

The Impact of Social Reproduction and Household DEBT: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Household debt and social reproduction are fundamentally interconnected topics. The existence of household debt allows households to engage in activities that are essential for fundamental subsistence, education and household care; therefore, gradually establishing a dependence on credit for families. Research continues to be fragmented across domestic practices, family dynamics and institutional structures. This systematic review used the PRISMA methodology to investigate the influence of indebtedness on social reproduction, utilizing 30 peer-reviewed articles. The findings reveal three central themes: (1) *Household Debt, Financialization and Social Reproduction*; (2) *Family, Gender and Changing Dynamics of Reproduction*; and (3) *Financial Systems, Sustainability and Broader Societal Implications*. This study contributes an integrated framework connecting the economic, social and gender dimensions of indebtedness, viewing household debt as a social process shaped by institutions rather than only a financial issue. It also provides policy recommendations to strengthen welfare systems, encourage responsible lending and improve household financial resilience.

Keywords: Household Debt, Social Reproduction, Financialization, Systematic Review

Introduction

Household debt has evolved as an important tool for funding and managing social reproduction costs such as housing, food, education, healthcare, and care. As states cut back on welfare, wages stagnate, and service delivery is outsourced, families are increasingly turning to mortgages, consumer lending, microfinance, and digital loans to help them make ends meet. In addition to altering the budget, this financialization of reproduction restructures

risk, power, and time both within and beyond generations. Worries are concentrated along race, class, and gender lines, and debt servicing increases vulnerability to shocks, competes with caring and limits free time. In many Global South contexts, formal bank or fintech credit has replaced reciprocal, kin-based lending, redefining social duties and the moral overtones of borrowing. As a result, it is critical to link household debt to social reproduction in order to demonstrate how financial instruments are intertwined with the creation and maintenance of life, influencing intergenerational trajectories, agency, and precarity, as well as to identify where policy levers can prevent the transfer of systemic risk onto domestic units.

Current research focuses on three closely linked topics. First, studies conducted at the household level, often using ethnographic or interview methods, show how debt is integrated into daily budgeting and caregiving routines, resulting in contradictory outcomes: credit can increase stress, time poverty, and reliance on female labor while also providing shelter and education (Harper et al., 2024; Leclaire, 2022; Yin et al., 2024). Second, research on family, gender, and changing household structures demonstrates how entrepreneurial couples, labor migration, intergenerational living, and post-separation child support shift duties, frequently transforming practical caregiving into paid work. According to life-course analyses, growing debt among older persons complicates intergenerational transfers and retirement security (Harper et al., 2024; Korankye, 2024; Li, 2020). Third, system-focused work connects outcomes to regulatory architectures and corporate practices: consumer protection, macro-prudential policies, supply-chain due diligence, SME restructuring protocols, and city-level initiatives can either reduce or increase the socialization of financial risk (Bond, 2024; Laprise & Wiedemann, 2025; Ramsay & Williams, 2020).

The literature on methodology includes stakeholder valuation tools for remediation decisions, legal and policy analyses of due diligence regimes, multiple-case studies of crisis-affected firms, and panel econometrics linking regional credit to informal employment (Bečicová & Blažek, 2015; Manzilati & Prestianawati, 2022; Osma, 2025). Theorists draw on feminist political economy, social reproduction theory, and critical international political economy to argue that debt is not a neutral financial variable, but rather a social connection that structures reproduction. However, there remain considerable conflicts and gaps. Causal pathways from indebtedness to care reallocation, health, and labor-market participation are frequently inferred rather than identified; measures of "social reproduction" vary greatly, limiting comparability; and Global South settings, rural economies, and algorithmic credit systems are understudied in comparison to their scale.

This research addresses the urgent need to understand how the financialization of social reproduction restructures economic life and redistributes risk within households and across generations. As credit becomes central to meeting everyday needs, debt increasingly serves as both a survival mechanism and a source of inequality, shaping labor participation, caregiving capacity and intergenerational mobility. To address this gap, the review systematically synthesizes empirical and theoretical studies on the intersection of social reproduction and household debt. It draws on feminist political economy, household finance and governance to develop a multidimensional framework that explains how financial instruments and social processes interact to sustain or mitigate vulnerability. This approach advances theoretical understanding of household debt as a structural feature of modern

economies and offers contextual insights to inform social protection, financial regulation and inclusive economic policy.

Problem Statement

Research on the relationship between social reproduction and household debt continues to be divided regarding fundamental issues of autonomy versus vulnerability within formal credit systems and concerning how household liabilities influence municipal and sovereign indebtedness to redefine local care infrastructures. There are significant gaps in knowledge, as numerous studies infer rather than explicitly identify causal pathways linking indebtedness to the reallocation of care, health and labor participation. The operationalization of "social reproduction" lacks standardization, which restricts comparability. Additionally, settings in the Global South, rural economies and credit systems receive insufficient attention. These limitations deter the precise evaluation of distributional effects across the life course, gender and class. Thus, its present obstacles to the development of policies that are intended to mitigate time poverty, psychosocial stress and long-term vulnerabilities associated with debt.

To address these limitations, a comprehensive three-pronged approach is necessary: first, household behaviors and perceptions such as time allocation, stress levels and financial management should be documented through longitudinal mixed-methods research (Gager et al., 2009; Worthington, 2006); second, intra-family bargaining processes and role negotiations across different life stages should be analyzed utilizing administrative data related to health, pensions and child support (Butola & Butola, 2024; Worthington, 2006); third, systemic regulations and their distributional effects should be assessed using quasi-experimental methodologies in response to policy shocks such as due-diligence legislation, interest-rate caps, forbearance measures and fintech regulatory changes (Andrés et al., 2016; De Schryder & Opitz, 2021). This problem formulation encourages a multi-level, integrated synthesis that can resolve contradictory results, enhance measurement consistency, and regulate practical approaches to social welfare, consumer protection and government reform.

Research Objectives

- i. To identify the objectives, we run systematize topics on the household debt and social reproduction, then use them to map the evidence base by conducting a PRISMA guided synthesis of peer-reviewed studies (advanced searches in Scopus and Web of Science; final n=30) to clarify how "social reproduction" and "household debt" are operationalized. We then organize the findings into three themes: (i) *Household Debt, Financialization and Social Reproduction*; (ii) *Family, Gender and Changing Reproduction Dynamics*; and (iii) *Financial Systems, Sustainability and Societal Implications*.
- ii. Examine how debt composition and intensity (mortgage, consumer, microfinance/fintech) reallocate time and care, reshape gendered roles and influence health and labor participation across classes, life-course cohorts and welfare contexts, with the household serving as a socioeconomic player that mediates these effects.
- iii. Assess the impact of financial regulation and institutional arrangements, including consumer protection, macroprudential tools, due diligence regimes, SME restructuring and digital-credit oversight, on the transmission or mitigation of risk to households. Develop a comprehensive, multi-level framework that includes specific policy and practice recommendations aimed at safeguarding the social foundations of household solvency.

Literature Review

Household Debt and the Dynamics of Social Reproduction

The link between household debt and social reproduction is an important but underexplored area of feminist scholarship. The processes involved in sustaining and procreating the workforce, such as routine and generational household activities, are referred to as social reproduction. In many historical and modern contexts, the structural connections between debt and social reproduction are clear. Pawnbroking in early modern England and modern day Pakistan, for example, demonstrates how credit forms have traditionally facilitated capitalism and household reproduction (Guérin et al., 2022; Peller et al., 2023; Roberts & Zulfiqar, 2019). Additionally, the gendered aspect of everyday finance particularly how it feminizes specific financial behaviors, emphasizes the need of understanding these relationships (Agunsoye & James, 2023; Nyantakyi-Frimpong et al., 2016; Roberts & Zulfiqar, 2019). The experiences of women in debt laden homes in Athens and Istanbul reveal insights into indebtedness and social reproduction processes, indicating that debt management enhances women's autonomy while simultaneously perpetuating social isolation and pain. The gendered difficulties of financial practices further complicate the interconnection between debt and social reproduction (Kennaway, 1948; Kılınçarslan, 2023; Ravelli, 2021).

Financialisation, Austerity and Social Reproduction

Neoliberal methods of austerity increase the link between social reproduction, debt and financialization. These variables are strongly associated in the United Kingdom where debt affects household economies and undermines their moral and financial claim to being a top priority (Karaagac, 2020; Montgomerie & Tepe-Belfrage, 2017; Strong, 2020). This disruption is significant because non-performing loans (NPL) have the potential to produce catastrophic failures in global financialized markets; highlighting the limits of financialization (Koutlou, 2023; Kumar et al., 2023; Montgomerie & Tepe-Belfrage, 2017; Sánchez Serrano, 2021). Numerous research has found that austere social reproduction reduces a household's economic sustainability. This claim is based on the fact that more and more people want to borrow money, which shows how hard everyday life is for middle and low income families. For instance, when social safety nets like government-funded reproductive health care are gradually taken away (Iqbal et al., 2025; Strong, 2020; Wiedemann, 2022). This has increased societal and income inequities, stressing the significance of understanding the connection between austerity, debt and social reproduction issues. The transformational power of debt, which reconfigures social spaces and fosters resistance through debt, highlights the broader implications of household debt in the austerity political economy.

Gendered Implications and Broader Socio-Economic Contexts

Household debt has a gendered influence as it is associated with socially reproductive labor (Karaagac, 2023; Kılınçarslan, 2023; Sajadian, 2024). Women's socially reproductive labor in debt management affords them more agency, but it also introduces hidden risks to their own social reproduction. This two-fold result illustrates the discrepancies in the relationship between debt and social reproduction. In East and Southeast Asia, the family's dual role as an economic actor and welfare provider is critical to understanding how welfare capitalism is socially perpetuated (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2017; Peng & Payette, 2023). The institutionalization of the family in these locations highlights the importance of household debt and private schools in sustaining social reproduction. Furthermore, as observed in China, the negative effects of family debt on people's health underscore the larger socioeconomic

consequences of debt (Peng & Payette, 2023; Yin et al., 2024). The findings call for greater research into the relationship between austerity and reproductive outcomes, as well as a re-articulation of the family's role as a collective socioeconomic actor.

Table 1

Summary Table from Existing Studies

Key Themes	Key Findings
Historical and Contemporary Contexts	The historical reliance on credit for household reproduction is demonstrated by pawnbroking in early modern England and modern-day Pakistan.
Gendered Nature of Finance	Women's roles in debt management are impacted by the gendered and feminized nature of everyday finance.
Financialisation and Austerity	Debt exposes the boundaries of financialization under neoliberal austerity and upends household economies.
Austere Social Reproduction	Debt is ingrained in everyday life as a result of austerity measures, which exacerbate inequality.
Transformative Power of Debt	Social spaces are altered by debt, and debt audits encourage resistance.
Gendered Implications	Although managing debt increases women's agency, it also causes social isolation and distress.
Family as Socio-Economic Actor	In East and Southeast Asian welfare capitalism, the family plays a critical role in social reproduction.
Health Impacts	Household debt has serious socioeconomic repercussions and has a detrimental impact on residents' health.

Methodology

Identification

According to the PRISMA paradigm, the identification stage establishes the basis for a systematic and transparent delineation of the existing scholarship. Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) had been used, as well as EconBiz, a specialist repository for economic and business research. The study uncovered a total of 79 publications relevant to the connection between household debt and social reproduction. Scopus generated 46 records, WoS provided 1 and EconBiz offered 32 findings. The significant discrepancy between databases highlights the disciplinary grouping of research and the variable representation of issues across indexing services. Most relevant contributions were included in Scopus because of its broad coverage of the social sciences, but WoS's stricter indexing standards and increased emphasis on the natural sciences and particular fields of social science produced a very limited output.

EconBiz which reveals its comparatively high yield, especially in acquiring literature related to applied policy research and alternative economic paradigms. The findings collectively suggest that research on household debt and social reproduction is fragmented across various disciplines instead of being unified in prominent, high-impact publication outlets, underscoring the need to employ multiple databases to reduce systematic bias.

The identification results encourage further reflection on the state of the field and the reason for the chosen strategy. The limited output in WoS may be due to the marginalization of topics such as reproductive labor, family dynamics and social sustainability

in conventional economics and finance journals, which frequently prioritize quantitative analyses of debt as an aggregate economic variable over its social implications. In contrast, the relatively strong representation in Scopus and EconBiz reflects the subject's interdisciplinary nature, with contributions from sociology, feminist political economy and heterodox economics. Second, the relatively small number of records (79) suggests that obviously link between household debt and social reproduction is still underexplored, despite the significant increase in studies on financialization and inequality. This emphasizes the importance of a systematic review, which not only archives existing research but also exposes conceptual gaps and pushes for the recognition of household debt as both a financial concern and a dynamic part of social reproduction. The identification stage not only counts the number of known works, but also shows that the subject is fragmented and growing, which supports the idea that this is a new and important topic for a systematic review.

This study employed essential steps of the systematic review process to compile a significant volume of pertinent literature. The procedure commenced with keyword selection, subsequently included the exploration of related terms through dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias and previous research. All pertinent terms were selected and search strings were formulated for the Scopus, Econbiz and Scopus databases (see Table 2). The first stage which is the identification phase of the systematic review yielded 79 relevant papers from three databases.

Table 2

Summary of Search String

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("household debt" OR "consumer debt" OR "personal debt" OR ("financial obligation" OR "liability")) AND ("social reproduction" OR "social sustainability" OR "reproductive labor" OR "family dynamics")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ARTS") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "MEDI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PSYC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) Date of Access: August 2025
Econbiz	("household debt" OR "consumer debt" OR "personal debt" OR ("financial obligation" OR "liability")) AND ("social reproduction" OR "social sustainability" OR "reproductive labor" OR "family dynamics") Date of Access: August 2025
WOS	("household debt" OR "consumer debt" OR "personal debt" OR ("financial obligation" OR "liability")) AND ("social reproduction" OR "social sustainability" OR "reproductive labor" OR "family dynamics") (Title) and Preprint Citation Index (Exclude – Database) Date of Access: August 2025

Screening

The screening step reviewed titles and abstracts to ensure methodological rigor and disciplinary relevance, as well as their alignment with the study subjects of the impact of social reproduction on debt. Inclusion criteria preferred peer-reviewed, English-language journal works published between 2008 and 2025 in the social sciences, economics or psychology that provide in-depth examination of social reproduction and household debt. Items outside of the scope, such as those in environmental science, engineering, energy or computer science,

as well as non-peer-reviewed formats such as conference papers, book chapters, monographs, reviews and "in-press" items, were excluded. There are three duplicate publications were identified and removed from various databases, which were excluded from the analysis.

This process put an emphasis on openness and consistency within the discipline. This cut down on bias caused by duplicates and resources that weren't relevant to the study's topic and also made cross-study synthesis more consistent. The significant decline from 79 to 37 demonstrates how few direct investigations exist and how widely distributed the relevant work is across domains. The pattern suggests a potential for interdisciplinary research that breaks down barriers between fields and investigates how household debt affects social reproduction.

Table 3

The Selection Criterion Is Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English.
Timeline	2008 – 2025	<2008
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject	Social Sciences, Business, Management and Accounting, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Medicine, Art and Humanities and Psychology	Besides Social Sciences, Business, Management and Accounting, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Medicine, Art and Humanities and Psychology

Eligibility

The eligibility phase outperformed formal screening by systematically assessing the relevance and accessibility of articles in selected databases. In this stage of the eligibility phase, 34 articles were identified to ensure their alignment with the review's objectives. However, four papers were omitted due to issues that are prevalent in systematic literature reviews. These papers were rejected because their titles did not adequately address household debt or social reproduction; and their summaries did not align with the study's objectives. Certain studies were eliminated because the whole text was unavailable, compromising analytical rigour and comparability within the selected corpus. The exclusions were necessary to keep intellectual consistency, give a full examination of all the works that were included and make sure that the appraisal was good. They eliminated superficial or peripheral contributions that could have diluted the analysis's emphasis.

After the systematic extraction, 30 papers met the requirements to be included in the qualitative summary. This created a valid dataset with a carefully chosen body of literature. These publications clearly investigate the relationship between household debt and social reproduction, providing a good balance of theoretical ideas and empirical case studies. The reduction in the initial number of records from 79 to 49 illustrates the unique nature and exclusivity of current scholarship on this intersection. The eligibility phase was both a

procedural and intellectual distinction, distinguishing works that only briefly mention debt or household dynamics from those that provide substantive insights into financial obligations and household and social system reproduction. It emphasizes the necessity for more academic involvement and explicit theorization of debt as a key aspect of social reproduction and focuses on the most important and accessible research to provide a reliable platform for synthesis and critical analysis.

Data Abstraction and Analysis

One of the assessment processes used in this study was an integrative analysis, which evaluate and synthesized several research designs (quantitative methodologies). The competence research sought to identify relevant areas and subtopics. Data collection was the first step in the theme's development. Figure 2 shows how the authors meticulously searched a compilation of 30 papers for assertions or information relevant to the current study's topics. The authors subsequently examined prior relevant studies on social reproduction and household debt in terms of methodologies and research outcomes. The author then worked with other co-authors to generate themes based on the findings in this study's setting. Throughout the data analysis process, a log was kept capturing any analyses, perspectives, riddles, or other data interpretation-related thoughts. Finally, the writers compared the findings to determine whether there were any inconsistencies in the theme design process. It is worth noting that if the authors disagree on any of the notions, they discuss them amongst themselves.

The authors additionally analyzed the findings to rectify any inconsistencies in the theme development process. Should any discrepancies in the themes emerge, the authors will discuss them between themselves. The developed concepts were refined to maintain consistency. The inquiries are as follows:

1. In what manner does the structure and magnitude of household debt (e.g., mortgages, consumer loans, microfinance/fintech) causally redistribute unpaid care work, time scarcity, and psychosocial stress across socioeconomic classes, genders, and life-course cohorts within varying welfare regimes?
2. How do changing family structures and norms—such as post-separation child support obligations, spousal commitment in entrepreneurship, multigenerational co-residence, and labor migration—affect the relationship between indebtedness and critical reproductive outcomes (children's education/nutrition, continuity of eldercare, women's labor force participation)?
3. To what degree do financial governance and sustainability measures (including consumer protection and due diligence legislation, interest rate and fee regulations, small and medium enterprise restructuring protocols, and civic place-making initiatives) mitigate the socialization of financial risk onto households and influence downstream outcomes such as informal sector employment, eviction rates, and community well-being?

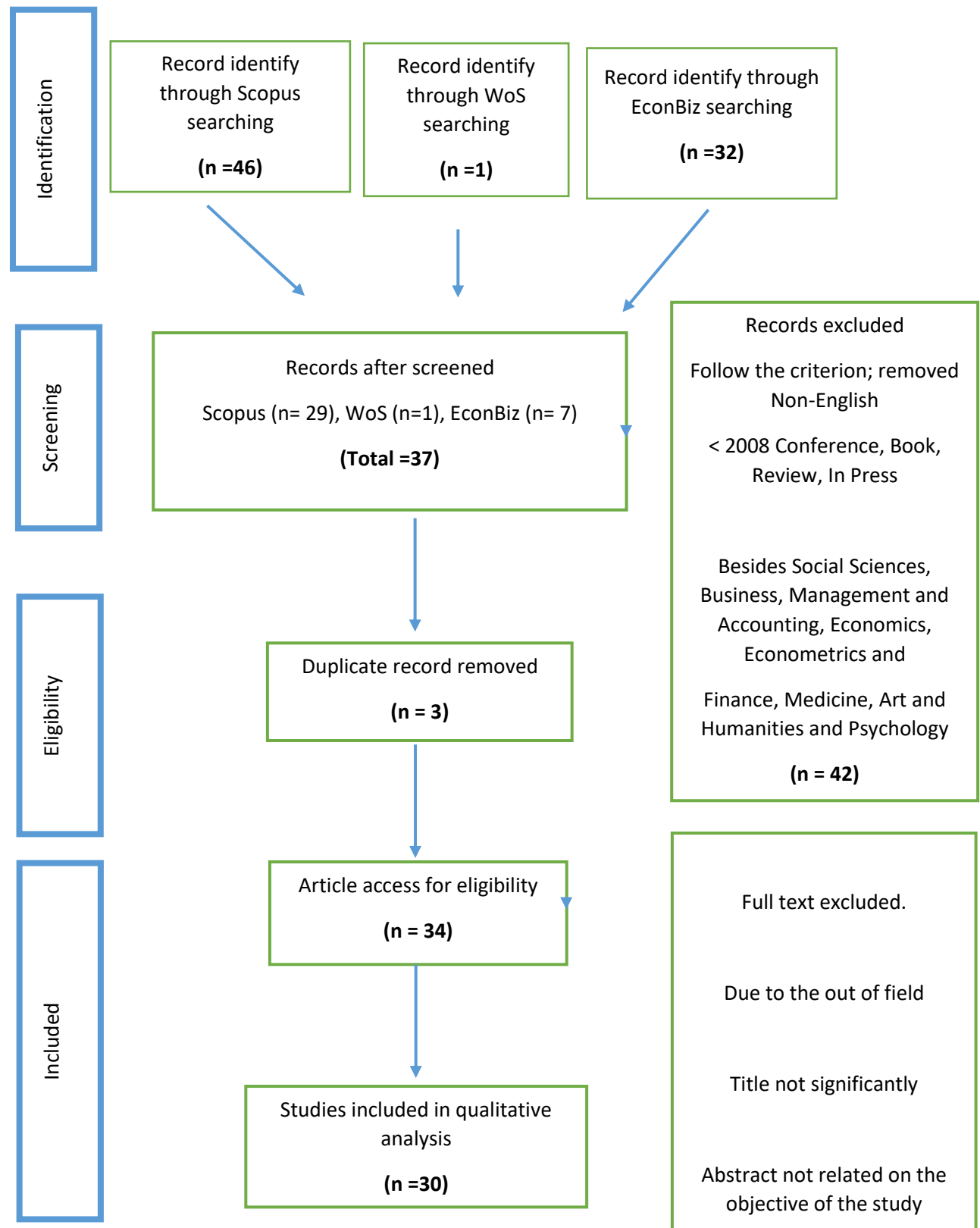


Figure 1: Flow diagram of the proposed searching study

Findings

Theme 1: Household Debt, Financialization and Social Reproduction

First theme outlines a universal structural characteristic that has become apparent is household debt, which influences social reproduction in conflicting and frequently unstable ways. Research by Kılınçarslan (2023), Karaagac (2020) and Roberts (2016) demonstrate the relationship between debt and gendered survival and caregiving duties. Contractual debt commitment is not limited to monetary liabilities, but it is ingrained in social reproduction practices, especially the excessive impact on women, who typically shoulder the caretaker role in the households and experiencing households in debt. For instance, Karaagac (2020) illustrates how women engage in "*caring for debt*" as a type of reproductive labor in Istanbul's mass housing estates, while Kılınçarslan (2023) shows how debt both increases women's agency and increases their risk of isolation and distress. In addition, Roberts (2016) views household debt within the larger context of neoliberal capitalism; arguing that the financialization of reproduction and consequent privatization intensify household financial struggles for necessities such as housing and food security concerns. These studies jointly demonstrate that debt interplay as an immediate financial solution, complementary to a source of structural vulnerability, restructuring gendered labor and strengthening social inequities.

Bohoslavsky (2021) and Charron-Chénier & Cotton (2025) both highlight the wider effects of debt on human rights, sustainability and intergenerational reproduction. Whilst Bohoslavsky (2021), express household debt as an enabler for both a cause and an effect of human rights violations, more significant for long-term debt, such as mortgages, education loans, and microcredit, which expose borrowers to predatory practices and criminalization. Alternatively, Féliz (2023) critical analysis of Argentina's sustainable discourse on the debt crisis has concluded how debt repayment obligations systematically impede life reproduction by intensifying the exploitation of both productive and reproductive labor. Parallel to the study by Charron-Chénier & Cotton (2025) who critically argued that the rising debt in the United States has created inequality and burdened its older population. Long-term changes in welfare cuts and credit policies are reflected in households, which have important ramifications for the reproduction of well-being in later life. Investigation outcome consistently reveals that regardless of the household or national level, these viewpoints all agree that debt regimes alter the circumstances of social reproduction, both directly and indirectly and are unsustainable and unfavourable to society.

The analysis results interrelate the institutional and structural dimensions of debt, illustrating how its varied effects across locations and classes are shaped by institutional quality, socio-demographic inequalities, macroeconomic conditions and local hierarchies. (Guérin et al., 2021; Sahoo & Yadav, 2024; Samad et al., 2022). Prior to the pawnbroking temporary loan market segment, it always postured a gendered history of pawnbroking where women, as main customers of pawnshops, collateralised pawnable items for quick cash, illustrating the interconnectedness of everyday forms of credit that shape capitalist development and the necessity of household reproduction (Roberts & Zulficar, 2019; Gondal & McLean, 2013; Henry & Loomis, 2023).

The observation of differences in financial management among various family classes suggests that working-class households, which fall between the lower and medium income

groups, prioritize short-term survival. On the other hand, the upper-middle-class households prefer intergenerational continuity. Wealthier groups benefit from durable wealth management channels and suffer fewer financial restrictions and allowing for long-term strategies. However, the lower-class households confront limits that tie them to current demands (Alkhurayji et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2024). The core concept of social ranks is underlined by behavioral patterns; with upper-class individuals focusing on self-interest and wealth preservation, while lower-class groupings elevate their riches for resource-sharing and survival, leading to the reproduction of greater class inequities (Alkhurayji et al., 2023; Noerhidajati et al., 2021; Piff et al., 2018; Sawyer & Veronese Passarella, 2021; Shen et al., 2024).

Theme 2: Family, Gender and Changing Dynamics of Reproduction

The study of household debt has long viewed families as key organizations for reproduction, inheritance, and the distribution of care and resources. Inheritance traditions and succession cultures show how continuity and stability are maintained over generations (Belmonte et al., 2016). In East and Southeast Asia, households are seen as collective socioeconomic entities, where income, debt, and private schooling expenditure play a crucial part in supporting reproduction (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2017). The post-separation dynamics in Australia highlight the gendered nature of these arrangements, with mothers bearing caring responsibilities while confronting limited economic options and problematic interactions with former partners (Vnuk, 2019). However, labor market innovations continue to reshape gendered roles by making caregiving a compensated activity and placing additional obligations on families. Industrial employment in Lesotho's garment industry has transformed social and emotional assistance into financial obligations for children and relatives (Ansell et al., 2015). Similar trends may be found in Asian welfare capitalism, where family income and credit play an important part in covering reproductive costs (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2017). Divorce cases in Australia also show how caregiving responsibilities and income are renegotiated under legal and emotional circumstances, frequently to the cost of women (Vnuk, 2019).

In a variety of circumstances, institutional frameworks and market forces shift reproductive labor to homes, where gendered trade-offs in time and resources have an impact on caring sustainability. Entrepreneurs household clarifies the connection between family, gender and reproduction. Family businesses can provide stability; nevertheless, spouse support may occasionally cause friction due to work-family conflict (Werbelt & Danes, 2010). Succession planning supports the preservation of wealth throughout generations; yet, it frequently limits freedom for persons in traditional roles (Belmonte et al., 2016). Overall, households act as complex economic agents, managing caring tasks, financial commitments and commercial responsibilities. Collectively, this research reveal that family environments support and regulate reproductive processes, with gendered dynamics regulating risks, autonomy, and the sustainability of caregiving (Ansell et al., 2015; Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2017; Vnuk, 2019).

Theme 3: Financial Systems, Sustainability and Broader Societal Implications

The third theme, the integration of financial systems, restructures familial relationships and reallocates risks among households and societies. In Istanbul, Argentina and Cambodia, debt-dependent survival tactics have replaced kinship based reciprocity and cooperative

behaviors. Bank credit and fintech loans are presented as manifestations of autonomy while also obligating households to structural payments (Gago & Cavallero, 2022; Green, 2022; Kılınçarslan, 2024). Insufficient regulation exacerbates inequality by shifting costs to households and strengthening socio-economic disparities (Foellmi & Oechslin, 2007; Hojman et al., 2016; Madsen et al., 2018; Stracca, 2014). Local governance and civic engagement impact reproductive processes through philanthropy, city branding, neighbourhoods relationships and infrastructure (Apitz et al., 2018; Jørgensen & Hannibal, 2023; Miller & Buys, 2008).

Conclusion

This systematic review looks at the impact of social reproduction on household debt in diverse events. Using Scopus, WOS and EconBiz, the search covered peer-reviewed social science papers from 1997 to 2025, yielding 30 qualifying research for qualitative synthesis. The analysis was divided into three themes: (1) the relationship between financialization, caring and household vulnerability; (2) family structures, gender roles and uncertainty events that affect debt; and (3) systemic interconnections between households and financial governance.

Debt was found to be necessary for daily survival in a variety of situations, including housing, food and education, but its accumulation aggravated gendered caregiving obligations, contributed to time poverty and increased long-term financial strain. The review contributes to scholarly understanding by combining household finance, gendered care economics and governance into a coherent framework that explains how debt works as both a financial practice and a social phenomenon. It proposes a three-pronged paradigm for further research: (1) domestic practices and skills, (2) intra-family relationships and gendered bargaining and (3) structural and regulatory constraints. The findings stress solutions in consumer protection, debt relief, family policy and enterprise-level tactics, while also demonstrating how governance decisions influence vulnerability and its continuation.

The first theme, the relationship between financialization, caregiving obligations, and household vulnerability is a rapidly emerging area of concern that requires further examination. Future study must (i) investigate how financial products and services are progressively infiltrating and commodifying care labor, with a focus on the direct and indirect effects on household solvency. This includes an examination of the financial responsibilities associated with elder care, childcare and healthcare, particularly considering declining public welfare provisions. (ii) Look into how different socioeconomic groups, such as single-parent homes, ethnic minorities and low-income families perceive financialized care differently, which contributes to disproportionate debt. This demands intersectional studies to reveal the various levels of systematic disadvantage. (iii) Assess the effectiveness of existing social programs and financial rules in reducing care-related debt. Research might concentrate on creative policy models that promote caregiving while maintaining financial stability by providing insights into best practices in social protection.

For the second theme, it is crucial to elucidate how familial structures and entrenched gender norms influence individuals' incurrence of debt, particularly in uncertain economic conditions. This is an important area for future study with the goal of accurately measuring gendered burdens. More real-world studies should investigate how changing and traditional

gender roles affect taking on debt, especially after major life events like divorce, unemployment or health crises. This includes looking into differences between men and women in terms of pay, owning assets and credit access. In addition to looking at total households' debt numbers, it is important to look at how debt is managed and distributed within families. This includes power dynamics, decision-making processes and possible differences in who is responsible for paying for what. Lastly, make a model that can be used to guess how different types of families, like multigenerational homes or blended families and the way men and women share work responsibilities affect their ability to withstand economic shocks and uncertain events.

In the third theme, the study focus on how households and financial government work together as a system. This shows how important it is to look at debt on a larger scale, rather than just looking at it from the point of view of individual responsibility. This theme takes a close look at how financial rules, monetary policies and consumer security systems affect the amounts and types of debt. This includes looking into possible governance gaps that leave people open to predatory loans or make their financial situation worse. More research needs to be done on how the digitization of financial services and the popularity of "pay-later" plans are changing the way people interact with banks. This is especially important when it comes to how much credit people can access, how well they can pay back loans and whether lending decisions are made without bias.

In conclusion, this comprehensive research emphasizes the philosophical and multidimensional impact of social reproduction on household debt, which is influenced by financialization, familial dynamics and systemic governance. The complex relationships addressed throughout the three topics not only reveal major vulnerabilities, but also establish the groundwork for future academic research, providing compelling reasons why this field need ongoing scholarly attention. Nonetheless, this study possesses certain limitations. It relied on three primary databases and encompassed only English-language publications, potentially excluding pertinent viewpoints from other linguistic and regional backgrounds. Research and data on health from the Global South remain underrepresented, and discrepancies in the definitions of "household debt" and "social reproduction" limit the comparability of results. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches, broaden cross-regional analyses, and investigate the implications of digital credit systems and fintech regulation using quasi-experimental designs.

This study contributes to economic literature by deepening the theoretical discourse on social reproduction in the context of household debt and financialization. It demonstrates that household indebtedness functions not only as a result of consumption and credit choices but also as a macro-structural mechanism that sustains economic inequality and labor-market dependency. By integrating insights from social reproduction theory into household economics, the research advances the conceptualization of debt as both an instrument of capital circulation and a process that reinforces class and gender hierarchies. The analysis further illustrates the uneven effects of household debt across economic contexts, particularly in developing economies where credit expansion often compensates for inadequate welfare systems. These findings inform economic policy debates by showing that household debt, while enabling short-term consumption, can perpetuate financial fragility and limit social mobility. In sum, the research enhances theoretical and contextual

understandings of household debt as both an economic mechanism and a social process that reproduces structural inequality in contemporary capitalist economies.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study.

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