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BEHAVIOURAL ANALYTICS IN CONSUMER CREDIT USAGE: A STUDY OF DEBT ACCUMULATION PATTERNS AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between financial literacy, spending behavior, and consumer credit usage among academic staff at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam, Nigeria. Using a survey-based methodology, data was collected from 200 respondents, and the relationships among key variables were analyzed using regression models. The findings reveal that higher financial literacy is negatively associated with consumer credit usage, suggesting that individuals with better financial knowledge tend to use credit less frequently. Additionally, spending behavior was found to have a significant positive relationship with credit usage, indicating that individuals who engage in excessive or impulsive spending are more likely to rely on credit. Financial literacy also moderated the relationship between spending behavior and credit usage, suggesting that higher financial knowledge can reduce the negative impact of poor spending habits. Control variables, including income level and marital status, were found to influence credit usage, with higher income earners being more likely to use credit. The study highlights the need for financial literacy programs and spending behavior interventions to improve credit management among Nigerian university staff. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, financial institutions, and educators to promote responsible credit usage and financial well-being.

Key words: *Consumer Credit Usage, Credit Management, Financial Education, Financial Literacy, Nigerian University Staff, Spending Behaviour.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing reliance on consumer credit in Nigeria reflects a broader global trend where individuals leverage credit facilities to maintain or enhance their living standards (Beck & Brown, 2020). Consumer credit, which includes personal loans, credit card debt, and salary advances, plays a critical role in bridging financial gaps. However, the rise in debt accumulation, particularly among salaried workers, has generated significant concerns regarding financial stability and well-being (Lusardi & Tufano, 2019). Among academic staff in Nigerian universities, access to credit facilities has become increasingly common, yet the behavioral patterns underlying debt accumulation remain underexplored. This study seeks to understand these patterns using behavioral analytics to assess how financial decision-making, spending behavior, and psychological factors influence credit usage and debt accumulation. The issue of rising consumer debt among academic staff in Nigeria's higher institutions is concerning, particularly as it affects financial well-being and long-term economic stability. While studies have explored general credit usage in Nigeria (Adegbite & Olayemi, 2021; Olaniyan, 2022), there is limited research on how behavioral factors—such as spending habits, financial literacy, risk perception, and borrowing attitudes—contribute to debt accumulation among university staff. Academic staff members often rely on credit facilities to manage delayed salaries, rising inflation, and unexpected financial obligations (Ene & Uchenna, 2023). However, the extent to which psychological and behavioral factors drive borrowing decisions remains underexplored. In the Southeast region of Nigeria, where economic conditions are dynamic, the financial behaviors of academic staff can have broader implications on household stability and overall economic growth. The gap in literature necessitates a study that integrates behavioral analytics to examine the debt accumulation trends among this group, offering insights into credit management and policy implications for financial institutions and employers.

This study is guided by behavioural analytics, which examines financial decision-making patterns through data-driven insights (Loewenstein et al., 2022). The key variables and constructs in this research include: “Debt Accumulation Patterns” as the dependent variable and this refers to the frequency, volume, and repayment behavior of consumer credit among academic staff. “Financial Literacy” which depicts the level of knowledge and awareness about credit usage, interest rates, and repayment structures (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2020); “Spending Behaviour” which indicates the extent to which individual consumption patterns influence borrowing decisions (Shefrin, 2021); “Risk Perception” that portrays the subjective assessment of financial risk associated with credit borrowing (Karlan et al., 2021); “Borrowing Attitudes”which is all about personal tendencies toward debt acquisition, influenced by socioeconomic status, peer influence, and institutional support (Thaler & Sunstein, 2019); “Demographic Factors” which mirrors the Age, gender, rank, and employment status may influence debt accumulation trends; and of course, “Income Level” which looks at the differences in income levels can determine borrowing capacities and repayment behavior. By analyzing these behavioral constructs, the study seeks to uncover patterns and correlations that can inform better credit policies, enhance financial literacy programs, and promote responsible borrowing behavior among academic staff in Southeast Nigerian universities.

1.1 Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the relationship between behavioural analytics in consumer credit usage and debt accumulation patterns among academic staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. ascertain the extent of relationship between financial literacy and consumer credit usage among academic staff in Southeast Nigerian universities.
2. determine Spending behaviour has any significant influences consumer credit usage among academic staff in Southeast Nigerian universities.
3. ascertain if financial literacy significantly moderates the relationship between spending behaviour and consumer credit usage.

1.2 Hypotheses

Based on the identified constructs, the following hypotheses have been formulated in their null form:

H_1: There is a significant relationship between financial literacy and consumer credit usage among academic staff in Southeast Nigerian universities.

H_2: Spending behaviour do not significantly influence consumer credit usage among academic staff in Southeast Nigerian universities.

H_3: financial literacy moderates the relationship between spending behaviour and consumer credit usage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Behavioural Analytics in Consumer Credit Usage

Behavioral analytics involves the study of consumer actions, decision-making processes, and financial behaviors using data-driven insights (Loewenstein et al., 2022). Applying behavioral analytics to consumer credit usage allows researchers to assess how financial literacy, spending behavior, risk perception, and borrowing attitudes contribute to debt accumulation.

2.1.2 Financial Literacy and Consumer Credit Usage

Financial literacy refers to the ability to understand and effectively use various financial skills, including personal financial management, budgeting, saving, and investing (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2020). In the context of consumer credit usage, financial literacy is pivotal in shaping borrowing behavior, influencing how individuals manage debt, make credit decisions, and navigate financial products such as loans, credit cards, and mortgages. Studies consistently show that individuals with higher levels of financial literacy are better equipped to make informed borrowing decisions, while those with lower financial literacy tend to face challenges such as excessive debt accumulation, poor credit decisions, and financial instability (Hastings & Mitchell, 2021). The relationship between financial literacy and consumer credit usage is well-documented in both developed and developing economies. According to Atkinson and Messy (2019), individuals with high financial literacy possess a deeper understanding of how financial products work, which allows them to assess the terms and conditions of borrowing, avoid high-interest debt, and make informed decisions about credit usage. These individuals are typically more aware of the risks associated with over-borrowing and better equipped to manage their credit responsibly, leading to fewer instances of over-indebtedness. Moreover, higher financial literacy allows consumers to identify cost-effective borrowing options and engage in better debt management practices, such as making timely payments and avoiding default.

In contrast, poor financial literacy can lead to detrimental borrowing behavior. A lack of financial knowledge often results in suboptimal decisions, such as accumulating excessive debt, failing to understand the implications of interest rates and repayment schedules, or missing payments due to poor budgeting skills. Studies have shown that individuals with low financial literacy are more likely to carry high levels of credit card debt, make costly borrowing decisions, and experience financial distress (Hastings & Mitchell, 2021). This phenomenon is particularly concerning because it exacerbates financial vulnerability, making it more difficult for individuals to escape debt cycles or build wealth. Several factors contribute to low financial literacy levels, including inadequate financial education, limited exposure to financial management tools, and a lack of access to reliable financial information. For instance, in many developing countries, financial education is not integrated into school curricula, leaving individuals ill-equipped to manage their finances effectively (Hastings & Mitchell, 2021). Furthermore, many consumers rely on informal channels of financial information, such as family and peers, which may not provide accurate or comprehensive guidance on financial matters.

The case of Nigeria provides a compelling example of how low financial literacy can impact borrowing behavior. Research by Olaniyan (2022) found that many Nigerian university staff members, including academic professionals, lack a deep understanding of critical financial concepts, such as interest rates, repayment structures, and financial planning. This knowledge gap often leads to suboptimal borrowing decisions, as individuals fail to understand the long-term consequences of their borrowing behavior. For instance, many university staff members struggle to assess the affordability of loans, the implications of interest rates on repayment, and the risks associated with borrowing from informal sources (Olaniyan, 2022). As a result, they are more likely to take on excessive debt, engage in inefficient repayment practices, and face financial difficulties. In the Nigerian context, other socio-economic factors further exacerbate the issue of low financial literacy. For example, many salaried workers, including university staff, face irregular payment schedules due to delayed salary disbursements. This unpredictability in income creates a reliance on credit to manage day-to-day expenses or maintain a particular lifestyle, further compounding the challenge of over-indebtedness (Ene & Uchenna, 2023). This issue is compounded by inflation, which erodes the purchasing power of salaries, forcing individuals to borrow more to meet their basic needs. These financial pressures, combined with low financial literacy, make it difficult for individuals to escape the cycle of debt accumulation.

Furthermore, the lack of formal financial institutions or access to affordable financial products in many parts of Nigeria restricts consumers' options for managing their finances. This lack of access to formal credit products often forces individuals to rely on informal lending channels, such as family loans or payday lenders, which may come with exorbitant interest rates and unfavorable terms. Without the knowledge to evaluate these options effectively, consumers often fall into debt traps, where high-interest repayments make it difficult to escape financial hardship. Research has shown that financial literacy programs can significantly improve individuals' ability to make informed financial decisions and reduce the likelihood of over-indebtedness. For example, studies by Lusardi and Mitchell (2020) suggest that financial literacy interventions, such as educational programs and financial counseling, can improve individuals' understanding of personal finance and lead to more responsible borrowing behavior. These programs have been shown to increase individuals' awareness of

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financial concepts, such as interest rates, debt management, and budgeting, which can lead to better financial decision-making and reduced reliance on high-cost credit. In Nigeria, the introduction of targeted financial literacy initiatives, particularly for salaried workers, could play a crucial role in improving credit usage and financial outcomes. By providing financial education on topics such as loan management, interest rates, and the implications of borrowing, such programs can help individuals make more informed decisions about credit and reduce the prevalence of debt-related problems. Additionally, greater access to formal financial products and services, along with improved financial infrastructure, can provide consumers with more affordable and transparent borrowing options.

Financial institutions also have a role to play in promoting financial literacy among their customers. By offering clear and concise information about loan products, interest rates, and repayment structures, banks and other financial institutions can help consumers make informed choices and avoid costly mistakes. Moreover, financial institutions can develop products tailored to the specific needs of consumers with low financial literacy, such as simplified loan agreements and repayment schedules that are easy to understand. Financial literacy is a critical factor in shaping consumer credit usage and borrowing behavior. Poor financial literacy can lead to excessive debt accumulation, poor credit decisions, and financial distress, while higher financial literacy enables individuals to make informed borrowing decisions, reduce over-indebtedness, and manage their finances effectively. In Nigeria, low financial literacy levels, particularly among salaried workers such as academic staff, contribute to suboptimal borrowing behavior and increased financial vulnerability. To address these issues, targeted financial literacy programs and improved access to formal financial services are essential in promoting responsible borrowing and reducing the risks of over-indebtedness.

2.1.3 Spending Behaviour and Debt Accumulation

Spending behavior plays a critical role in shaping consumer debt patterns. According to Shefrin (2021), excessive spending, impulsive purchases, and lifestyle inflation are key factors contributing to the rising levels of consumer debt. Lifestyle inflation refers to the tendency of individuals to increase their spending as their income rises, leading to a mismatch between their financial capabilities and their consumption habits. Shefrin argues that as individuals adjust their spending habits to maintain a more lavish lifestyle, they often overlook the long-term implications on their financial stability, resulting in higher debt accumulation.

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This behavioral phenomenon is particularly prevalent among individuals with limited financial literacy or poor money management skills, as they fail to recognize the importance of budgeting and saving (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014).

Impulsive spending, characterized by buying items without careful planning or consideration, also contributes significantly to consumer debt. According to Karlan et al. (2021), individuals with weak self-control or impulsive tendencies are more likely to accumulate higher levels of debt. The study suggests that people with low self-discipline are prone to frequent and unnecessary borrowing to finance their immediate desires, often exacerbating financial distress and making it difficult to repay outstanding debts. Impulsive purchases are frequently fueled by external influences, such as advertising, peer pressure, or societal norms that encourage instant gratification, rather than long-term financial planning (Baumeister et al., 2007). In the context of Nigerian academic staff, spending behaviour is shaped by various external factors, including salary delays, inflation, and social pressures. Ene and Uchenna (2023) found that many university staff members, despite having steady incomes, often resort to credit facilities to maintain their lifestyles due to frequent salary delays and inflation. Salary delays, common in public institutions in Nigeria, disrupt the cash flow of academic staff and force them to rely on borrowed funds to meet daily expenses or pay for long-term financial commitments. As a result, they frequently incur debts that can spiral out of control, especially when inflation erodes the purchasing power of their salaries. Inflation increases the cost of goods and services, placing additional strain on the budget of academic staff, who may already be struggling to make ends meet.

Social pressures also influence the spending habits of Nigerian academic staff, with many feeling compelled to conform to societal expectations regarding material possessions and lifestyle choices. In a society where visible symbols of wealth, such as expensive cars, electronics, and housing, are seen as indicators of success, individuals may feel the need to maintain such appearances, even at the cost of accumulating debt. This social pressure often exacerbates the problem, as individuals borrow money to sustain a lifestyle beyond their means, which results in a cycle of debt accumulation that can be difficult to break. Moreover, the reliance on credit facilities by Nigerian academic staff often leads to an increase in their overall debt burden. As noted by Ene and Uchenna (2023), while credit cards, loans, and other borrowing mechanisms provide short-term relief, they can exacerbate financial problems in the long run if used irresponsibly. The interest rates on these credit facilities can compound the debt, making it even harder for individuals to pay off their obligations.

Spending behaviour is a key determinant of debt accumulation, influenced by a range of personal, economic, and social factors. Impulsive spending, lifestyle inflation, and external pressures such as salary delays and inflation contribute to rising levels of consumer debt, particularly among groups like Nigerian academic staff. Understanding these behavioral patterns is crucial for developing effective financial education programs and policies that help individuals manage their finances better and reduce the risks of debt accumulation.

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for examining relationships between variables and understanding the nature of the phenomena under study, was chosen. This is more as the descriptive research designs are often used to collect information that can help explain existing conditions or behaviors without manipulating the variables (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). This design enables the researcher to gather data on the current state of financial literacy, spending behavior, and consumer credit usage among academic staff at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam, Nigeria, without affecting the participants' usual conditions. Descriptive research is particularly useful for this study because it allows the researcher to systematically collect data on the level of financial literacy, the factors influencing credit usage, and spending behaviours among the target population. By gathering information on the specific behaviours and attitudes of academic staff members, this approach aids in identifying trends and patterns relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The sample size of 220 respondents was used for the study.The primary instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire. A questionnaire is ideal for collecting data on respondents' financial literacy levels, spending behaviours, and credit usage patterns, as it allows for consistent data collection across a large sample (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, marital status, and income level). Section B: Financial literacy, measured with 5 items related to respondents' understanding of basic financial concepts, such as interest rates, budgeting, saving, and loan management. Section C: Spending behaviour, with 6 items designed to measure how respondents make purchasing decisions, the role of impulse buying, and lifestyle inflation. Section D: Consumer credit usage, assessed with 5 items measuring the frequency of credit use, reliance on credit for lifestyle maintenance, and repayment behavior. The items for each core variable were adapted from validated scales in prior research, including Lusardi and Mitchell (2020) for financial literacy, Shefrin (2021) for spending behaviour, and Karlan et al. (2021) for consumer credit usage. Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" to capture the respondents' attitudes and behaviors accurately.

The questionnaire was distributed through both physical and online means to ensure a wide coverage and increase the response rate. The physical distribution involved handing out printed copies of the questionnaire to academic staff in their respective departments during scheduled staff meetings or office hours. The online distribution was conducted via the university's email system or a secure survey link shared through the staff WhatsApp group, ensuring accessibility to those who may prefer completing the survey remotely. The researcher personally oversaw the distribution and collection of the questionnaires to clarify any doubts the respondents may have and to ensure that all completed forms are returned within the stipulated timeframe. A one-month period was allocated for data collection to accommodate academic staff's busy schedules. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a content validity assessment by seeking the expertise of three academics in the fields of finance and marketing. These experts reviewed the items to determine if they adequately capture the concepts of financial literacy, spending behaviour, and consumer credit usage. Based on their feedback, the questionnaire was refined to ensure it measures the intended constructs. For reliability, the researcher performed a pilot study using 30 respondents from a similar institution to test the consistency of the instrument. The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.7 or higher considered acceptable (Field, 2013).

Common method variance (CMV) refers to the bias that may occur when data on both dependent and independent variables are collected using the same method (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To mitigate the potential for CMV, the study employed procedural remedies such as ensuring respondent anonymity and providing clear instructions about the importance of honest and accurate responses. Additionally, the questionnaire was designed to reduce the potential for social desirability bias, which could influence participants' responses.

The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and the key variables (financial literacy, spending behaviour, and consumer credit usage). Inferential statistics, specifically multiple regression analysis, was employed to test the hypotheses and examine the relationships between the independent variables (financial literacy, spending behaviour) and the dependent variable (consumer credit usage). Regression analysis is suitable for assessing the strength and direction of the relationships between variables (Pallant, 2016). Additionally, correlation analysis was performed to determine the associations between the core variables.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presented the data analysis process, emphasizing the methods and techniques used to test the hypotheses, as well as the analysis of the control variables. The analysis aims to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the relationship between financial literacy, spending behavior, and consumer credit usage among academic staff at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam.

4.1 Response Rate

A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed to the academic staff members of COOU, Igbariam. Given the 80% response rate, 176 completed and usable questionnaires were returned for analysis. This response rate is considered sufficient for the sample size, ensuring that the results are statistically reliable and valid. The respondents were from diverse academic departments, with a mix of male and female academic staff members representing various age groups and income levels.

4.1.1 Data Cleaning and Preparation

Before conducting the analysis, the collected data underwent a thorough cleaning process. This involved checking for missing values, outliers, and errors in the responses. Missing data were handled using the mean substitution method for continuous variables, while categorical variables were treated by excluding incomplete cases. Outliers were identified using standardized z-scores, and those that were deemed extreme were excluded from the analysis.

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After cleaning, the dataset was prepared for statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to provide an overview of the key variables. The following descriptive statistics were generated for the socio-demographic variables:

i. **Age**: The majority of respondents were between 30 and 45 years of age (48%), followed by those aged 46-60 years (32%) and those under 30 years (20%).
ii. **Gender**: The sample consisted of 58% male respondents and 42% female respondents.
iii. **Income Level**: Respondents reported varied income levels, with 30% earning between ₦150,000 and ₦250,000 monthly, 40% earning between ₦251,000 and ₦350,000, and 30% earning over ₦350,000.
iv. **Marital Status**: A majority (65%) were married, 25% were single, and 10% were divorced or widowed.

Descriptive statistics for the core variables (financial literacy, spending behavior, and consumer credit usage) were also calculated. For example, the mean score for financial literacy was 3.2 (on a 5-point scale), indicating a moderate understanding of financial concepts among the respondents. The mean score for spending behavior was 3.5, and the mean score for consumer credit usage was 3.8, suggesting that the academic staff had a relatively high tendency to use credit and engage in spending behaviors beyond their immediate means.

4.1.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to explore the relationships between the core variables of financial literacy, spending behavior, and consumer credit usage. The results showed the following significant correlations:

i. **Financial literacy and spending behavior**: A positive, moderate correlation ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals with higher financial literacy are somewhat better at controlling their spending behavior.

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ii. **Financial literacy and consumer credit usage**: A negative, weak correlation ($r = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals with higher financial literacy tend to use credit less frequently.

iii. **Spending behavior and consumer credit usage**: A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), showing that higher spending tendencies are strongly associated with increased credit usage.

These correlations are consistent with previous research, confirming that financial literacy, spending behavior, and consumer credit usage are interrelated in a meaningful way (Hastings & Mitchell, 2021; Shefrin, 2021).

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

4.2.1 Hypothesis 1

H_o: There is a significant relationship between financial literacy and consumer credit usage among academic staff at COOU.

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to test the first hypothesis, examining the relationship between financial literacy (independent variable) and consumer credit usage (dependent variable). The results showed that financial literacy has a significant negative effect on consumer credit usage ($\beta = -0.28$, $t = -3.65$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that higher financial literacy is associated with lower consumer credit usage, supporting Hypothesis 1.
The findings from the regression analysis showed that financial literacy has a significant negative relationship with consumer credit usage ($\beta = -0.28$, $t = -3.65$, $p < 0.01$), meaning that respondents with higher levels of financial literacy tend to use credit less frequently. This supports Hypothesis 1, which posited that financial literacy would be inversely related to consumer credit usage. These results align with the findings of Atkinson and Messy (2019), who found that individuals with higher financial literacy make more informed financial decisions and are less likely to accumulate debt. Similarly, Lusardi and Mitchell (2020) noted that financial literacy enables individuals to better understand interest rates, repayment schedules, and the long-term consequences of borrowing, which can lead to more responsible credit usage.

This finding is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where financial literacy levels have been reported to be low among salaried workers, including university staff (Olaniyan, 2022). The current study's results further reinforce this point, indicating that many academic staff members at COOU lack sufficient financial literacy to manage their credit usage effectively. This suggests that there is a need for more comprehensive financial education programs to equip individuals with the necessary skills to manage their finances and reduce the risk of over-indebtedness.

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2

H_o: Spending behaviour significantly influences consumer credit usage among academic staff at COOU.

A simple linear regression was also conducted for the second hypothesis, with spending behaviour as the independent variable and consumer credit usage as the dependent variable. The results revealed a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.65$, $t = 8.23$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that increased spending behaviour leads to higher consumer credit usage, thus supporting Hypothesis 2. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between spending behavior and consumer credit usage ($\beta = 0.65$, $t = 8.23$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals with higher tendencies to spend beyond their means are more likely to rely on credit. This supports Hypothesis 2, which suggested that spending behavior would positively influence credit usage. This finding is consistent with Shefrin (2021), who argued that excessive spending and impulse purchases often lead to an increased reliance on credit, especially when individuals lack the financial means to cover their expenses.

The strong association between spending behavior and credit usage observed in this study is also in line with Karlan et al. (2021), who found that individuals with weak self-control tend to accumulate higher levels of debt due to frequent and unnecessary borrowing. Among Nigerian academic staff, social pressures, salary delays, and inflation may contribute to an increased reliance on credit to sustain their lifestyles, as suggested by Ene and Uchenna (2023). The current study aligns with this view, highlighting that many university staff members use credit facilities to maintain their standard of living, thus exacerbating their debt burdens.

4.2.3 Hypothesis 3

H_o: Financial literacy moderates the relationship between spending behaviour and consumer credit usage.

For the third hypothesis, a moderation analysis was performed using PROCESS, a tool developed by Hayes (2013). The analysis tested whether financial literacy moderates the relationship between spending behaviour and consumer credit usage. The interaction term between spending behaviour and financial literacy was significant ($\beta = -0.12$, $t = -2.07$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that financial literacy weakens the positive effect of spending behavior on consumer credit usage. This result supports Hypothesis 3, suggesting that individuals with higher financial literacy are less likely to engage in excessive credit usage, even if they exhibit high spending behaviour.

The moderation analysis confirmed that financial literacy significantly weakens the positive relationship between spending behaviour and consumer credit usage ($\beta = -0.12$, $t = -2.07$, $p < 0.05$), supporting Hypothesis 3. This suggests that individuals with higher financial literacy are less likely to accumulate credit debt, even if they engage in high levels of spending. This finding is consistent with previous research by Hastings and Mitchell (2021), who found that financial literacy acts as a protective factor against the negative consequences of poor spending habits, such as over-indebtedness.

In particular, the results suggest that financial literacy provides individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to better manage their credit usage, even in the face of impulsive spending behaviours. This underscores the importance of financial education in mitigating the potential harms of excessive borrowing and spending, which is crucial in the Nigerian context where many individuals lack access to adequate financial management resources (Olaniyan, 2022).

4.6 Control Variables

Control variables are included in the analysis to account for potential confounding factors that may influence the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The control variables in this study include age, gender, marital status, and income level. These variables were selected based on previous research, which has shown that demographic factors can influence financial behaviors (Atkinson & Messy, 2019).

To assess the impact of these control variables, a multiple regression analysis was conducted, incorporating financial literacy, spending behavior, and the control variables as predictors of consumer credit usage. The results indicated that:

i. **Age**: A positive but weak relationship was found between age and consumer credit usage ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.23$). Older respondents were slightly more likely to use credit.
ii. **Gender**: Gender did not have a significant effect on credit usage ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.45$), suggesting that men and women in the sample use credit at similar rates.
iii. **Marital Status**: Marital status had a significant effect ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$), with married individuals more likely to use credit, possibly due to family-related financial obligations.
iv. **Income Level**: Income level was positively related to consumer credit usage ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher-income respondents tend to use more credit, likely due to greater access to credit facilities.

The analysis of the control variables—age, gender, marital status, and income level—provided additional insights into factors that influence consumer credit usage. The study found that income level had the strongest effect on credit usage ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher-income individuals are more likely to use credit. This finding is consistent with the literature, which suggests that individuals with higher incomes tend to have better access to credit facilities and are more likely to use credit for consumption (Atkinson & Messy, 2019). This may be due to the greater availability of credit lines or the increased propensity to finance large purchases, such as homes or cars, through credit.

Marital status also had a significant effect on credit usage, with married individuals being more likely to use credit ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$). This finding aligns with the work of Shefrin (2021), who noted that family-related financial obligations can increase the likelihood of credit usage. Married individuals may face greater financial responsibilities, including supporting children or managing household expenses, which may necessitate the use of credit. Age, however, was found to have a weak positive relationship with credit usage ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.23$), suggesting that older individuals may be slightly more likely to use credit, potentially due to higher living costs or family obligations as they age.

Gender did not significantly influence credit usage ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.45$), which is consistent with some studies that have found no major differences in credit usage between men and

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women (Atkinson & Messy, 2019). However, it is important to note that this lack of a significant effect may vary across different contexts and may be influenced by cultural and societal factors.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing consumer credit usage among academic staff at COOU, Igbariam. Financial literacy and spending behavior both play significant roles in determining credit usage, with higher financial literacy serving as a protective factor against over-indebtedness. The findings also highlight the importance of demographic factors such as income level and marital status in shaping credit usage behavior. These results underscore the need for targeted financial education and interventions to improve financial management and reduce the risk of excessive debt.

The findings of this study have important implications for policymakers, financial institutions, and educators. Given the significant role of financial literacy in managing credit usage, there is a clear need for more robust financial education programs targeted at university staff and other salaried workers in Nigeria. These programs should focus on building knowledge about interest rates, repayment structures, and budgeting, as well as promoting responsible borrowing practices. Additionally, the strong relationship between spending behavior and credit usage suggests that individuals may benefit from interventions that help them manage their spending habits. Financial counseling services, particularly those aimed at reducing impulse buying and promoting long-term financial planning, could help reduce reliance on credit among academic staff.

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