

INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF RETIREES FROM CIVIL SERVICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper discussed the information seeking behaviour of retirees from civil service in Nigeria. The paper was introduced by a brief description of eligibility for retirement in Nigerian Civil Service. It brought to light various forms of retirement, theories of retirement and went further to highlight the information needs of the retirees. The retirees demand for information to meet their needs. The factors militating against the accessibility and availability of information infrastructure and resources were discussed and they include; high cost of internet usage, lack of maximum ease to access the library, inequality in the provision of reading materials, lack of adequate large print publishers, personal factors such as the nature of disability and inadequate finances. Recommendations were proffered and they included that the government should encourage large print publisher or establish such printing establishments; internet services should be rendered at a cheaper rate; programmes that will interest the elderly should be included in daily broadcast over the radio and television, newspaper and magazines, prompt payment of pension allowances to enable the elderly purchase information equipment or gadgets needed. Finally, the paper recommends that government and organizations should embark on compulsory counselling for pre-retirees and retirees.

Introduction

In most developing countries and Nigeria in particular, government or organizations restrict working age of public civil servants and private employees to prevent an ageing labour force by allowing entrants of young able bodied labour for increasing efficiency and productivity. This has become so necessary because as a worker becomes older his marginal physical productivity of labour will definitely decline. Thus retaining such a worker in employment at this point will amount to running the organisation at a loss. That is why in Nigeria, statutory working age in the public service is fixed at sixty (60) years or thirty five (35) years of unbroken active working service before retirement. However, the Retirement Age Harmonization Act of 2012 puts the

retirement age of judicial officers and professors of tertiary institutions at 70 because of the belief that the “*older , the wiser*” in those sectors. In the private sector, retirement age varies between 55 and 60 years of service and the factor of 35 years of service is not applicable (FGN, 2008). Other less measurable retirement criteria such as low productivity, divided interest, labour redundancy, rationalisation and so on are often introduced and these have exacerbated the already negative attitude the Nigerian workers have for retirement.

Retirees from civil service seek information from information professionals about various aspects of life so that they can function well during post - retirement. Retirement is a period when they slow down on activities and are not as active as they were when they were much younger and so its pertinent that they seek for information and make use of it.

The purpose of this paper is divided into two folds. The first fold is to create profuse awareness among young workers currently in service on the need to substantiate serious commitment to preparation for post-retirement life. The second fold is to provide a guide that can be employed for managing post-retirement conditions in Nigeria. This will no doubt provide answers to some challenging issues that bother workers at retirement.

Concept of Civil Service

Civil service comprises of government officials that are employed in civil occupations that are not political or judicial in nature. People who work in civil service are usually called civil servants. Civil servants are government employees that are promoted on the basis of merit and seniority which may include examinations (Page, Bridges & Chapman, 2019). The term civil service could be seen as a branch of governmental service in which individuals were employed on the basis of professional merit as proven by competitive examination. Buckley 2006, also defined

civil service as the body of employees in any government agency other than the military. A civil servant was a person employed for a government department or agency. The term explicitly excluded the armed services, although civilian officials would work at Defence Ministry headquarters. The term always included the state's employees, whether regional, or sub-state, or even municipal employees who were called civil servants and it varied from country to country (Riper, 2008). Every state in Nigeria had its own civil service.

Concept of Retirement

Retirement has long been considered as one of the most important later life changes and a transitional stage of life that can be a pleasant experience for some, yet traumatic for others (Marshall 2004). Subjectively, retirement is a self-defined notion that can mean different things to different people. For some, retirement may mean reducing the amount of work hours per week from full-time to part time status, while for others it may mean working on a voluntary basis. Abdulkadir , Rasaq and Isiaka (2018), defined retirement as a major shift for an individual which is affected to a large extent by psychological variables and cultural meaning of retirement. Ukwuayi (2002), sees retirement as withdrawal from position or service, going away, retreating, or removal from work. Asuquo (2007) in the same vain, also sees retirement as a complex social phenomenon that signifies the detachment from customary activities in business, industry, or active services as full-time employee.

Dada and Idowu (2003) defined retirement as a transition from the world of work into a world of less rigorous work activity and rest especially in respect of retirement due to old age or long years of service. He noted however, that in Nigeria, some retirements have not been due to old age or long service, but to cut down in expenses in the public and private sectors of the economy as well as

political factors. Despite these subjective and objective definitions, views and opinions of retirement, one can agree that retirement requires reduction of activities prior to the later stages of life.

According to Oniye (2004), whichever way retirement comes, it tends to emphasise separation from job with concern for the future. Retirement is indeed a period of withdrawal from active job of one means of livelihood. Retirement is a fluid concept because it connotes different things and is fraught with different experiences for different people. We observe over time that retirement life is not a homogenous experience for everyone. While some individuals view it positively and anticipate it with nostalgia, others dread its eventuality with great anxiety.

Asuquo and Maliki (2007) highlighted three (3) major types of retirement that are common in Nigeria, are:-

- **Voluntary retirement** occurs when the individual, decides to quit active service for personal reasons irrespective of age, experience, length of service or retirement policies. This type of retirement depends more on the employee than the employer. Most of the voluntary retirement plan requires a minimum number of years of work before the employee is eligible for retirement. In Nigeria, the minimum number of years of work presently before the employee qualifies for voluntary retirement with pension benefit in public service is 10 years. The voluntary plans however vary according to organizations to organizations and countries. Compulsory or Forced Retirement:
- **Compulsory or forced retirement** is a situation in which the individual is forced or compelled to retire against the individual's expectation and when he is ill-prepared for it. There may be a number of reasons why a civil servant will be forced to retire, they may

include; ill health, gross indiscipline, physical inability, criminal record and lack of prerequisite qualification after a period of time. These retirements are usually done in the interest of the organisation.

- **Mandatory retirement** is the normal retirement that is expected at the end of a person's work life. It is usually after the person has served for uninterrupted 35 years or has reached the retirement age in the organization (Akinade, 2008). This is the period where a lot of thoughts creep into the persons mind. It can be exciting for some, threatening or challenging. This is the make-or-break season whereby some people are full of ideas about what to do and other are blank about what to do with their lives.

Theories of Retirement

There are various theories of retirement namely role theory, continuity theory, the life course perspective theory, social breakdown theory, disengagement theory and activity theory.

Role Theory

According to role theory, retirement is an adjustment of one's principal role usually as a paid worker, a role that is central to a person's identity (Kim & Moen, 2001). Roles give people a sense of worth and achievement and helps to shape their behaviours and self-concept (Choi, 2001). Further, role theory suggests that retirement can be stressful event for individuals due to loss of fundamental social role. Learning to deal with loss may cause individuals to feel a sense of vulnerability. For instance, some retired individuals may experience feelings of disconnect and anxiety that may lead to low levels of life satisfaction during retirement. Role theory puts forward the notion that older adults experience changes in well-being when role transition occurs. In particular the transition from worker to retiree is commonly identified as a major role loss which

can lead to an erosion of social identity and self-esteem. Feelings of diminished self-worth and depression may result from retirement because the occupation one had may have been a source of self-worth (Silver, 2007).

Continuity Theory

Continuity Theory describes retirement as a linear series of life events that gradually lead to a logical career stage and pleasant experience or transition without maladjustment or distress into retirement. It suggests that the circumstances of retirees (e.g. resources, behaviours) do not change, but instead they maintain a consistent pattern. Further, as they age, workers frequently substitute new roles for lost ones. Additionally, teachers' central personality core-characteristics and values) will be more pronounced during the later stage of life (Hooyman & Kiyat, 2007). Continuity theory assumes a linear flow with continued growth and an accrual in resources throughout life span in preparation for retirement. In contrast to role theory, continuity theorists rejects the notion that occupation is central to one's identity and suggest that in retirement individuals can be expected to maintain levels of activity and self-esteem. A key premise of continuity theory is that individuals maintain their own ways of adapting to their environment and thus maintain a consistent pattern of behaviour as they age.

This premise is built upon the notion that people have unique personalities which are consistent across the life span and this dictates how they deal with transition.

Information Need of Retirees

. Information Seeking Behaviour encompasses information need, information demand and information use. It's not sufficient enough for retirees to be fed information, there has to be a need for the information then they demand or seek the information and finally they put the information to

use.

Information can be defined as already processed data used for quality decision making (Gene Bellinger, et al, 2004).

Information and need are inseparable. Information need on the other hand, is the hunger, thirst and quest for information to satisfy particular needs. Retirees need information on various items such as;

- what business to engage in / entrepreneurial skills
- what investment to invest in that will yield profit
- health Insurance scheme
- leisure
- pension scheme and so on.

Information Seeking Behaviour of Retirees

Information seeking behaviour refers to the way people search for and utilize information. Wilson (2000) described information seeking behaviour as the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and Information use. He described purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goals. Information seeking behaviour is the micro- level of behaviour employed by the searcher in interacting with information systems of all kinds, be it between the seeker and the system, or the pure method of creating and following up on a search. Information Seeking Behaviour involves the searching, locating, retrieving and using of information (Karunarathna, 2008). The retirees sought printed resources for hobby- related information seeking. For answers to medical and financial questions, they tended to look primarily to the interpersonal sources. Interpersonal sources include physicians, pharmacist, herbalist and traditional healers,

other professionals, family members and friends. When it comes to making informed decisions about their health care, the majority adhere to a physician-Centered Care Model (Campbell & Nolfi ,2005). Retirees tend to turn to their doctors as their primary source of medical information. Information Seeking Behaviour is the user altitude to information.

Pre-retirement counselling is a form of counselling. It can be conceptualized as a systematic and organized assistance offered to near-retirement workers in order to maximize their potentials while at work or out of work. This assistance provides them the opportunity to develop holistic and adequate plan for their years of retirement that addresses the practical, psychological, intellectual, creative, recreational and emotional needs of their lives. There are many aspects that need to be addressed when planning for a major life change that involves a transition like retirement. The pre-retirement counsellor is in a position to assist the client respond to issues of personal concern like finance, physical changes, emotional instability, recreation and leisure matters.

Factors militating against the accessibility and availability of information resources for retirees

Atinmo (2000) in her write up gave the two terms different meanings. Availability in her papers is used to mean “the state of being physically present, within easy reach of users” while Accessibility “refers to the resources being effectively and independently used by the elderly”. The sighted retiree finds it easy to access information materials and they are readily made available when needed by them, for the retiree who is visually impaired the reverse is the case as the inability to use their eyes effectively could not make information resources available and easily accessible to them, because their information material also has to be in special format such as large prints or in audio cds. Several factors can affect the communication that the retirees have with health care professionals, or their access to information. McKenzie (2002) identified three kinds of barriers to

communication with health practitioners. Those originating with either the information provider or the seeker, and those that might originate with both the provider and the seeker. Factors creating barriers includes: the use of medical terminology, lack of communication skills, arrogant attitudes among doctors as well as, lack of time (Glenton, 2002).

Lack of information can also lead to incorrect behaviour. Sometimes no information is given at all, or it is given only orally and is thus easily forgotten. In Nigeria, there is constitutional provisions made for the physically challenged persons in general but there has been no national coordinating effort to meet the demands of the retirees.

In Nigeria, libraries have not put into consideration the adequate provision of resources for the retired.

The use of internet in Nigeria is not cheap; therefore, the elderly who are mostly retired would shy away from using the internet which is one major source of accessing information for all ages around the world. Conclusively, in the findings of (Williamson et al, 2000), personal factors such as life circumstances, being alone, poverty, or retired, the type of elderly people involved as well as individual information seeking preferences, all influenced the way the elderly access information.

Strategies and Recommendation for Enhancing Information Seeking and Satisfaction of Retirees

Counsellors with their allies in the helping profession should assist individuals to be aware of the impact and importance of pre-retirement counselling on the process of adjusting to retirement. Secondly, efforts should be made by government, scholars and researchers to improve and sustain optimistic perception of pre-retirement so as to ensure more favourable attitude to it through public enlightenment campaigns, workshops, seminars, symposia and talk shows.

Bramly (2000) made suggestions for library building, that:

- There should be mapped out portions as resource center of the elderly
- The room should be isolated to reduce the effect of noise.
- The library building should be designed with ramps for easy access into the building.

These resources are what should be adequately provided for the retirees but as a result of certain factors they cannot be met. In addition, the following should also be looked into to ensure a smooth sail for retirees:-

- Prompt payment of pension allowance to enable the elderly have enough finances to purchase the necessary information resources as well as take care of their health.
- The government should encourage large print publishers or establish such printing establishments.
- The government should subsidize optical and reading aids for easy affordability by the elderly.
- Internet access should be made very cheap.
- Programmes that will interest the elderly should be included in the daily broadcast over the radio, television, magazines and newspapers.
- Handsets for the elderly should have large buttons and should be very loud.
- Physicians and nurses should answer the queries of the elderly in a very simple manner that will be understandable by them.
- Family members, relatives and friends should not be far from the elderly because they are one of major source of information for the elderly.
- News translation in vernacular languages should be transmitted always on radio and television to keep the illiterate elderly informed.

Conclusion

The information needs of the elderly are almost the same like their younger counterparts, where information is needed to take life decision, major issues regarding their health, recreational interest, pension/ finances, government matters and so on. They demand for information to meet their information needs, the elderly visit libraries/ information centers, listen to vernacular programmes on radio and television, and visit family members, relatives and younger members in the community where they live. The information obtained are used by the elderly to understand a particular situation, to get fact about something, to know what and how to do something, confirm another item of information, project future events and develop relationship.

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