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THE IMPACT OF THE INDEBTEDNESS OF MANAUARA FAMILIES ON CONSUMPTION AND QUALITY OF LIFE

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Abstract: This article addresses the problem of indebtedness among Brazilian families, especially in Manaus, in a scenario of high inflation, high interest rates and loss of purchasing power. The main objective of the research was to analyze how indebtedness influences the consumption habits and quality of life of Manaus families. To this end, specific objectives were defined, such as identifying the main factors of indebtedness, understanding its impact on consumer decisions and evaluating the social, economic and psychological consequences. The methodology used consisted of a 15-question questionnaire, distributed in person and online. The sample consisted of 36 participants living in different areas of the city of Manaus, the majority of whom were women aged between 26 and 35, with an income of up to two minimum salaries and completed high school. The results indicated that the majority of those interviewed have some kind of debt, mainly bank loans, informal loans and credit card use. In many cases, these debts compromise between 26% and 50% of family income. Based on the data obtained, the importance of public policies aimed at financial education, stimulating job creation and social inclusion are highlighted as ways of tackling the impacts of indebtedness on families' lives. **Keywords:** Indebtedness; Financial education; Income; Consumption.

INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, in recent years, household debt has become a major problem due to persistent inflation, rising interest rates and the fall in Brazilians' purchasing power. In a context of economic instability and difficulties in obtaining credit on favorable terms, many families opt for excessive loans and financing, as well as resorting to revolving credit to cover living expenses and maintain their usual level of consumption (Jovem Pan, 2025).

The situation is similar in Manaus, where people have chronic debt problems. In Manaus, local factors such as the high concentration of income in certain areas, the high cost of living, informal employment and a lack of financial education all contribute to household indebtedness (Fiori *et al*, 2018).

For this reason, strengthening financial balance and expanding financial education are important ways to minimize the harmful effects of debt in the family environment (Silva *et al*, 2020). Therefore, understanding the impact of the indebtedness of Manaus families on consumption and quality of life is important for the development of public policies and financial education actions that promote economic and social sustainability in the region.

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To analyze how indebtedness affects the consumption patterns and quality of life of families living in Manaus.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To identify the main factors that contribute to the indebtedness of Manaus families.

To check how indebtedness influences the consumption decisions of individuals and families.

To assess the impact of indebtedness on quality of life, considering social, psychological and economic aspects.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

FAMILY INDEBTEDNESS IN THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

The increase in debt among Brazilian families is a reality that has been gaining momentum over the last few years, driven by a series of economic and social factors. According to the

Central Bank (2023), the number of families in debt has risen steadily, revealing a growing dependence on credit as a way of sustaining consumption and covering basic day-to-day expenses. A survey carried out by the National Confederation of Trade in Goods, Services and Tourism (CNC, 2022) indicates that more than 70% of Brazilian households have some kind of debt, with credit cards, personal loans and financing being the main culprits.

Increased access to credit, while promoting financial inclusion, can aggravate the vulnerability of families if it is not accompanied by financial education and social protection policies. Excessive indebtedness limits future consumption, increases the risk of default and can compromise the economic resilience of Brazilian families (Barreto, 2025).

In addition, analyses carried out by Lima and Silva (2021) show that, in Brazil, credit is often used as a way of supplementing monthly income, rather than as an instrument designed for investment or financial organization. This practice contributes to worsening the risk of over-indebtedness, as credit is used as an immediate solution to financial difficulties, rather than as a long-term strategy.

DETERMINANTS OF FAMILY INDEBTEDNESS

According to the research carried out by Almeida and Rocha (2019), several factors contribute to the continuous indebtedness of families, including low income, unemployment, informality in the job market, low levels of education and a lack of financial guidance. In addition to these structural aspects, there are also behavioral elements, such as impulse consumption and social pressure to maintain a lifestyle that is often beyond the family's real means.

Researchers such as Fonseca and Oliveira (2022) also draw attention to the impact of the culture of immediate consumption, strongly

influenced by social networks and advertising, which reinforce the idea that well-being and success are linked to the acquisition of goods. When this type of behavior is not accompanied by good financial control, it tends to lead to the unbridled use of credit, especially revolving credit cards and loans with high interest rates.

Santos (2020) adds another important point to the debate: the role of financial institutions in this process. These entities often offer credit with little or no assessment of consumers' real ability to pay, which ends up feeding a cycle of indebtedness that is difficult to break.

DEBT AND CONSUMPTION

Uncontrolled consumption is one of the main factors affecting indebtedness. Studies such as Mendes and Cavalcanti (2021) show that indebted families tend to reduce their spending on leisure, education and better quality food in order to prioritize debt repayments. This change in consumption patterns has a direct impact on the family's well-being, promoting a more restrictive lifestyle and often generating frustrations and internal conflicts.

However, it is important to understand that consumption can also be an emotional escape valve. According to the theory of compensatory consumption, discussed by Dittmar (2008), people in situations of stress or low self-esteem tend to consume as a form of emotional compensation, which can lead to compulsive indebtedness.

Therefore, debt and a lack of consumption management form a complex relationship in which one feeds the other. A lack of balance in this dynamic can jeopardize not only financial stability, but also the mental health of the individuals involved.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF INDEBTEDNESS

Quality of life is a multidimensional concept that involves factors such as health, emotional well-being, safety, housing, access to education and leisure. According to the World Health Organization (1995), quality of life is directly related to the individual's perception of their position in life, in the context of the culture and value systems in which they are inserted.

Research such as that by Oliveira and Souza (2021) shows that debt can significantly affect families' quality of life, generating stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, loss of productivity and even physical and mental health problems. Financial insecurity is identified as one of the main causes of emotional distress in indebted families.

In addition, prolonged indebtedness can compromise access to essential goods and services, such as adequate food, medicines, transportation and decent housing. In extreme cases, there are records of families falling into a situation of social vulnerability because they are unable to reverse their indebtedness (Silva; Teixeira, 2020).

THE SITUATION IN MANAUS: REGIONAL CONTEXT AND PARTICULARITIES

According to the IBGE, Manaus is the most populous city in the North, with over 2 million inhabitants (IBGE, Census 2022) and the main economic hub of the Amazon. Manaus has its own peculiarities when it comes to debt and, according to Lenice Benevides, an economics professor at Ufam, debt is a direct reflection of insufficient income to cover basic expenses, as well as personal financial planning difficulties, external factors also put pressure on families' finances (Amazonas Atual, 2025).

Along the same lines of regional peculiarities, research such as that by Costa and

Azevedo (2022) reveals that many families in Manaus live with a large part of their income tied up in debt and face difficulties covering essential expenses. The strong presence of the commercial sector in the city and the habit of making purchases in installments, both in physical stores and through apps, are factors that contribute to this situation - added to the low savings rate and instability in family income.

According to Campbell (2007), consumption in modern society ceases to be a means of meeting basic needs and starts to focus on satisfying individual wants and desires. In this context, individuals build their identity predominantly through their consumer preferences and tastes, which function as symbols of social belonging and self-affirmation. This process explains why Manaus families, under symbolic pressure to consume, can resort to credit even in the face of economic restrictions, accumulating debts that affect their quality of life and emotional stability.

Another point worth highlighting is the scarcity of academic studies investigating indebtedness from a regional perspective in the Amazon. This gap reinforces the importance of research such as this, which seeks to understand local specificities and provide support for more effective actions.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND POSSIBLE COPING STRATEGIES

Financial education is widely recognized as one of the main tools for avoiding debt and encouraging the responsible use of credit. According to Vieira and Andrade (2020), families who have a basic understanding of personal finance tend to plan their spending better, manage to save part of their income and tend to avoid unnecessary debt.

Presidential Decree 7.397/2010 provides for awareness-raising actions through the National Financial Education Strategy (ENEF).

However, the scope of these initiatives is still limited, especially in the North and Northeast regions of the country. The absence of this topic in the school curriculum and the lack of engagement among the adult population hinder progress in this area.

In scenarios of social and economic disparity, such actions become even more important, as families' income is often uncertain and they cannot afford everything they need. In Manaus, where many families live on very little money, the lack of good financial control only makes debts worse. To top it off, impulse buying, encouraged by easy credit and flashy advertisements, makes people use credit cards, overdrafts and loans with extremely high interest rates without thinking (Penalber, 2022).

According to Ferreira and Oliveira (2023), the lack of budgetary control and ignorance of how credit works creates a vicious cycle: families commit a large part of their income to debt and, with no margin for savings, they become even more dependent on new loans. As well as jeopardizing future consumption, this scenario has a direct impact on quality of life, generating financial stress, emotional illness and family breakdown.

Several studies indicate that financial health is directly related to mental health, such as Almeida and Barbosa (2021) who point out that individuals in debt have higher levels of anxiety, insomnia and depression, with significant damage to productivity at work, family life and self-esteem. When this situation becomes widespread in entire communities, the impact goes beyond the individual level and extends to the social fabric, reducing community cohesion and widening socio-economic disparities.

Therefore, in order to understand the indebtedness of Manaus families, it is crucial to use a vision that brings together different areas of knowledge, looking not only at money, but also at culture, education and the emotio-

nal side of people. Studying what people consume and how they live needs to go beyond economic figures, including how they feel about how well they are doing, whether they are secure and whether they can make plans for the future.

Studies argue that public policies aimed at financial education at community level, together with the strengthening of measures to protect indebted consumers, can contribute significantly to reducing the high levels of indebtedness among Brazilian families - including those living in Manaus (Santos; Lima, 2022).

Understanding the effects of this indebtedness on consumption and quality of life requires empirical research that takes into account the specificities of the local reality. Therefore, the next section of this paper presents the methodological procedures adopted to carry out the research, including the sampling criteria, the data collection instruments and the analytical approach used, with the aim of offering a more precise and contextualized view of the phenomenon studied.

METHODOLOGY

The research is of an applied, exploratory and descriptive nature, with a quantitative approach, with the aim of understanding the impact of indebtedness on Manaus families, especially in relation to consumption and quality of life. The theoretical foundation was based on authors such as Dittmar (2008), Oliveira and Souza (2021) and Fonseca and Oliveira (2022), as well as secondary data from sources such as IBGE, CNC and the Central Bank.

Data was collected through bibliographical and field research, using a structured questionnaire with closed questions. The questionnaires were administered in person and via Google Forms. The sample consisted of 36 families living in Manaus, taking into account the diversity of income, schooling and family structure.

The quantitative data was analyzed using spreadsheets and basic statistics. The main limitations involved the small sample size and the resistance of some participants to providing financial information.

RESULTS

The sample consisted of 36 people living in different areas of the city of Manaus-AM. As for the profile of those interviewed, the majority were female (69.44%), aged between 26 and 35 (30.56%). With regard to family income, the majority (66.67%) reported earning up to 2 minimum wages and 61.11% had completed high school (Table 1).

Table 02 shows that of the 36 interviewees, 69.44% said they had some kind of debt at the time of the survey. Among the most common were bank loans (40%), followed by informal loans (32%) and credit card use (24%), representing between 26% and 50% of monthly family income (56%).

With regard to the main reason that led the interviewee into debt, see Table 3, the majority (44%) pointed to unemployment as a determining factor, and 64% reported that they had changed their consumption habits due to debt in order to adapt to the financial situation, with a reduction in supermarket purchases (37.5%) being the main change.

Table 4 shows that 69.44% said that debts had a negative impact on their quality of life. When assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, quality of life levels were concentrated in the lower ranges: 25% rated their quality of life as 1 (very low) and 30.56% as 2 (low). In addition, 41.67% reported that debt causes stress, anxiety or other emotional health problems in their family.

DISCUSSION

The sociodemographic profile of this study was young women (26-35 years old), with an income of between one and two minimum

wages and completed high school. Studies such as Vieira, Kilimnik and Neto (2016) point out that low schooling and income reduce the ability to manage debt, making them more susceptible to indebtedness.

According to the National Survey of Consumer Indebtedness and Default (PEIC 2022), the debt rates of Amazonian families exceed 70%, a scenario similar to that of the survey, which showed that 69.44% of respondents have some kind of debt. The use of bank loans, informal loans and credit cards corroborates data from national studies that indicate credit cards as the main source of credit used by Brazilian families to meet the need for consumption in times of low budgets. (CNN, 2025)

With regard to the main cause of debts, 44% of the responses were caused by unemployment or lack of income, and Serasa (2022) also observed the same understanding of the cause of indebtedness. Another factor that stood out in the survey was that the majority (66.7%) reported that debt consumes between 26-50% of their monthly income. According to BACEN (2023), between 2017 and 2022, household debt ranged from 16% to 50% of income, indicating an overload in up to half of the middle-income brackets. This reinforces the vulnerability of those interviewed, with tight incomes and significant debts.

With regard to the impact debt has on quality of life, the data shows that a large proportion (69.44%) of those interviewed perceive negative effects, as well as frequent reports of stress and anxiety. These results are in line with research that associates excessive indebtedness with mental and emotional health problems, especially in contexts of socioeconomic vulnerability (Souza, 2024). The reduction in leisure costs and supermarket purchases shows that families are looking for strategies to adapt in an attempt to balance the books, but on the other hand, this behavior can affect quality of life and well-being.

Variables	n	%
Gender		
Female	25	69,44
Male	11	30,56
Age		
18-25	07	19,44
26-35	11	30,56
36-45	09	25,00
46-60	06	16,67
Over 60	03	8,33
Family income		
Up to 01 minimum wage	07	19,44
01 to 02 minimum wages	24	66,67
Above 05 minimum wages	05	13,89
Level of education		
Incomplete elementary school	-	-
Complete elementary school	1	2,78
Completed high school	22	61,11
Higher education completed	8	22,22
Postgraduate	5	13,89

Table 1. Description of the variables: gender, age, family income and level of schooling. Manaus-AM (n=36)

Source: survey data, 2025.

Variables	n	%
Currently have some kind of debt		
Yes	25	69,44
No	11	30,56
If yes, what types of debt does your family have?		
Credit card	06	24,00
Bank loans	10	40,00
Informal loans	08	32,00
Financing	01	04,00
How much of your family's monthly income do your debts represent?		
Up to 25%	07	28,00
Between 26% and 50%	14	56,00
Between 51% and 75%	04	16,00
More than 75%	-	-

Table 2. Description of the interviewees' types of debt (n=36)

Source: survey data, 2025.

Variables	n	%
Main reason for indebtedness		
Unemployment or loss of income	11	44,00
Health expenses	09	36,00
Excessive consumption	03	12,00
Lack of financial control	02	08,00
Have you changed your consumption habits because of debt?		
Yes	16	64,00
No	09	36,00
What changes have occurred?		
Reduction in supermarket shopping	06	37,50
Cut down on leisure and entertainment	05	31,25
Cancellation of services (TV, internet, streaming)	05	31,25
Reducing health/education costs	-	-

Table 3. Description of the reason for indebtedness (n=36)

Source: survey data, 2025

Variables	n	%
Do you think debt affects your quality of life?		
Yes	25	69,44
No	11	30,56
Partially	-	-
On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your quality of life today?		
1 (Very low)	09	25,00
2 (Low)	11	30,56
3 (Median)	05	13,89
4 (Good)	08	22,22
5 (Excellent)	03	8,33
Does debt cause stress, anxiety or emotional health problems in your family?		
Yes	15	41,67
No	09	25,00
Sometimes	12	33,33

Table 4. Description of quality of life (n=36)

Source: survey data, 2025.

In view of this, it is possible to understand that the data obtained through this research is in line with a broader indebtedness that has been growing in Brazil and Amazonas, being generated by macroeconomic elements such as high interest rates, inflation and unemployment, as well as local aspects such as low income, schooling and informal employment. When debt is not well managed, it can jeopardize not only spending, but also the quality of life and mental health of families, which strengthens the need for public policies aimed at financial education, job creation and social inclusion

CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand how indebtedness affects consumption and the quality of life of families in Manaus, Amazonas. The results were that, for many people, debt is a heavy reality, especially for those with lower incomes and average schooling. These factors make families more vulnerable to financial problems.

It was identified that the main reason for debt is lack of employment or a drop in income, which shows how unprotected these families are in the face of any economic instability. The most common debts come from bank loans, informal loans (help from friends or acquaintances) and, of course, credit card use, which is often the way to cover basic ex-

penses such as food and bills.

The way in which family income is committed to debts and their impact was relevant, with the majority of participants indicating that between 26% and 50% of their monthly income goes towards paying off debts. This scenario leads to changes in consumption habits, especially cuts in leisure, food and essential services, which can directly affect the well-being of families.

In addition to the financial side, debts also weigh on emotional health and social relationships. Many interviewees said they felt stressed, anxious and even had other emotional problems because of their debts. This makes it clear that debt is not just a question of money, but something that deeply affects people's lives.

Based on this, it is clear that the indebtedness of families in Manaus, particularly among low-income families, is a problem that deserves attention, as it alters consumption patterns, quality of life and even mental health. To change this scenario, we recommend investing in public policies that promote financial education, facilitate responsible access to credit and create social safety nets. Only in this way will it be possible to ease the burden of debt and guarantee a better life for these families.

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