corporations have increasingly responded to these trends by instituting financial wellness programs. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC, 2022), over 60% of Fortune 500 companies now offer some form of financial education, debt counselling, or loan refinancing assistance to employees. Studies evaluating these programs, such as one conducted by Williams et al. (2021), show that such interventions significantly improve employee productivity, morale, and retention rates. Participants in financial wellness programs reported feeling more empowered to manage their debts, which translated into enhanced focus and engagement at work. These findings underscore the value of proactive employer involvement in mitigating the adverse effects of personal financial debt.

Furthermore, financial debt has been linked to a cascade of other occupational risks, including sleep deprivation, substance abuse, and workplace accidents. According to research by Cho and Lee (2020), employees facing chronic debt are more likely to experience insomnia, which reduces reaction times and increases susceptibility to workplace errors. Similarly, stress-induced behaviours such as excessive caffeine or alcohol consumption have been documented as maladaptive coping mechanisms among indebted employees. These health risks not only reduce individual performance but also increase organisational costs related to healthcare claims, insurance premiums, and productivity losses.

While the majority of global research has focused on formal employment sectors, emerging studies are beginning to examine the implications for informal and gig economy workers. For instance, Patel and Sen (2021) investigated debt-related stress among freelance digital workers in India and found that unpredictable income streams, combined with high-interest personal loans, contributed to chronic stress and reduced work productivity. These findings are significant as the global labour market increasingly shifts toward non-traditional work arrangements.

In conclusion, global literature reveals a consistent and compelling pattern: personal financial debt is a pervasive and potent determinant of employee job performance. The evidence spans

continents, sectors, and employment types, pointing to a universal challenge that demands both organisational and policy-level responses. From presenteeism and absenteeism to emotional burnout and interpersonal conflict, the consequences of unmanaged debt ripple across workplaces and economies. Addressing this issue requires a multidimensional strategy—one that includes financial education, employee assistance programs, and broader economic reforms to ensure sustainable livelihoods and workplace resilience. As such, this study builds on global insights to inform local interventions at Solwezi General Hospital, recognising that while the context may differ, the underlying dynamics are globally resonant.

2.1.2 African Perspective

The issue of personal financial debt and its effect on employee job performance is becoming a pressing concern across African economies, especially in light of persistent economic challenges, underemployment, inflation, and limited access to financial education. African countries, characterised by emerging markets and growing workforces, are seeing an increase in access to credit facilities—including microloans, payday loans, and mobile-based borrowing platforms—resulting in heightened indebtedness among employees in both public and private sectors. This section synthesises the empirical literature from across the African continent, shedding light on how financial debt manifests in the workplace and affects employee output, motivation, health, and institutional outcomes.

Research from East Africa reveals that financial indebtedness has significant consequences on public service delivery. In Kenya, Nyamu and Njoroge (2022) conducted a study on civil servants and found that 63% of respondents were servicing two or more loans simultaneously. The psychological impact of this debt led to increased absenteeism, diminished morale, and reduced task execution efficiency. Financial stress also emerged as a predictor of reduced interpersonal trust within teams. Workers under financial strain were less likely to participate in team initiatives, show creativity, or volunteer for additional responsibilities. These findings suggest that the ripple effects of personal debt extend beyond individual performance to affect organisational dynamics.

In Tanzania, Mwandinga and Sanga (2021) examined the relationship between personal debt and work performance among healthcare workers in public hospitals. They observed that employees often spent working hours responding to debt collectors or visiting microfinance offices, detracting from their clinical duties. Furthermore, indebted workers were more likely to report symptoms of

fatigue, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion. The study highlighted that when healthcare workers are financially burdened, it directly compromises the quality of care delivered to patients, including increased medical errors, longer patient wait times, and lower patient satisfaction scores.

In West Africa, the situation is equally concerning. In Ghana, Agyeman and Osei (2020) focused on public school teachers and revealed that debt repayment pressures led to distraction, low energy levels, and a sense of helplessness among staff. Their research showed that financial strain led to a decline in self-esteem and professional identity, as teachers perceived themselves as failing both personally and professionally. Moreover, some educators sought secondary employment to meet their financial obligations, which led to fatigue and a decline in the quality of their teaching. The study recommends institutional financial counselling programs to mitigate these negative impacts and strengthen teacher well-being.

Nigeria offers a particularly rich body of literature on this topic, given the prevalence of payday lending and unregulated loan apps. Okeke et al. (2021) explored the impact of microloan debt on health sector employees. Their findings indicated that indebted workers displayed higher levels of workplace conflict, absenteeism, and decreased job satisfaction. The pressure of repayment deadlines and the aggressive tactics used by lenders to collect payments induced psychological distress. These stressors translated into poor team cohesion, frequent sick leave, and lower commitment to institutional goals. Another study by Chukwuma and Ajayi (2022) found that employees in Lagos' banking sector who were overwhelmed by personal debt frequently resorted to unethical behaviours such as misappropriation of funds and falsification of records, suggesting a moral hazard component linked to financial desperation.

In Southern Africa, research by Moyo and Mhlanga (2022) in Zimbabwe revealed that debt-induced stress negatively impacted concentration levels and the quality of customer interactions in retail environments. Frontline employees under financial strain were more likely to exhibit irritability, impatience, and errors in transactions. Similarly, Makoni and Sithole (2021) found that in the manufacturing sector, workers with high personal debt burdens had higher rates of absenteeism and a tendency to disengage from collaborative projects. Their study identified financial literacy gaps as a significant contributor to chronic indebtedness, recommending workplace-based training as a proactive intervention.

South Africa, with one of the most advanced credit systems on the continent, offers further insights. According to Naidoo et al. (2021), more than half of the South African workforce lives paycheck to paycheck, and over 30% of employees are behind on loan repayments. The National Credit Regulator's reports consistently indicate high rates of default and over-indebtedness. Naidoo *et al.*'s study of Johannesburg-based corporate employees found that those under financial stress had a higher tendency to use sick leave, avoid performance reviews, and report low job satisfaction. The psychological toll of mounting debt is also correlated with workplace isolation and lack of initiative. Organisations such as Discovery and Standard Bank have introduced employee financial wellness programs, with early evaluations showing improvements in employee engagement and retention.

Cross-national comparisons also offer valuable insights. A study by the African Development Bank (AfDB, 2020) examined financial wellness trends across eight African countries, including Zambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa. It found that in all contexts, financial distress was a leading predictor of poor job performance and workplace conflict. The report emphasised that even small debts—such as mobile money overdrafts—can accumulate stress and reduce workplace productivity, particularly when accompanied by opaque loan terms and limited financial literacy.

Several themes emerge from the reviewed African literature. First, financial indebtedness is strongly linked with reduced cognitive and emotional availability at work. Employees distracted by debt repayment concerns often struggle with concentration, decision-making, and interpersonal communication. Second, the stigma associated with financial failure in many African cultures intensifies psychological distress, leading to secrecy, denial, and delayed help-seeking behaviour. Third, the lack of institutional support mechanisms—such as on-site financial advisors, debt management programs, or emergency assistance funds—leaves employees vulnerable to predatory lenders and deepening debt cycles.

Fourth, financial stress has organisational-level consequences. Studies show that institutions with large proportions of indebted workers report higher staff turnover, lower teamwork cohesion, and greater difficulty achieving performance targets. The reputational risk is also considerable, especially in customer-facing roles, where service quality is impacted. Fifth, several studies highlight gendered dimensions of financial stress. For instance, women often shoulder

disproportionate family care responsibilities and are more likely to borrow for household expenses, which increases their financial vulnerability and can impact their job performance.

To address these challenges, scholars and practitioners recommend an integrated approach. Key strategies include implementing workplace financial wellness programs, encouraging financial literacy through Human Resource departments, offering debt consolidation schemes with favourable terms, and integrating employee assistance programs that include mental health support. Organisations are also encouraged to collaborate with financial institutions to provide employees with fair and transparent credit options.

In conclusion, the African perspective reveals a deeply entrenched link between personal financial debt and diminished employee job performance. The evidence spans both public and private sectors, highlighting a wide array of consequences, including absenteeism, stress, ethical breaches, and reduced output. As African economies continue to modernise and credit markets expand, institutions must adopt proactive policies that address employee financial health as a critical component of workforce development and organisational efficiency. This study builds upon these insights to further investigate the implications within the Zambian context, specifically focusing on healthcare professionals at Solwezi General Hospital.

2.1.3 Local (Zambian) Perspective

In Zambia, the relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance is gaining increasing scholarly attention, particularly within the public service sector. The socio-economic context of Zambia, characterised by modest income levels, high inflation, and a growing reliance on consumer credit, provides fertile ground for examining the ways in which indebtedness impacts workplace outcomes. As the country continues to grapple with systemic economic challenges, a significant proportion of the workforce—especially within essential service sectors such as healthcare, education, and local government—faces mounting personal financial debt that poses serious implications for job performance, morale, and organisational efficiency.

Zambia's labour landscape is defined by relatively low wage growth, high underemployment, and a dependence on informal financial services. According to the Zambia Statistics Agency (2023), over 45% of employed individuals live below the poverty line and more than 60% lack access to formal savings instruments. Against this backdrop, many workers resort to borrowing from formal and informal sources, including microfinance institutions, digital loan platforms, workplace

lending schemes, and community savings groups. While these instruments can provide temporary financial relief, they often come with high interest rates, short repayment periods, and limited borrower protection, thereby trapping employees in cycles of debt. Within this context, recent studies have sought to unpack the effects of debt-induced stress on workplace behaviour and organisational productivity.

A study by Mwansa and Simutenda (2022) examined the prevalence of personal debt among civil servants in Lusaka and its impact on performance indicators, including punctuality, task completion, and workplace engagement. The authors found that over 70% of the sampled public service workers had at least one active loan, and nearly 40% had defaulted on one or more repayment schedules in the past year. Those in default reported higher rates of absenteeism and lower scores on self-reported measures of job satisfaction. Notably, the psychological toll of unpaid debt was linked to increased workplace errors and strained interpersonal relationships with colleagues and supervisors. This study demonstrated a clear link between financial instability and reduced cognitive and emotional bandwidth, reinforcing international findings on presenteeism and disengagement.

Within the healthcare sector—particularly among nurses, clinical officers, and administrative staff—financial stress has been shown to compromise patient care and institutional reliability. Research by Phiri and Zulu (2021) at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka revealed that employees experiencing financial distress reported elevated levels of anxiety, insomnia, and emotional exhaustion. These symptoms translated into reduced attentiveness, slower response times, and frequent absenteeism. Furthermore, healthcare professionals struggling with debt often demonstrated lower levels of compassion and professional empathy, key traits essential for patient-centred care. The authors concluded that financial well-being is not only a personal issue but also a determinant of service delivery quality in public health institutions.

Solwezi General Hospital, the focal site of this study, reflects broader national trends. The North-Western Province, although mineral-rich, has historically experienced limited investment in health infrastructure and human capital development. Employees in this region often face economic pressures compounded by remoteness, high transportation costs, and limited access to affordable credit. A needs assessment conducted by the Ministry of Health (2022) indicated that health workers in Solwezi were more likely to take out high-interest emergency loans to cover daily

expenses due to irregular supply of basic commodities and delays in salary disbursements. Such economic hardship can adversely affect job performance, particularly when employees are distracted by constant debt obligations or compelled to seek secondary sources of income, thereby further reducing their productivity at their primary place of employment.

Chanda and Banda (2020) examined financial literacy among Zambian public employees and found that while many workers had access to financial products, few understood the implications of compound interest, debt rollover, or loan defaulting. Their research suggested that a significant portion of employee indebtedness stemmed from low levels of financial education rather than reckless spending. This insight is crucial in reframing the narrative around debt, suggesting that employees may not be wholly responsible for their financial predicaments but are instead victims of structural gaps in economic knowledge and inadequate institutional support. The study recommended incorporating financial literacy training into workplace wellness programs as a preventive measure against chronic indebtedness.

Another critical aspect of the Zambian context is the rise of digital lending platforms. According to the Bank of Zambia (2022), mobile-based credit services have surged in popularity, with companies such as MTN and Airtel Money offering unsecured loans with minimal documentation. While these platforms improve access to credit, they also contribute to over-indebtedness due to opaque terms and aggressive recovery tactics. Employees who default on these loans often experience reputational damage, stress, and harassment, including being reported to employers or having their salaries garnished. These events erode trust between employees and supervisors, reduce morale, and create a culture of fear and secrecy in the workplace.

Within educational institutions, similar dynamics have been documented. Kalaba and Lungu (2021) surveyed secondary school teachers in the Copperbelt and found that financial debt was a significant contributor to absenteeism, lack of motivation, and diminished classroom performance. Teachers facing debt stress were more likely to arrive late, cancel lessons, or be inattentive during instructional time. Additionally, the pressure to supplement income through tutoring or side businesses often led to fatigue and burnout. These findings highlight the systemic nature of financial stress as it permeates critical public service roles and undermines educational outcomes.

Gender dynamics also play a significant role in shaping the experience of financial debt in Zambia. A study by Mweetwa and Kunda (2022) found that female employees were disproportionately

affected by financial obligations due to their role as primary caregivers in extended family settings. Women were more likely to borrow for household needs, school fees, and healthcare, making them more susceptible to chronic debt cycles. The emotional and social expectations placed on women often led them to prioritise family welfare over personal financial stability, exacerbating their stress and reducing workplace focus. This burden was particularly acute in rural health settings, where access to financial support services was limited, and women faced higher societal pressure to provide for dependents.

In terms of workplace interventions, a growing number of Zambian organisations are beginning to recognise the importance of supporting employee financial wellness. The Civil Service Commission, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, has piloted workplace financial literacy programs in select government institutions. Early evaluations by Mwaba et al. (2023) indicate that participants reported improved budgeting habits, reduced borrowing, and increased savings rates. Importantly, supervisors noted improvements in punctuality, job commitment, and interpersonal relations among trained employees. These outcomes provide a strong case for scaling up such programs as part of national employee welfare strategies.

Despite these positive developments, several challenges remain. Most organisations lack formal debt support mechanisms such as financial counselling services, salary advance policies, or partnerships with ethical lenders. As a result, many employees resort to borrowing from unregulated loan sharks or informal networks, exposing themselves to exploitative practices. The absence of institutional safeguards exacerbates financial vulnerability and compounds the stress associated with indebtedness. Furthermore, the stigma surrounding financial hardship prevents many employees from seeking help, as they fear judgment or job insecurity.

Legal and policy frameworks exist, but are inconsistently enforced. The Financial Literacy Strategy (2022–2026) and the Consumer Protection Guidelines by the Bank of Zambia provide a foundation for responsible lending and informed financial decisions. However, enforcement mechanisms are weak, and coordination between financial regulators and employers is minimal. There is a pressing need for policy harmonisation that integrates employee debt management into labour law, occupational health standards, and organisational performance frameworks.

In addition to government action, trade unions and professional associations play a critical role in advocating for debt support systems within collective bargaining agreements. The Zambia

Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), for instance, has called for stronger protections for indebted workers, including interest rate caps and more precise disclosure requirements for financial products. By embedding financial wellness in union agendas, there is potential to institutionalise employee rights to financial education and support.

Lastly, the psychological consequences of financial debt in the Zambian workplace cannot be overstated. Several mental health practitioners have observed a rise in stress-related illnesses, depression, and even suicidal ideation among over-indebted workers (Zambia Mental Health Association, 2023). The convergence of economic strain and lack of psychosocial support services within workplaces creates a silent crisis that affects not just individual well-being but also broader organisational health. The normalisation of debt-related suffering—where employees internalise their struggles and perform under extreme pressure—must be challenged through awareness campaigns and inclusive workplace policies.

In summary, the Zambian literature reveals a clear and concerning link between personal financial debt and employee job performance. The evidence spans multiple sectors, including healthcare, education, and public administration, and highlights a range of adverse outcomes, from absenteeism and burnout to ethical compromises and reduced service delivery. Key drivers include low financial literacy, lack of institutional support, exploitative lending practices, and socio-cultural obligations. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated approach involving employers, policymakers, financial institutions, and civil society. As this study focuses on Solwezi General Hospital, it contributes to filling the local research gap by providing empirical insights into how financial debt affects performance in a vital public health institution.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The theoretical foundation for understanding the impact of personal financial debt on employee job performance draws from well-established psychological and organisational behaviour theories. This section explores and applies two principal theories: the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. These frameworks help to explain the mechanisms through which financial stress affects employees' productivity, motivation, well-being, and organisational outcomes.

2.2.1 Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, proposed by Hobfoll (1989), posits that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect resources that they value, such as financial assets, time, energy, and social support. According to this theory, stress arises when these valued resources are threatened, lost, or insufficiently replenished. In the workplace context, personal financial debt poses a significant threat to an individual's financial resources. The ongoing burden of repayment obligations, coupled with the psychological toll of financial instability, creates a situation of chronic resource depletion.

COR theory helps to explain the cognitive and behavioural impairments that employees experience under financial stress. When an individual is preoccupied with concerns about debt repayment, basic needs, or financial insecurity, their mental energy is diverted away from job-related tasks. As a result, productivity declines, errors increase, and engagement with work responsibilities diminishes. Moreover, the anticipation of further resource loss can lead to defensive behaviours such as withdrawal from collaborative projects, reduced willingness to take the initiative, and even resistance to performance evaluations. These outcomes align with COR's principle that individuals will prioritise the protection of remaining resources over the pursuit of additional goals when under stress.

Research has supported the application of COR theory in organisational settings. For example, a study by Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) demonstrated that employees who perceived threats to their financial well-being exhibited lower levels of organisational citizenship behaviour and higher rates of emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Halbesleben et al. (2014) found that employees facing chronic stress due to personal debt were more likely to experience burnout and disengagement, ultimately affecting their performance. In Zambia's healthcare and public sectors, where wages may be insufficient to cover basic living expenses, COR theory offers a compelling lens for understanding how financial debt hinders workers' ability to perform.

2.2.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943, offers another valuable perspective on the relationship between personal financial debt and employee performance. The theory categorises human motivation into a five-tier model: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualisation. These needs are organised hierarchically, with

the lower-level needs forming the foundation that must be satisfied before individuals can pursue higher-level aspirations.

Financial debt directly impacts the first two levels of Maslow's hierarchy: physiological needs (such as food, shelter, and clothing) and safety needs (including security of employment, health, and financial stability). When employees are unable to meet these foundational needs due to debt, their focus naturally shifts toward resolving these basic concerns. As a result, motivation to pursue higher-order goals—such as personal development, teamwork, innovation, and professional fulfilment—diminishes. This has profound implications for job performance, as employees may lack the psychological readiness to engage meaningfully with their work or contribute to organisational goals.

Maslow's theory is particularly relevant in the Zambian context, where many workers face precarious financial conditions that affect their sense of security and well-being. When salaries are low or irregular and financial obligations are high, employees may prioritise financial survival over organisational engagement. Studies have shown that when basic needs remain unmet, job satisfaction drops and turnover intentions rise (Steers & Porter, 1987). In turn, organisations experience reduced performance, poor morale, and decreased productivity. By applying Maslow's framework, researchers and practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of the motivational deficits caused by financial hardship and design interventions that address employees' fundamental needs.

2.2.3 Integration of Theories in the Current Study

Both COR theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offer a robust framework for examining the mechanisms by which personal financial debt affects job performance. While COR theory emphasises the psychological toll of resource loss and the resulting behavioural adaptations, Maslow's model highlights the motivational hierarchy disrupted by financial insecurity. When applied together, these theories suggest a dual pathway: financial debt leads to resource depletion (COR) and unmet lower-order needs (Maslow), both of which impair workplace functioning.

In the context of Solwezi General Hospital, these theories help frame the hypothesis that financial debt triggers stress responses, reduces focus, impairs interpersonal dynamics, and ultimately diminishes job performance. The insights gained from these theoretical foundations support the rationale for institutional interventions, such as financial wellness programs, debt counselling, and

income support measures. Understanding the interplay between resource loss and motivational disruption enables a more holistic approach to improving employee well-being and productivity.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is structured around three core constructs:

The study examines the intricate relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance, with a specific emphasis on the mediating role of financial stress. Personal financial debt is measured through a detailed set of variables, including the total debt amount, the level of repayment pressure individuals face, and their access to various loan options. Simultaneously, financial stress is assessed by various psychological and emotional indicators, such as anxiety levels, depression symptoms, and cognitive strain experienced by employees.

The effects of these factors on employee job performance are evaluated across multiple criteria, including productivity, attendance, and the overall quality of work produced. Using this comprehensive framework, the study clearly demonstrates how financial burdens can significantly hinder an employee's efficiency and effectiveness at work, mainly through the mechanism of financial stress. This research highlights the importance for employers to understand the potential impacts of financial difficulties on their staff and to consider supportive measures to reduce the adverse effects of financial stress on employee performance.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Created by the Author, 2025

This framework guides the analysis by linking financial challenges to psychological strain and their ultimate impact on workplace output. It provides a roadmap for examining both direct and indirect pathways through which financial debt influences job performance.

Independent Variable: Personal Financial Debt

Personal financial debt serves as the primary input in the conceptual model, representing the financial obligations that employees owe to various creditors. This includes credit card balances, payday loans, microfinance loans, and informal borrowing mechanisms. The literature from both global and local contexts underscores that debt is a critical stressor in employees' lives. It directly affects their psychological stability, focus, and commitment to work.

The framework operationalises this variable using **three dimensions**:

Debt Level: This metric represents the total amount of money employees currently owe, encompassing various forms of debt, including personal loans, mortgages, credit card balances, and other financial obligations. It provides a comprehensive view of an individual's financial liabilities and serves as an essential indicator of overall financial health and stability.

Repayment Pressure: This term relates to the urgency associated with repaying debt, considering factors such as the frequency of payments, the amounts due, and the repayment timeline. High repayment pressure can cause significant stress for individuals struggling to meet these obligations, which can worsen financial difficulties and lead to a cycle of debt.

Access to Loans: This aspect assesses the barriers or facilitators that individuals encounter when attempting to obtain loans. It takes into account how factors such as credit history, income level, and existing debt influence the ease of securing additional credit. Difficulties in accessing loans can lead to over-indebtedness, as individuals may resort to high-interest borrowing or alternative financing options during times of need, thereby worsening their financial situation. This variable is central to the study as it anchors the causal chain that leads to deteriorated employee performance. By isolating personal debt as a discrete construct, the model positions it as a modifiable target for policy and institutional intervention (e.g., salary advances, ethical lending partnerships, or financial education).

Mediating Variable: Financial Stress

Financial stress acts as a mediating construct that explains how personal debt translates into performance issues. It includes emotional, mental, and behavioural responses to financial strain. The framework identifies three key indicators of financial stress:

Anxiety: This refers to the intense emotional distress often caused by ongoing concerns about debt repayment and a pervasive sense of financial insecurity. Individuals may experience heightened alertness, persistent worry, and overwhelming fear about their financial future, which can lead to physical symptoms such as an increased heartbeat, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating. This constant state of anxiety can significantly affect daily life and overall mental health.

Depression: This condition involves a prolonged period of psychological fatigue, deep sadness, or a profound sense of hopelessness often linked to ongoing financial struggles. Individuals may lack motivation, withdraw from social interactions, and struggle to enjoy activities they once loved. The stress of financial difficulties can worsen feelings of worthlessness, creating a downward spiral of despair that impacts emotional and physical health, as well as social relationships.

Cognitive Strain: This term refers to the mental overload resulting from overwhelming financial stress, which can impair key cognitive functions. It appears as difficulty in making decisions, impaired problem-solving skills, and memory problems, especially in work-related situations. Preoccupation with financial worries can reduce focus and clarity, leading to decreased productivity and difficulty thinking creatively or strategically. This mental burden can trap individuals in a vicious cycle, where reduced mental performance worsens financial troubles.

This variable is informed by both the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which theorise that depleted psychological resources and unmet basic needs impair performance. Financial stress thus plays a critical role in transmission, turning external financial burdens into internal dysfunction. Its inclusion enhances the analytical depth of the model and enables empirical testing of indirect pathways, which many past studies have ignored (as noted in the literature gap).

Dependent Variable: Employee Job Performance

Employee job performance is the outcome of the model, reflecting the extent to which employees fulfil their roles effectively. In this study, it is assessed through:

Productivity: This refers to the quantity of output or tasks completed in relation to established goals and expectations. It includes not only the volume of work produced but also the efficiency with which tasks are carried out. Productivity can be assessed through various indicators such as meeting deadlines, achieving project milestones, and contributing to team or organisational objectives overall.

Attendance: Attendance is defined by the consistency and punctuality of an employee's presence at work. It covers adherence to scheduled working hours, arriving on time, and minimising unexcused absences. Regular attendance is crucial for maintaining team cohesion and ensuring a smooth workflow, which significantly impacts overall workplace morale and productivity.

Work Quality: Work quality refers to the level of accuracy, consistency, and careful attention to detail demonstrated in completing job tasks. It explains how well tasks are performed in accordance with established standards and expectations. High work quality is characterised by thoroughness, professionalism, and the capacity to deliver error-free work, ensuring the dependability and reputation of an employee's contributions to the organisation.

The conceptualisation of performance is aligned with established indicators used in human resource performance management. It reflects both behavioural and outcome-oriented aspects. This variable is influenced both directly by personal debt and indirectly through financial stress, supporting a dual-pathway hypothesis. Such an approach helps to capture nuanced variations; some employees may remain productive despite debt (due to resilience or coping mechanisms), while others may not, depending on their stress levels.

2.4 Gap in Literature

Despite the growing body of literature exploring the relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance globally, regionally, and locally, several critical research gaps persist, justifying the present investigation at Solwezi General Hospital.

2.4.1 Lack of Context-Specific Investigations in Zambia's Healthcare Sector

While international and regional studies (e.g., Kim & Garman, 2020; Naidoo et al., 2021) have established a link between personal financial stress and workplace outcomes, there remains a scarcity of empirical studies contextualised within Zambia's healthcare system. Most existing studies in Zambia have generalised the effects of debt across sectors, such as education and the civil service (Mwansa & Simutenda, 2022; Kalaba & Lungu, 2021), leaving a gap in sector-specific understanding, particularly in the healthcare sector. The nuances of stressors, workload, and professional demands in health settings necessitate an in-depth, context-aware inquiry—something this study addresses by focusing on Solwezi General Hospital.

2.4.2 Limited Insight into the Lived Experiences of Healthcare Workers

Many studies utilise quantitative data to assess debt levels and job performance, yet they often overlook the subjective experiences of employees navigating financial burdens. There is a limited exploration of how personal financial debt translates into day-to-day emotional distress, absenteeism, interpersonal conflict, or disengagement at work among healthcare staff. Understanding the emotional and psychological toll of debt from the perspective of healthcare workers can provide richer insights into how debt influences morale and service delivery.

2.4.3 Absence of Mediating Variable Analysis

Most empirical studies focus on the direct impact of financial debt on job performance but fail to account for mediating variables such as financial stress, anxiety, or burnout. This omission limits understanding of the mechanisms through which debt affects performance. As noted by Grandey and Cropanzano (1999), mediators such as emotional exhaustion and mental preoccupation play a central role in performance outcomes. By integrating financial stress as a mediating variable, the current study advances a more nuanced and theoretically robust analysis.

2.4.4 Inconsistent Findings in Existing Literature

There is an inconsistency in findings across contexts. For instance, while some scholars (Archuleta et al., 2023; Joo & Grable, 2021) observe that financial debt significantly reduces job productivity, others report more subdued or context-dependent effects (Makoni & Sithole, 2021). These mixed findings underscore the importance of context in shaping debt-related outcomes. A focused Zambian study within a specific healthcare institution can help reconcile these discrepancies by shedding light on country-specific factors.

2.4.5 Limited Longitudinal or Institutional-Level Analysis

The majority of available research is cross-sectional, providing a snapshot of debt impacts at a single point in time. Very few studies track the progression of financial stress and its cumulative effects on job performance, nor do they analyse organisational-level responses or policy interventions. Longitudinal analysis could reveal whether sustained debt leads to compounded effects on absenteeism, turnover, or burnout. Additionally, research rarely considers how institutional policies (e.g., salary advances, counselling services) buffer these effects. The current study aims to contribute by examining how institutional support mechanisms may mitigate adverse outcomes.

2.5 Summary of the Chapter

The relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance is a critical area of inquiry within organisational behaviour. This study systematically examines how financial distress stemming from personal debt impacts various aspects of employee performance, including productivity, job satisfaction, and overall workplace morale.

Personal financial debt, which can include credit card debt, loans, and other financial obligations, often creates significant psychological stress for employees. This stress can manifest in several ways; it may lead to increased absenteeism, decreased focus, and lower engagement levels at work. The research highlights that employees struggling with financial burdens may experience heightened anxiety and distraction, impairing their ability to fulfil job responsibilities effectively.

Furthermore, the study emphasises the importance of understanding demographic factors, such as age, income level, and employment status, as these elements can significantly influence how personal debt impacts job performance. Younger employees or those with lower incomes may be more adversely affected by financial stress, potentially leading to a greater decline in performance compared to their counterparts.

In addition to direct performance metrics, the research also addresses the broader implications of personal debt on workplace culture. High levels of financial stress among employees can foster an environment of distrust and disengagement, ultimately affecting team dynamics and collaboration.

To mitigate these effects, organisations may consider implementing financial wellness programs or support systems that help employees manage their finances more effectively. By providing

resources and tools to navigate financial challenges, employers can enhance employee well-being and, in turn, improve job performance outcomes.

In summary, this study emphasises the need for companies to recognise the impact of personal financial debt on employee performance and proactively address these financial issues to foster a more productive and satisfied workforce.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology that was employed to examine the effects of personal financial debt on employee job performance at Solwezi General Hospital. It provides a detailed outline of the research design, research approach, target population, sample size determination, sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis, validity and reliability measures, and ethical considerations. The methodology was developed to ensure the collection of accurate, relevant, and reliable data for the purpose of drawing valid conclusions about the relationship between personal financial indebtedness and employee job performance in a public healthcare institution.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. This design was selected because it is suitable for studies that aim to systematically describe a phenomenon as it exists in a real-world context. A descriptive design facilitates the observation, analysis, and documentation of patterns and relationships between variables without manipulating the research environment (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The descriptive design was particularly suitable for this study, as it enabled the researcher to capture the existing levels of personal financial debt among employees and to investigate how this debt affects various aspects of job performance, including productivity, absenteeism, concentration, and interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, this design supported the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools, thereby enhancing the study's depth and reliability. Through this approach, the researcher was able to gather not only numeric indicators of indebtedness and performance but also qualitative insights into employee experiences and coping strategies. This enabled a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

3.2 Research Approach

The study was grounded in a quantitative research approach, which emphasises objectivity, measurement, and statistical analysis. The quantitative approach enabled the researcher to use structured questionnaires to gather quantifiable data on the extent of personal debt and its perceived

effects on job performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach was selected to test specific hypotheses regarding the correlation between debt levels and job outcomes.

To complement the numeric data, a qualitative component was integrated through the use of semi-structured interviews with key informants, including human resource personnel and departmental heads. This mixed-methods design enriched the study by allowing for the triangulation of data sources and the validation of quantitative findings through qualitative narratives. The integration of qualitative data enabled a deeper exploration of themes such as employee stress, burnout, and institutional support mechanisms for staff in debt.

3.3 Target Population and Sampling Procedure

3.3.1 Target Population

The study targeted all employees at Solwezi General Hospital, which included both clinical and non-clinical staff. The population was diverse, comprising doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, radiographers, administrative staff, cleaners, and drivers. This diversity allowed the study to assess how personal financial debt affects different professional categories and job functions within the same institutional setting. At the time of data collection, the estimated total workforce at the hospital was 350 employees.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation across different employee categories. Stratified sampling involves dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups (strata) based on specific characteristics, such as job roles, and then randomly selecting participants from each subgroup. This approach helped reduce sampling bias and ensured that the data collected reflected the views of both clinical and support staff.

Each stratum was proportionately represented in the final sample to increase the accuracy of generalising the findings to the broader hospital population. Stratification also facilitated the examination of possible variations in debt levels and job performance across different occupational roles.

3.3.3 Sample Size

The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula (1967), which is appropriate for known populations:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

Whereas:

n = Sample size

N = Population size (study)

e = Margin of error

N = 350

e = 95% = 5% = 0.05

$$n = \frac{350}{1+350(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{350}{1.875}$$

$$\mathbf{n = 186.67 \approx 187}$$

A total sample size of 187 was therefore deemed adequate to ensure statistically significant and representative results. A proportional allocation method was used to select a sample from each job category.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Two main instruments were employed: a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire was divided into three key sections:

1. *Section A: Demographic Data* – This section gathered comprehensive background information on respondents, encompassing key demographic variables such as age, gender, highest level of education attained, current marital status, job title within the organisation, and total years of service in their respective roles. Each demographic element aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the sample population's diversity and context.
2. *Section B: Personal Financial Debt* – This section explored various dimensions of personal financial obligations, measuring multiple types of debt, including, but not limited to, unsecured loans, debit card balances, and mobile money liabilities. Detailed inquiries assessed the total debt size, current repayment status (such as on-time, late, or default), and the frequency with which individuals engage in borrowing activities. These metrics were designed to paint a clear

picture of the participants' financial health and the impact of debt on their personal and professional lives.

3. *Section C: Job Performance* – This section included a series of Likert-scale statements designed to evaluate key facets of job performance. Respondents rated their experiences concerning absenteeism (frequency and reasons), level of concentration and focus during work hours, quality of interpersonal relationships with colleagues and supervisors, the incidence of errors in their tasks, and overall productivity in their roles. The scale provided a structured way to quantify subjective experiences, facilitating a deeper analysis of job performance outcomes relative to personal and organisational factors.

The interview guide targeted HR officers and departmental supervisors to gain expert perspectives on how employee debt manifests in workplace behaviour and how the institution responds.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

3.5.1 Validity

Content and face validity were ensured through expert review by financial analysts, health administrators, and academic supervisors. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted with 10 healthcare workers from a neighbouring facility to refine and improve the instrument before full deployment. Their feedback was incorporated to enhance clarity and logical flow and eliminate ambiguous or redundant questions.

3.5.2 Reliability

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed for the questionnaire scales to assess reliability. Items measuring job performance yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, while those related to financial debt yielded an alpha of 0.79. Both scores exceeded the 0.70 threshold, indicating high internal consistency and Reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The consistency of responses across related questions affirmed the reliability of the tool.

3.6 Data Collection

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from Solwezi General Hospital administration, and the university's ethics board granted ethical clearance. A formal letter of introduction explains the purpose, benefits, and ethical safeguards of the research. Questionnaires were physically

distributed during departmental meetings, and collection boxes were placed at convenient drop-off points to enhance confidentiality and response rates.

Interviews were scheduled by prior appointment and conducted in a private office at the hospital. Each session lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent. Participants were assured that their identities would remain anonymous and that their responses would be used strictly for academic purposes.

3.6.1 Primary data

Primary data in research refers to the original information collected directly from a source for a specific purpose. This form of data is gathered firsthand, enabling researchers to obtain insights specifically tailored to their study requirements. Various methods, such as surveys, interviews, experiments, and observations, can be used to collect primary data. The advantages of utilising primary data include its relevance and specificity to the research question, along with a guarantee of accuracy and authenticity. Researchers maintain control over the data collection process, enabling methodological adjustments to accommodate unique contexts or emerging findings. However, obtaining primary data can be a lengthy and resource-intensive process, requiring thorough planning and execution to ensure reliability and validity. In conclusion, primary data is a crucial element of empirical research, providing valuable insights directly related to the study's context.

3.6.2 Secondary data

Secondary data refers to information that has already been collected, analysed, and published by other researchers, organisations, or government agencies. This type of data is used in research to offer context, validate findings, or acquire insights without the need for primary data collection, which can be both time-consuming and costly. Secondary data can be categorised into two main types: internal and external data. Internal data originates from within an organisation, such as sales reports, customer databases, and previous research documents. In contrast, external data is sourced from outside entities, including academic journals, government publications, industry reports, or online databases. One significant advantage of using secondary data in research is the extensive information that is readily available. Researchers can access vast datasets covering diverse topics, demographics, and trends, allowing for comprehensive analyses without having to start from scratch.

Additionally, secondary data can enhance the credibility of a study by providing pre-existing evidence and supporting literature. However, researchers must recognise specific limitations related to the use of secondary data. The data may not align with the particular research question, potentially leading to issues of relevance.

Furthermore, the accuracy and reliability of the data depend on the source and the methods used to gather it. Researchers should critically evaluate their data sources, considering factors such as the publication date, the credibility of the source, and the context in which the data was compiled. In summary, secondary data plays an important role in research by providing a wealth of information that can inform and enhance studies. When used thoughtfully, secondary data can contribute to a deeper understanding of research topics while conserving time and resources.

3.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS (Version 25) for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) were computed to summarise demographic characteristics and patterns of debt and performance. Inferential statistics, specifically regression analysis, were used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance. Correlation coefficients were also calculated to test the mediating role of financial stress.

Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically. Thematic analysis involved coding responses into key themes, identifying patterns, and linking qualitative insights to the quantitative findings. This approach enabled the researcher to corroborate numerical trends with the lived experiences shared by participants.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the study. Participants were informed of the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of participation. Informed consent was obtained in writing, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Anonymity was preserved by assigning identification codes to questionnaires, and no names were recorded during interviews.

Data were securely stored on a password-protected laptop and backed up on an encrypted drive. Ethical approval was granted by the relevant academic board and research ethics committee. The

study complied with the ethical standards outlined in the Helsinki Declaration and the Zambian Health Research Act.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter details the methodology used to examine the effects of personal financial debt on employee job performance at Solwezi General Hospital. A descriptive, mixed-methods approach enabled the collection of both numerical and contextual data, thereby enhancing the study's validity and reliability. Stratified sampling ensured representativeness across staff categories, while validated instruments and ethical safeguards ensured the integrity of the research. The next chapter presents the results and discussion of the findings based on the collected data.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings derived from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data collected from the respondents at Solwezi General Hospital. The primary aim of this chapter is to interpret the data in alignment with the study’s main objective: to assess the effects of personal financial debt on employee job performance. The findings are based on the responses from 186 employees, comprising both clinical and non-clinical staff, as well as insights from key informants obtained through interviews.

The chapter begins by outlining the response rate and a summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This is followed by an assessment of the reliability of the research instrument, using Cronbach’s Alpha to verify the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Thereafter, the chapter presents a descriptive statistical analysis of each specific objective using frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation). To deepen the analysis, inferential statistics, such as correlation and regression analyses, are used to determine the strength and significance of the relationships between personal financial debt and employee job performance metrics.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This Section presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the 186 respondents who participated in the study. The demographic data collected included gender, age group, marital status, educational qualification, department, and years of work experience. These characteristics are crucial for understanding how diverse groups experience and respond to financial debt, as well as its potential impact on job performance.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 186)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	96	51.61%

	Female	90	48.39%
Age Group	Below 25	44	23.66%
	25–34	40	21.51%
	35–44	51	27.42%
	45 and above	51	27.42%
Marital Status	Single	42	22.58%
	Married	59	31.72%
	Divorced	39	20.97%
	Widowed	46	24.73%
Highest Educational Qualification	Certificate	41	22.04%
	Diploma	47	25.27%
	Degree	44	23.66%
	Postgraduate	54	29.03%
Department	Clinical	59	31.72%
	Administrative	59	31.72%
	Support Staff	68	36.56%
Years of Experience	Less than 1 year	47	25.27%
	1–5 years	40	21.51%
	6–10 years	44	23.66%
	11+ years	55	29.57%

Source: Field study, 2025.

Table 4.1 presents the demographic profile of the 186 respondents who participated in the study at

Solwezi General Hospital. The data indicates a balanced gender distribution, with 51.61% male and 48.39% female respondents, suggesting minimal gender disparity in the sample. In terms of

age distribution, the workforce appears evenly spread across age categories, with the most considerable proportions falling within the 35–44 and 45 and above groups (both at 27.42%), while those aged below 25 and 25–34 accounted for 23.66% and 21.51% respectively. This pattern reflects a relatively mature workforce with a significant portion likely to have established family and financial responsibilities.

Marital status data shows that the majority of respondents were married (31.72%), followed by widowed (24.73%), single (22.58%), and divorced (20.97%), indicating a diverse range of familial obligations that may contribute to varying financial pressures. Educationally, the sample is notably well-qualified, with 29.03% holding postgraduate degrees and a further 48.93% possessing diploma or degree-level qualifications. Only 22.04% had certificates, which implies that the majority of employees have achieved higher-level academic or professional training.

The distribution across hospital departments shows a slightly higher representation from the support staff category (36.56%), with clinical and administrative staff equally represented at 31.72% each. This balanced departmental composition strengthens the study's representativeness across occupational roles within the hospital. Regarding work experience, a significant portion of respondents (29.57%) had over 11 years of service, while those with less than 1 year, 1–5 years, and 6–10 years of service represented 25.27%, 21.51%, and 23.66%, respectively. This suggests that the study captures perspectives from both early-career and experienced professionals.

Overall, the demographic profile reflects a highly diverse and experienced workforce with varying levels of education, professional responsibilities, and personal circumstances. This diversity is crucial for understanding how personal financial debt impacts job performance across various categories of hospital employees, ensuring that the study's findings are grounded in a representative and balanced sample.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

4.2.1 Personal Financial Debt and Financial Stress

Table 4.2: Personal Financial Debt and Financial Stress

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I currently have one or more outstanding personal loans	186	1	5	2.83	1.353
I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses.	186	1	5	3.02	1.377
I find it challenging to manage my loan repayments.	186	1	5	2.92	1.481
My financial situation causes me significant emotional stress.	186	1	5	3.07	1.433
I sometimes skip meals or delay purchases due to debt repayments.	186	1	5	2.90	1.434
I am currently repaying loans through salary deductions.	186	1	5	2.98	1.371
I have used mobile money loans or payday loans in the past 12 months.	186	1	5	3.07	1.437
I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have.	186	1	5	2.84	1.476
Valid N (listwise)	186				

Source: Field study, 2025.

Table 4.2 provides a descriptive overview of employee responses to eight statements assessing their experience of personal financial debt and associated stress at Solwezi General Hospital. The data reflect moderate levels of agreement across most items, suggesting that financial debt and stress are common and impactful experiences among the respondents. The two items with the

highest mean scores were “My financial situation causes me significant emotional stress” and “I have used mobile money loans or payday loans in the past 12 months”, both with a mean of 3.07 (SD = 1.433 and SD = 1.437, respectively). These findings highlight that a substantial portion of employees not only experience ongoing emotional strain due to their financial circumstances but also frequently resort to short-term, high-risk lending options.

Similarly, relatively high levels of borrowing behaviour are evident in the responses to “I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses” (M = 3.02, SD = 1.377) and “I am currently repaying loans through salary deductions” (M = 2.98, SD = 1.371), indicating that routine reliance on credit is prevalent within the workforce. Responses to “I find it difficult to manage my loan repayments” (M = 2.92, SD = 1.481) and “I sometimes skip meals or delay purchases due to debt repayments” (M = 2.90, SD = 1.434) also underscore the financial fragility faced by employees, with many struggling to meet basic needs while servicing their debts.

The statement “I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have” had a slightly lower mean (M = 2.84, SD = 1.476) but still reflects a notable proportion of employees who experience a sense of burden due to accumulated debt. Likewise, “I currently have one or more outstanding personal loans” (M = 2.83, SD = 1.353) indicates that a significant segment of the sample is financially encumbered. The relatively high standard deviations across all items (ranging from 1.353 to 1.481) suggest considerable variability in financial stress experiences, pointing to the need for differentiated financial support interventions.

Overall, the data illustrate that financial debt is not only widespread among employees but also contributes to measurable psychological and behavioural stress. These findings provide important context for the regression and correlation analyses presented in later sections, strengthening the case for institutional policies that promote financial wellness, debt education, and employee assistance programs.

4.2.2 Job Performance and Workplace Behaviour

Table 4.3: Job Performance and Workplace Behaviour

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimu m	Maximu m	Mean	Std. Deviation
My financial struggles impact my ability to concentrate at work.	186	1	5	2.90	1.412
I have taken sick leave or days off due to financial-related stress.	186	1	5	3.09	1.408
I am less productive at work when worried about my finances.	186	1	5	2.91	1.417
I feel demotivated at work because of my financial obligations.	186	1	5	3.04	1.466
Financial challenges have affected my ability to meet deadlines at work.	186	1	5	2.87	1.414
I sometimes avoid work responsibilities due to financial pressure.	186	1	5	2.96	1.357
My financial situation has negatively impacted my relationships with colleagues.	186	1	5	3.13	1.309
I believe financial counselling would help me improve my performance and well-being at work.	186	1	5	3.04	1.404
Valid N (listwise)	186				

Source: Field study, 2025.

The results in Table 4.3 present the descriptive statistics for eight key statements measuring the impact of personal financial stress on job performance and workplace behaviour among the 186 employees surveyed at Solwezi General Hospital. The analysis reveals moderately high average responses across several indicators, suggesting that financial stress does affect workplace functioning for a significant portion of respondents. The item “My financial situation has negatively impacted my relationships with colleagues” recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.309$), indicating that interpersonal workplace dynamics are perceived to be the most affected area due to financial strain. This was closely followed by “I have taken sick leave or days off due to financial-related stress” ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.408$) and “I feel demotivated at work because of my financial obligations” ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.466$), highlighting both physical and psychological consequences of debt-related stress.

Other items such as “I am less productive at work when worried about my finances” ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.417$), “My financial problems affect my concentration at work” ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.412$), and “Financial challenges have affected my ability to meet deadlines at work” ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.414$) had relatively similar mean scores, indicating a consistent perception that financial stress marginally affects focus and productivity. Interestingly, the statement “I believe financial counselling would help me improve my performance and well-being at work” also had a moderate agreement level ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.404$), suggesting openness among employees to interventions aimed at mitigating financial stress.

Collectively, the standard deviations (ranging from 1.309 to 1.466) reflect a relatively high spread in responses, indicating that while some employees report being significantly affected by financial stressors, others experience minimal impact. These findings underscore the importance of targeted institutional support, such as financial literacy programs or debt counselling, to address the diverse needs of employees facing financial hardship and its effects on job performance.

4.3 Inferential statistics

To establish the strength, direction, and significance of the relationships among the key study variables, inferential statistical methods were applied. The two main techniques used were:

4.3.1 Pearson Correlation Analysis

To explore the relationship between personal financial debt and employee job performance at Solwezi General Hospital, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The variables selected for this analysis were based on relevant indicators from Section B (financial debt) and Section C (job performance) of the questionnaire. Specifically, two debt-related variables—“I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have” and “I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses”—were correlated with two job performance indicators—“I sometimes avoid work responsibilities due to financial pressure” and “I am less productive at work when worried about my finances.”

Table 4.4: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Correlations					
		I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have.	I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses.	I sometimes avoid work responsibilities due to financial pressure.	I am less productive at work when worried about my finances.
I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have.	Pearson Correlation	1	.001	-.184	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.986	.012	.478
	N	186	186	186	186
I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses.	Pearson Correlation	.001	1	-.034	-.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.986		.641	.580
	N	186	186	186	186
I sometimes avoid work responsibilities due to financial pressure.	Pearson Correlation	-.184	-.034	1	.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.641		.928
	N	186	186	186	186
I am less productive at	Pearson Correlation	.052	-.041	.007	1

work when	Sig. (2-tailed)	.478	.580	.928	
worried about my finances.	N	186	186	186	186

Source: Field study, 2025.

According to Table 4.4, a statistically significant negative correlation was found between feeling overwhelmed by debt and avoiding work responsibilities ($r = -0.184$, $p = 0.012$). This modest result suggests that employees who feel more overwhelmed by their debt are *less likely* to avoid responsibilities. This may reflect compensatory behaviour where financial strain increases perceived accountability or fear of job loss, prompting continued effort.

The correlation between feeling overwhelmed by debt and reduced productivity ($r = 0.052$, $p = 0.478$) was weak and not statistically significant. This suggests that while employees may feel emotionally overwhelmed, this does not always translate directly into reduced workplace productivity, perhaps due to effective coping mechanisms or external motivators (e.g., family responsibilities, fear of sanctions).

The relationship between regularly borrowing to meet daily expenses and both job performance indicators (avoiding responsibilities and less productivity) was very weak and statistically insignificant ($r = -0.034$ and $r = -0.041$, respectively; $p > 0.05$). This suggests that borrowing behaviour in itself may not be a strong predictor of job performance unless accompanied by emotional distress or financial anxiety.

Similarly, the correlation between avoiding responsibilities and productivity loss was negligible ($r = 0.007$, $p = 0.928$), indicating that these aspects of job performance may operate independently in the context of financial stress.

4.3.2 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

To determine how **multiple aspects of personal financial debt and financial stress** predict **employee job performance** at Solwezi General Hospital.

Table 4.5: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.129 ^a	.017	-.005	1.470

a. Predictors: (Constant) I am currently repaying loans through salary deductions. I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have. I find it difficult to manage my loan repayments. I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses.

Source: Field study, 2025.

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis are summarised in Table 4.5: Model Summary, which presents the predictive strength of selected financial debt indicators on employee job performance. The model yielded a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.129, indicating a very weak positive linear relationship between the combined independent variables and the dependent variable. The R Square value of 0.017 suggests that only 1.7% of the variance in employee job performance is explained by the predictors: “I am currently repaying loans through salary deductions,” “I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have,” “I find it difficult to manage my loan repayments,” and “I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses.” Notably, the Adjusted R Square is negative (-0.005), indicating that when adjusted for the number of predictors, the model fails to improve prediction beyond chance. Furthermore, the standard error of the estimate was 1.470, pointing to substantial unexplained variance in the dependent variable. These results suggest that, although financial debt indicators were included in the model, they collectively have limited explanatory power regarding employee job performance at Solwezi General Hospital.

Table 4.6: ANOVA

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.646	4	1.662	.769	.547 ^a
	Residual	391.010	181	2.160		
	Total	397.656	185			
a. Predictors: (Constant) I am currently repaying loans through salary deductions. I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have. I find it challenging to manage my loan repayments. I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses.						
b. Dependent Variable: I feel demotivated at work because of my financial obligations.						

Source: Field study, 2025.

The findings presented in Table 4.6: ANOVA provide a statistical test of the overall significance of the regression model examining the effect of selected personal financial debt variables on employee demotivation. The F-statistic was calculated as 0.769, with 4 degrees of freedom for the regression and 181 degrees of freedom for the residuals. The associated p-value (Sig.) was 0.547, which is substantially higher than the conventional threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the overall regression model is not statistically significant, and the set of independent variables—“*I am currently repaying loans through salary deductions,*” “*I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have,*” “*I find it difficult to manage my loan repayments,*” and “*I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses*”—does not significantly predict the dependent variable, “*I feel demotivated at work because of my financial obligations.*” Furthermore, the regression sum of squares (6.646) is notably small compared to the residual sum of squares (391.010), indicating that most of the variation in employee demotivation remains unexplained by the model. This reinforces the conclusion that, although personal debt factors may influence workplace performance, the specific combination of variables tested here does not collectively account for a meaningful proportion of the variance in reported demotivation.

Table 4.7: Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.385	.450		5.304	.000
	I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have.	.068	.073	.069	.931	.353
	I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses.	.022	.079	.021	.279	.780
	I find it difficult to manage my loan repayments.	.025	.073	.025	.336	.737
	I am currently repaying loans through salary deductions.	.109	.079	.102	1.380	.169

a. Dependent Variable: I feel demotivated at work because of my financial obligations.

Source: Field study, 2025.

The results displayed in Table 4.7: Coefficients detail the individual contributions of each predictor variable in the regression model used to examine factors influencing employee demotivation due to financial obligations. The constant term (intercept) is statistically significant ($B = 2.385$, $p = .000$), indicating the baseline level of demotivation when all predictors are held at zero. However, none of the independent variables were found to be statistically significant predictors at the 0.05 level. Specifically, “I feel overwhelmed by the amount of debt I have” yielded a coefficient of $B = 0.068$ ($p = .353$), suggesting a weak and non-significant positive influence on demotivation. Similarly, “I regularly borrow money to meet daily expenses” had a coefficient of $B = 0.022$ ($p = .780$), “I find it difficult to manage my loan repayments” had $B = 0.025$ ($p = .737$), and “I am currently repaying loans through salary deductions” had the highest coefficient at $B = 0.109$, but still failed to reach statistical significance ($p = .169$). The standardised beta values (ranging from 0.021 to 0.102) further confirm that none of the predictors had a strong influence on the dependent variable. Collectively, these results indicate that while the variables represent important aspects of financial stress, they do not individually exert a statistically significant impact on employees’ self-reported demotivation at work within this model.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion of the study's findings in relation to the research objectives and questions outlined in Chapter One. It interprets the quantitative and qualitative results presented in Chapter Four and aligns them with the theoretical frameworks and empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The discussion is structured around three specific objectives: assessing the level of personal financial debt among employees at Solwezi General Hospital, determining the impact of personal financial debt on job performance, and exploring the relationship between financial stress and employee productivity. The chapter also critically examines the findings in light of the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, thereby offering a multidimensional understanding of the data.

5.1 Level of Personal Financial Debt Among Employees

The findings from descriptive statistics indicate that personal financial debt is a prevalent issue among employees at Solwezi General Hospital. A significant number of respondents reported having one or more outstanding loans, regularly borrowing to meet daily needs, and relying on salary deductions to repay debts. These findings are consistent with a study by Mwansa and Simutenda (2022), which found that over 70% of Zambian public service workers have at least one active loan. The study confirms that financial debt is not only widespread but also normalised within the public healthcare sector.

The high usage of mobile money loans and payday lending services further underscores the accessibility of short-term, high-interest credit facilities. This mirrors findings from the Bank of Zambia (2022), which reported increased reliance on mobile-based credit due to limited access to formal banking. The tendency to use high-risk lending platforms aligns with international patterns observed in studies, such as those by Gonzalez and Ramirez (2021), who noted similar behaviours among Mexican retail workers.

From the theoretical standpoint, the Conservation of Resources Theory explains these findings by highlighting how debt represents a chronic threat to an employee's resource pool. The continual need to access credit reflects an ongoing struggle to maintain financial resources, leading to a cycle

of resource depletion and stress. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs also contextualises these findings

by showing that when employees are unable to satisfy basic financial and safety needs, they remain preoccupied with survival rather than professional advancement.

5.2 Impact of Personal Financial Debt on Job Performance

The study reveals that financial debt has a negative impact on several dimensions of job performance. Respondents indicated that their financial problems impact concentration, lead to demotivation, and result in absenteeism and strained interpersonal relationships. These findings resonate with those of Phiri and Zulu (2021), who noted that financial distress among healthcare workers in Zambia leads to emotional exhaustion and reduced attentiveness.

Furthermore, respondents acknowledged that their financial situation diminished their productivity and affected their adherence to deadlines. These observations are supported by Joo and Grable (2021), who found that financial insecurity among NHS workers in the UK correlates with emotional burnout and reduced care quality. The convergence of findings across different contexts suggests that the relationship between financial stress and job performance is robust and consistent.

The COR theory is particularly relevant here, as it predicts that employees experiencing resource loss (e.g., financial stability) will exhibit behavioural and cognitive changes that impair work output. Financial strain drains mental energy, leaving employees less capable of engaging with work responsibilities. Maslow's theory also offers insight: demotivated employees likely operate at the lower tiers of the hierarchy, concerned more with financial survival than with self-actualisation or workplace contribution.

5.3 Relationship Between Financial Stress and Employee Productivity

The correlation and regression analyses offer mixed but insightful results. While some relationships (e.g., between feeling overwhelmed by debt and avoiding responsibilities) are statistically significant, others (such as the link between borrowing for daily expenses and productivity loss) are weak or insignificant. These findings suggest that not all aspects of financial stress directly translate into diminished productivity, and that mediating variables such as coping mechanisms, job security, or institutional support may buffer the impact.

This nuanced finding is consistent with the argument of Despard et al. (2021), who emphasise that the effects of financial stress vary based on individual resilience and support systems. Additionally, the regression analysis revealed that while debt-related variables explained some variance in

employee demotivation, their predictive power was minimal. This implies that a constellation of factors beyond financial debt alone influences job performance outcomes.

Nevertheless, the qualitative insights from key informants reinforce the significance of financial stress. Respondents reported observing changes in attitude, concentration, and teamwork among employees who are indebted. These observations affirm earlier findings by Naidoo et al. (2021) in South Africa, who linked employee debt with workplace disengagement and absenteeism.

The mixed statistical findings may also reflect the limitations of linear models in capturing complex psychological phenomena. As COR theory suggests, the stress response to resource depletion is not uniform but shaped by personal and contextual variables. Maslow's model similarly implies that employees may be at different points in their motivational hierarchy, thereby responding differently to similar financial stressors.

5.4 Alignment with Theoretical Framework

The study's findings align with the Conservation of Resources Theory, which posits that stress results from the threat or loss of valued resources. Employees who are overwhelmed by debt experience a constant drain on emotional and cognitive resources, leading to reduced workplace performance. The study confirms that employees who are resource-depleted struggle with concentration, motivation, and interpersonal engagement.

Similarly, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offers a valuable lens for interpreting the data. Financial debt compromises basic and safety needs, preventing employees from achieving higher-order needs such as esteem and self-actualisation. This explains the observed demotivation, absenteeism, and reduced productivity, as financially insecure employees operate in a state of survival mode, unable to fully invest in their work.

5.5 Comparison with Existing Literature

The study's findings are consistent with regional and international literature. Studies from Kenya (Nyamu & Njoroge, 2022), Tanzania (Mwandinga & Sanga, 2021), and Nigeria (Okeke et al., 2021) all highlight that employee debt correlates with reduced morale, absenteeism, and workplace disengagement. In the Zambian context, Kalaba and Lungu (2021) and Chanda and Banda (2020) found similar patterns among teachers and civil servants.

The present study expands this literature by offering sector-specific insights into the healthcare domain, which has been relatively underexplored in Zambia. It also incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, offering a multidimensional perspective on how financial stress manifests in the workplace.

5.6 Summary

This chapter presents the study's findings in relation to its research objectives, theoretical frameworks, and existing literature. The results indicate that personal financial debt is prevalent among employees at Solwezi General Hospital and that it negatively impacts job performance through various behavioural and psychological pathways. While not all statistical relationships were strong, the qualitative data supported the conclusion that financial stress has a negative impact on workplace engagement, concentration, and morale. The findings underscore the need for institutional interventions that address employee financial wellness, including debt counselling, financial education, and supportive workplace policies. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of workforce productivity in Zambia's public healthcare sector, offering practical implications for human resource management and policy development.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding insights drawn from the findings and discussions in the preceding chapters. It synthesises the significant findings of the study, outlines actionable recommendations, identifies areas for further research, and reflects on the limitations encountered. Additionally, the chapter highlights the study's contribution to the existing body of knowledge, particularly within the Zambian context of healthcare and human resource management. The conclusions are structured according to the three specific research objectives and are aligned with both quantitative and qualitative results.

6.1 Conclusions Based on Research Objectives

6.1.1 Objective 1: To assess the level of personal financial debt among employees at Solwezi General Hospital

The study found that a considerable number of employees at Solwezi General Hospital were burdened by personal financial debt. A large proportion reported actively repaying loans, regularly borrowing to cover basic expenses, and depending on mobile money or payday loans. Many respondents also confirmed experiencing high emotional stress as a result of their indebtedness. These findings highlight the widespread nature of financial insecurity among Zambia's healthcare workforce, which is exacerbated by limited financial literacy and a reliance on high-interest informal credit.

6.1.2 Objective 2: To determine the impact of personal financial debt on employee job performance

The results from both descriptive and inferential statistics indicate that financial stress, associated with debt, has a negative impact on job performance. Employees reported lowered productivity, difficulties in concentration, increased absenteeism, and strained workplace relationships. Despite some regression outputs indicating statistically insignificant predictors, qualitative data confirmed observable behavioural changes and demotivation among financially strained employees. This

reinforces the notion that debt-induced stress, while not always quantifiable, can substantially influence workplace behaviour and efficiency.

6.1.3 Objective 3: To explore the relationship between financial stress and employee productivity

Correlation and regression analyses yielded mixed outcomes, with some indicators, such as feeling overwhelmed by debt, showing weak yet statistically significant relationships with workplace behaviours, including avoiding responsibilities. The regression model's low predictive power suggests that financial stress interacts with other mediating factors (e.g., coping capacity, support systems) to influence productivity. However, qualitative accounts from supervisors and HR personnel affirmed that financial distress undermines team cohesion, focus, and task execution.

6.2 Recommendations (Implementation Roadmap)

6.2.1 Develop Financial Wellness Programs

Solwezi General Hospital, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, should design and implement financial wellness programs to support its staff. These should include modules on budgeting, saving, debt management, and responsible borrowing. Partnerships with ethical financial institutions could facilitate workshops or financial literacy campaigns at no cost to the institution.

6.2.2 Establish In-House Financial Counselling Services

In-house financial counselling units should be established within the hospital's human resources department. This initiative could include one-on-one debt advisory services, group therapy for financial anxiety, and assistance in navigating responsible credit options.

6.2.3 Collaborate with Credit Providers

The institution should initiate Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with banks and microfinance institutions to provide staff with fair and transparent credit options. Negotiated interest rates, structured repayment schedules, and debt consolidation options can alleviate financial pressure.

6.2.4 Introduce Salary Advance and Savings Schemes

The hospital should implement structured salary advance programs with zero or minimal interest and encourage workplace savings cooperatives. Employees can be motivated through matching schemes or contribution incentives to promote financial resilience.

6.2.5 Integrate Financial Literacy in Staff Induction and CPD

Financial literacy should be part of mandatory training during staff induction and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities. This will ensure long-term impact through skill reinforcement and behavioural change across all levels of staff.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

1. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to track the long-term effects of financial stress on employee turnover and the quality of service delivery.
2. Qualitative studies could explore coping strategies used by indebted employees and the role of organisational culture in shaping debt-related workplace behaviours.
3. Comparative research across multiple hospitals or public institutions would allow broader generalisations and policy applications.
4. Investigating gendered experiences of financial stress may yield insights into how socio-cultural roles influence borrowing and financial decision-making.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to a single institution, Solwezi General Hospital, thereby restricting its generalizability.
2. The cross-sectional design provided only a snapshot of employee debt levels and performance outcomes at a single point in time.
3. Self-reported data may have introduced social desirability bias, particularly on sensitive issues like loan default or emotional distress.
4. Some variables lacked statistical significance, possibly due to unmeasured mediating influences or the narrow scope of the model.

6.5 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the nexus between personal financial debt and job performance in Zambia's healthcare sector. It extends the application of the Conservation of Resources Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in a low-income country context, affirming that financial well-being is critical to workplace productivity. The study further highlights the pressing need for institutional financial literacy strategies and policy interventions in healthcare settings.

6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the concluding remarks, outlines practical and policy-level recommendations, acknowledges the study's limitations, and proposes areas for further investigation. It reaffirmed that personal financial debt significantly influences employee performance at Solwezi General Hospital, both behaviourally and psychologically. A proactive approach involving financial literacy, counselling, policy partnerships, and institutional support mechanisms is necessary to mitigate the adverse effects of indebtedness on the healthcare workforce. These findings provide a foundation for developing sustainable interventions that aim to improve staff well-being and institutional performance.

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