

**KNOWLEDGE AND PREPARATION OF NIGERIAN EMPLOYEES TOWARDS
RETIREMENT: COUNSELLING TIPS**

BEST-NJOKU MARIS MARIA

**Department of Educational Psychology/Guidance and Counselling
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri,
Imo State Nigeria.
marisbest2013@gmail.com**

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UGONNA CHINONYE E.

**Department of Educational Psychology/Guidance and Counselling
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri,
Imo State Nigeria.
Email: ceugonna@gmail.com**

&

UGONNA IKECHUKWU A.

**Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbarian
Email: campus.ivkeugonna@gmail.com**

Abstract

It has been observed that most individuals who put their active service in work end up as unhappy retirees, this situation is mostly seen on those individuals who do not have prior knowledge and preparedness towards retirement. This study therefore investigated on the knowledge and preparation of Nigerian employees towards retirement using IMSUBEB as the case study. The purpose of the study is to find out employees level of awareness and preparedness towards retirement. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study and a quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study. Seventy subjects were drawn for the study using simple random sampling. The population comprised of all the employees in Imo state Ministry of Education. A researcher made instrument ERKPC was used for the study, retirement counselling package was used as a technique for helping the participant. The data was analyzed using simple percentage. Result showed that the retirement counselling package used was effective in creating awareness as well as assist the employees to have prior retirement preparation. Conclusion was drawn and recommendations made which include among others that retirement counselling package should be used in different work establishment to assist in-service employees be aware as well as prepare for their retirement stage prior to their retirement time.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria today, the attitude of the employers (government and individual bodies) towards retirees is an issue of concern. When a worker spends his active life time rendering service to his/her employer or even self, there is the prior expectation that when he/she is aged and or retired, the employer or should take part in taking care of him/her. Unfortunately, what we see in the country today in some establishments especially in the government sector, seems to contradict this assertion. Workers spend their life time rendering service to their employer and at the time of retirement, they are abandoned by these bodies. Most of these individuals (retirees) get frustrated at this kind of treatment as a result end up sometimes dying miserable and unhappy, or suffer from stress related ailments such as Parkinson, disease partial/total paralysis (stroke), brain malfunctioning etcetera due to inability of their former employers grant them their benefits. This ugly situation is mostly experienced by individuals who did not prepare ahead of their retirement time.

The global economic meltdown and the recession being experienced in Nigeria today tend to worsen the situation. The government of the country finds it difficult today to take care of the vibrant workers (in terms of salary payment and other incentives) whom may be seen as the pillar of the nation's economy not to talk of the retirees whom some twisted mind leaders are seeing as being worthless to the society. They never consider the fact that these men and women spent their active life working hard for the growth and development of the nation of which they (the leaders) are presently enjoying. The past works of these men and women need to be appreciated when they retire.

According to Kwesi and Aggrey (2012), work or active service is very significant as it affects attitude and behaviour and provides a basis for improving living standards of the individual worker. For a worker, work provides a sure means of achieving independence, leadership and self direction, and gives a sense of belonging and identity. It is a result of the significance of work in a person's life that some workers become so attached, committed and involved in their work. Work keeps them busy and they derive maximum benefits from it by devoting long hours to working. It is assumed that anything that will remove a committed worker off the job without accomplishment of needs satisfied by the work may be resisted, the worker will possess negative feelings towards such a situation, and retirement can be noted as one of such situations.

Retirement, therefore seems to be one of those conditions bringing about disengagement of workers from their jobs. As stated by Uzoigwe (2013), it involves the life pattern of a person after he/she has given up full time career employment. Viewed as such, retirement could become a threat to many workers especially to those who never prepared for it before time.

Blunt (1983) opines that the thought of retirement poses a great challenge to workers especially to those who are attached to their career employment. This being the case therefore, inappropriate or unprepared retirement programme could cause a lot of challenges such as life threatening sickness like heart attack, stroke, loss of memory etcetera. Uzoigwe (2013), stated that individuals who never planned for their retirement often develop neurosis prior to their retirement time. The challenges posed by retirement could sometimes be traumatic to these individuals approaching retirement. Most workers who are faced with these challenges have ended up negatively such as untimely death, frustration, constant living in fear which invariably has resulted in low productivity at the

retiring period of these individuals, sudden development of stress related ailment et cetera more especially on the part of those who have no prior plans for this stage of life.

It is therefore pertinent that awareness be created to the employees on the available retirement planning packages as it concerns the knowledge and preparation of the retirement stage so as to help them avoid being caught in the web of unplanned retirement stage which could be so devastating to the individual, the work and the society, hence the need for this study. The study examines the knowledge and preparedness of Nigerian employees towards retirement. The study will also consider the extent of knowledge and preparedness of these employees towards retirement in relation to gender.

Gender according to Nwankwo (2013) implies socially constructed roles and relationship, values relative power and influence that the society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. It implies sex roles qualities attributed to either male or female. Studies have been conducted on retirement and employees attitude towards it.

In a study conducted by Ubangha and Akunyemi (2005) on the relationship between attitude to retirement planning and retirement anxiety among teachers in four local government areas of Lagos metropolis, the result showed that 655 of the teacher indicated willingness to continue teaching after retirement if given the chance. This so to say indicates that most people do not have any plans on what they want after retirement due to lack of knowledge and preparation towards retirement, it therefore means that workers should be made to know and have plans for their retirement right from their first day of employment.

Another study carried out by Nwankwo S.C (2013) on the extent of preparedness of active workers towards retirement age in Ahiazu Mbaise L.G.A of Imo State where 825 5 -10 years experienced respondents opinions were sampled. The findings indicated that 412 out of the 825 respondents were not sure of what to do, have no plans of what to do and are not bothered on what to do with their lives after retirement. There is therefore the need to create awareness as well as assist workers to start preparing for their retirement from the first day of their appointment into a working establishment either as an employee or a self employed worker.

According to White House Conference on Aging as cited in Manion's (1976), retirement has profound implications for changes in an individual's social and economic status, in his inter-personal relationships and in his self-perception and morale. Increasing evidence indicates that realistic pre-retirement preparation improves the chances of making a good adjustment to retirement.

Every active worker who hopes to retire one day from his/her profession as happy retiree and thereafter lives a blissful and fulfilled life should endeavour to acquire the knowledge and preparedness associated with this phenomenon (retirement). Unfortunately very few workers do make plans for their retirement from the right time, and most of them when they do, they do that a bit late, so when the times comes for their retirement, they face stressful situation such as shock, emotional and psychological trauma as previously mentioned. Hence for employees to retire from their career/profession prepared and happy, counselling intervention for effective preparation and acquiring of knowledge on the phenomenon should be made available to them early enough to plan ahead of time. Thus there is need for a study to awaken the planning as well as proffer the rightful counselling approach towards achieving that.

Statement of Problem

Retirement stage is a happy stage in the life of every employee or self employed individual in that it is a time when one should relax the functional parts of his/her body and then enjoy the fruit of his/her labour, but it is a life threatening stage to those who did not prepare for it or as well start on time to do that.

The Nigerian situation today on its own poses a great threat to the lives of the prospective retirees. Most workers today are thrown into confusion because of the situation of things in the country. For instance, the usual regular pension and gratuity is becoming a thing of the past in most of the government establishments. Those who depend only on that as their retirement fall-back are almost thrown into a confused state as everything is becoming unrealistic in the country. This then implies that a worker (either self-employed or an employee) who did not or start early to prepare for his/her retirement ahead of time may end up frustrated and unhappy as most people retire with unfinished personal and social responsibilities such as health bills, children fees, accommodation, rent et cetera. This issue poses a great problem and if not checked and handled appropriately may lead to throwing a once vibrant and active individual into a destitute and a beggar and this is not for the good of the individual and the society at large. The problem identified here therefore is to what extent do Nigerian employees prepare for their retirement and what is their level of awareness on the need to prepare for one's retirement ahead of time.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the level of awareness and preparedness of the Nigerian employees towards retirement. It is meant to ascertain the extent at which these employees are knowledgeable of the fact that they will retire one day. The study will also ascertain how prepared these employees are towards their retirement.

Research Questions

1. What is the percentage mean scores of retirement knowledge and preparedness among Nigerian employees?
2. What is the percentage mean scores of retirement knowledge and preparedness among employees across gender?

Methods

Design: The study adopted a quasi –experimental design of which the sampled population's knowledge on retirement awareness and preparedness were gathered. Those who had no retirement preparation plan yet were trained on retirement counselling, while those who have started the preparations were encouraged and helped to fortify their preparations via retirement counselling.

Population

The population of the study comprised of all the employees in the Imo State Ministry of Education.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of 70 were drawn from the Imo state Universal basic Education Board (IMSUBEB). Simple random sampling was used in selecting IMSUBEB among the bodies under ministry of education State Education Management Board (SEMB), Examination Development Centre (EDC), IMSUBEB, ACE. The researcher used a simple random

sampling in selecting the 70 participants which comprise of 35 male and 35 female. These employees are those with 5 – 10 years working experience with their present employer.

Instrument

A research made instrument; Employee Retirement Knowledge and Preparedness Checklist (ERKPC) was used. The instrument is made of two parts, part one is on respondents bio-data while part 2 contains 10 retirement knowledge and preparedness items that tends to elicit information on how each respondent is aware and preparing for his or her retirement.

The ERKPC has a two point response system of Yes and No with figure quantification of 1 for yes and 2 for No responses. A score of 15 and above shows that the individual has knowledge and is preparing for his or her retirement while a score from 14 – 1 shows that the individual is not preparing for his/her retirement.

Activities of the Researchers

The researchers, having obtained permission from the chairman of the SUBEB administered the ERKPC to the entire 124 staff of the board from which 70 were selected for the study based on their response on the knowledge and preparedness towards retirement as well as their scores. The 70 respondents who recorded little or no knowledge of retirement as well as lack of preparedness for it were given retirement counselling by the researcher where which awareness and the need for them to start preparing for retirement were created.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using percentage.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the percentage mean scores of retirement knowledge and preparedness among Nigerian employees?

The % mean score of retirement knowledge and preparedness among Nigerian employees do not differ significantly.

Table 1 Percentage Analysis of the % mean score of retirement knowledge and preparedness of participants.

Study variables	No of Responses	
	High (Positive)	Low (Positive)
Retirement knowledge level	60 = 86%	10 = 14%
Retirement preparedness	15 = 21%	55 = 79%

The result of the table above shows the number and percentage of participants who are knowledgeable of their retirement time as 60 and 86% respectively. On the other hand, the number and percentage of participants who deny knowledge of retirement stage yet as 10 and 14% respectively.

Same table 1 shows the number and percentage of participants who have started preparing for their retirement period as 15 and 21% whereas that of participants who have not started planning for their retirement as 55 and 70% respectively.

Since the percentage of those who have knowledge of their retirement period is greater than those who have no knowledge of it and the percentage of those who are preparing for their retirement period is lower than those not preparing for their retirement, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative accepted. There is therefore significant difference in the percentage mean score of retirement knowledge and preparedness among Nigerian employees.

Research Question 2

What is the percentage mean scores of retirement knowledge and preparedness among employees across gender?

Table 2: Percentage analysis of mean score of the level of retirement knowledge and preparedness among Nigerian employees across gender.

Gender	Retirement Knowledge		Retirement Preparedness	
	High (Positive)	Low (Positive)	High (Positive)	Low (Positive)
Male	35 = 50%	5=7.1%	10 = 14%	35=50%
Female	25 = 36%	5 = 7.1%	5 = 7.1%	20 = 29%

From table 2, the number and percentage of male participants who are knowledgeable of their retirement period are 35 and 50% while those who do have knowledge of it have 5 and 7% as their number and percentage respectively. For female their number and percentage for it are 25 and 36% while those who don't have knowledge have 5 and 7.1% number and percentage.

On the same table 2, the number and percentage of male who are preparing for their retirement prior to its time are 35 and 50% while those who are not preparing for it prior to its time have 10 and 14% as their number and percentage. On the other hand, the number and percentage of female who are preparing for their retirement prior to its time are 20 and 29% while the number and percentage of those who are not preparing for their retirement prior to its time are 5 and 7.1%.

Discussion

The study found that significant difference exist in the number of employees who have knowledge of their retirement stage and those who do not have knowledge of it. Also there is significant difference in the number and percentage of those who are preparing for their retirement period and those who are not.

This implies that the retirement counselling package administered to the participants was effective on their knowledge and retirement preparation life pattern. This present result is also consistent with that of Kwesi and Ellen (2012) who investigated the efficacy of retirement counselling on public school teachers and found that the secondary school teachers attitude on retirement planning changed positively have being administered with retirement counselling package.

Also the study found a significant difference in the knowledge and preparedness perception of male and female participants. This implies that the retirement counselling package was more effective in male participants than the female, this could be attributed to the fact that male naturally assumes ownership and is always in charge of the family and so when the treatment package was administered, it kind of awaken the sleeping perception of man's

responsibility in them. This result corroborates with the findings of Asonibare (2008) on the issue of retirement counselling technique and gender where he found out that the efficacy of the technique is more effective on male than in the female.

However, the current findings contradicts the result obtained by Kolo, Bello and Oliagba (2013) that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female participant using retirement counselling technique in helping them plan for the retirement period. Meanwhile the study tallies with the work of Asanibare and Oniye (2008) where they assert that the knowledge and availability of retirement to employees either self employed or employee enhances the smooth transition of ones career from active to retired individual. This was evidenced in their work where 54% out of their total sample happily transit to retirement stage without stress or frustration having received the retirement counselling package. These participants were able to achieve this due to their adherence to the retirement tips of the retirement counsellors which include;

1. Start saving, keep saving and stick to your goal.
2. Know your retirement needs
3. Contribute to your employer's retirement savings plan
4. Learn about your employer's pension plans
5. Consider basic investment principles
6. Don't touch your retirement savings
7. Ask your employer to start a plan
8. Put money into an individual retirement account
9. Find out about your social security benefits and
10. Ask questions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn;

The aim of the study is to find out the level of awareness on retirement knowledge and how prepared are the employees towards this retirement. The study also x-ray the impact of the counselling packages as administered to the employees especially those who are within 5 – 10 years working experiences. It was noted that at first many employees were not bothered on life after retirement and as such were not making plans towards it. However, having received the retirement counselling package, the level of awareness attitude, perception and plans of these participants changed positively.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that awareness be created to Nigerian employees on the knowledge and prior preparation of retirement stage, especially to the young working experienced employees. This could be achieved using retirement counselling packages.

It is also recommended that the employees' governing body of every establishment, institute a counselling unit aimed at educating and creating awareness of retirement knowledge and its prior preparation to its staff right from their day of appointment.

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