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PERSON-CENTRED THERAPY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PRE-RETIREMENT ANXIETY AMONG FEDERAL ROAD SAFETY OFFICERS IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Pre-retirement anxiety is a challenge facing about to retire officers. It is a state of fear and uneasiness from active work-life is associated with the Federal Road Safety (FRS) officers. Past studies on pre-retirement anxiety among FRS officers concentrated on causal factors with little intervention studies. This study, therefore, investigated the challenges of pre-retirement anxiety within the context of FRS officers in Edo zone comprising Anambra, Delta and Edo states, Nigeria, with cognisance of their occupational stressors, cultural factors and individual experiences. The study was anchored to continuity theory of retirement, while a mixed methods approach was employed to assess anxiety levels and psychological wellbeing as well as qualitative interviews to explore the experiences and perceptions of some of the officers undergoing therapy. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the 30 retiring participants (less than five years) into the groups. Participants with 60% and above score on retirement anxiety screening tool with their consent were used in the study. The instruments used were Pre-retirement Anxiety ($\alpha=.90$) and Social-support ($\alpha=.70$) scales. Hypotheses were raised and tested. Data were analysed using analysis of Covariance and Scheffe Post-hoc test @ 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed the effectiveness of PCT in managing pre-retirement anxiety of the officers. There was no interaction effect of treatment, gender and social support on pre-retirement anxiety of the officers. Person-centred therapy was effective in managing pre-retirement anxiety among FRS officers. Counseling psychologists should adopt this intervention when handling issues related to pre-retirement anxiety.

Keywords: Person-centred therapy, Pre-retirement, Anxiety, Federal Road Safety officers.

Introduction

Retirement can be defined as the cessation of active service of an employee from a routine job at a pre-determined age and/or period of service by an organisation. It is the end of performance of services rendered by an employee to his employer due to attainment of a determined age, years of service or illness. Policy makers in an organisation statutorily determine the determined age. For instance, in Nigeria, retirement can come because of numbers of years already put in service which is 35 years while

attaining the age of 60 years could be another yardstick in disengaging from service. In the same vein, Petters and Asuquo (2008) referred to retirement as leaving a job at a specified period after putting in some number of years of one's productive years or after attaining a given age of 60 years in the public sectors of economy. Thus, retirement can be viewed as termination of a pattern of life or completion of a career. Retirement can be categorised into three; voluntary, compulsory, and mandatory (Garba and Mamman, 2014).

Globally, retirement is widely perceived as a vital stage in human development. Individuals who engage in pre-retirement planning adapt well to retirement and are probably going to experience it as a vacation stage of experiencing a Rest and Relaxation (R and R) period of recovering from the anxieties and strains of work (Arogundade, 2016). More importantly, retirement can also be recognised as 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. However, the transition from work to retirement involves interruption in lifestyle (Luborsky and LeBlanc, 2003). Apparently, the thought of retirement to most employees breeds negative emotions such as worry, fear, anxiety, disillusionment and apprehension. However, retirement comes within these ambiances in a man's occupational development. When an individual detaches from work, he is likely to enter a state of diminution (Asiedu, Assoah, and Wilson, 2018). In other words, anything that will detach a devoted employee from his work can lead to negative feelings towards such a situation. Retirement can be considered as one of such situations.

Moreover, as an individual gets closer to retirement, he is likely to develop anxiety with some probing and provocative questions running through his mind. Also, live experiences gathered from their former colleagues and heart troubling reported cases both in the newspapers and social media as to the challenges faced by retirees in Nigeria may impact anxiety to pre-retirees. For instance, Adewale in The Guardian Newspaper of 7th October 2022 reported that "The Nigerian Labour Congress' (NLC) pensioners protest over ₦36 billion outstanding entitlements". Similarly, a recent report of 5th January 2023, in The Punch newspaper, captioned, "Edo pensioners protest unpaid gratuities, government promises payment". In some other reports, retirees slumped and died on the spot or were being rushed to the hospital while queuing to be screened for their benefits. Also, the deteriorating look of some retirees can send anxiety signals to the pre-retirees. The insensitivity of some governors to the plight of pensioners in Nigeria is worrisome. All these could incubate anxiety on pre-retirees.

Pre-retirement anxiety encompasses fears, worries, and apprehension exhibit by an individual about the future as a result of the cessation of active working life plus the attached remuneration. It involves fear that usually results from an unknown future and uncertainty of survival, especially such that may be facing loyal and uncompromising employee like Federal Road Safety Corps officers after the official security might have been withdrawn due to retirement. It also incorporates envisaged boredom due to inactivity and financial stress due to cessation of regular remuneration and unreliable pension managers in the system.

Retirement comes up at the most sensitive stage of an individual's vocational development. Thus, pre-retirement anxiety can oscillate from variant causes from fear of the unknown future to uncertainty of survival due to financial constraints. Some other causes are; change of status, accommodation and suitable location are some changes

that a per-retiree may be anxious about. Some of the major causes of pre-retirement anxiety, according to Oluseyi and Olufemi (2015), are inadequate fund, challenges in managing mental and physical health, challenge of managing a new and lower social status, boredom, inactivity, cessation of social activities that are work related such as tours and conferences, total dependence on present salary, problem of securing avoidable and suitable residential accommodation, ignorance of proper management of pension fund, attitude of friends and family, and the challenges of relegation of status and cessation of the benefits of enjoyment of the official amenities and stewards. FRS officers saddled with playing strategic and pivotal roles in the safety and sanity of the national road from traffic crashes are not exempted. However, they have their various retirement dates which can pitch their minds and as well creating tension owing to the fear of losing their prestigious job, the security the job offers as well as the pride the uniform brings when they are fully kitted.

Pre-retirement anxiety poses diverse challenges around officers' social life and wellbeing. It can degenerate to both physical and mental health issues. Some of such can include uncontrollable high blood pressure, palpitations, ulcer, rapid heart rate, depression especially when they remember they are getting close to retirement. According to Robert (2017), retirement may raise the risk of coronary events. On social ground, some employees on their getting close to retirement might start cutting down major financial responsibilities attached to them at home like children's school fees, clothing, house projects, housekeep allowance and some other social activities especially, as the breadwinner. Also, they are likely to withdraw from extended family functions and responsibilities. All these can breed peer and family rejection with certain emotional conflicts among loved ones. Occupationally, it can lead to negative work behaviour, counter-productive activities and unethical occupational actions from officers saddled with safety of national road network. Therefore, this study examined the effectiveness of person-centred therapy in ameliorating the menace of pre-retirement anxiety.

Person-centred Therapy (PCT) is a non-directional therapy propounded by Carl Rogers in helping clients to develop greater understanding of self and also to developing their capacity to face their problems without direct interventions of the therapist. This capacity for self-help is hinged on six therapeutic conditions of PCT which includes; client perception of the existence of the problem, therapist/client contact, client incongruence, emphatic understanding from the therapist towards the client, genuineness or congruence of the therapist and the capacity of the therapist to display Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) all through the therapeutic sessions (Schmid, 2019).

This intervention believes that the therapy cannot be guaranteed its effectiveness when the client is not specific about the problem or is not aware of the existence of the problem. In other words, it is the motivation of the client and his awareness that propels the guidance of the therapist through self-exploration to creating a paradigm shift which is capable of ameliorating the menace of pre-retirement anxiety.

Retirement is a mixed grill, laced with the excitement of a relaxed or reduced workload and anxiety towards unknown future. Anxiety is known as an expression of disillusionment and apprehension which can lead to cognitive distortions. The tendency of officers experiencing anxiety at the thought of retirement is contributed by the sense of diminution at the loss of the prestige accorded officers in form of respect and accolade received in discharge of their duties without carrying firearm. Also, the sudden stoppage of official

tours, seminars and conferences coupled with the feeling of insecurity at the withdrawal of domestic servants at retirement could impact anxiety. Moreover, the frightening news about retirees both in the print and socio-media with the depreciating look of some retirees are eyes sores to about to retire. The psycho-social feedback is detrimental to their social, physical, and mental health which can also affect the quality of their services.

Apparently, the instability of the value of national currency, economy and unending inflation is worrisome. There are some personal concerns regarding challenges that come along with retirement such as the unreliability of pension managers, unpaid gratuity, boredom, and inactivity. The incessant transfer of the officers is an impediment in planning. The unreliability of the prompt payment of their gratuity and their survival in maintaining the social class they are used to could also be a concern. Retirement could also lead to reduced intensity of affiliation to social contact.

Consequently, the psychosocial and economical feedback of these problems are negative work attitude, counter-productive work behaviour which can lead to increase in road crash, disappointment, displeasure, hurt, worry, anger, frustration, stress, also, feeling of injustice, depression, these could also lead to sudden physical and mental health challenges, such as incidence of high blood pressure, ulcer, palpitation, depression, and other anxiety prone mental health challenges like suicidal ideation and finally, sudden death.

Counselling Intervention Procedure

Step 1: General introduction, orientation to the training, administration of pretest, overview of PCT.

Step 2: Description and consequences of pre-retirement anxiety.

Step 3: Introduction to PCT, meaning and core processes.

Step 4: Assessing PCT technique in relation to pre-retirement anxiety.

Step 5: Identification of diverse options in retirement and how to activate them

Step 6: Discussion of risks and hindrances in available options

Step 7: Experiential practice of PCT during the session

Step 8: Review of previous sessions, posttest administration and conclusion.

It is very important to note that encouragement is very important process in all the stages of the therapy.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant main effect of treatment on pre-retirement anxiety among Federal Road safety officers.
2. There is no significant main effect of gender on pre-retirement anxiety among Federal Road safety officers.
3. There is no significant main effect of social support on pre-retirement among Federal Road safety officers.

4. There is no interaction effect of treatment, gender and social support on pre-retirement anxiety among Federal Road Safety officers.

Qualitative Research Questions (Key Informant Interview Guide)

1. What do you understand by pre-retirement anxiety?
 2. What could be the cause(s) of pre-retirement anxiety?
 3. What is the frequency of pre-retirement anxiety among about to retire?
 4. What are the consequences of pre-retirement anxiety?
 5. Are you aware of any remedy/remedies that can prevent pre-retirement anxiety among officers?
- 5b. Kindly mention them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of Person-centred therapy in managing pre-retirement anxiety. Gender and social support were moderators. Six null hypotheses were tested @ 0.05 level of significance. The report from this study is beneficial to employees, employers, policy makers, government at all levels, therapists, and researchers.

Methodology

The study was anchored to continuity theory of retirement, while a mixed methods approach was employed to assess anxiety levels and psychological wellbeing as well as qualitative interviews to explore the experiences and perceptions of some of the officers undergoing therapy. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the 30 retiring participants (less than five years) into the groups. Participants who scored 60% and above on retirement anxiety screening tool with their consent were used in the study. The instruments used were Pre-retirement Anxiety ($\alpha=.90$) and Social-support ($\alpha=.70$) scales. Hypotheses were raised and tested. Data were analysed using Analysis of Covariance and Scheffe Post-hoc test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Results revealed that out of 30 respondents 35.6% were below 55 years of age while 64.4% were between 55 to 60 years. 67% were males and 33% were females. They were recruited into two groups. 60% were exposed to Person-centred therapy while the remaining 40% were in the control group. This implies that most of the respondents with pre-retirement anxiety were between the ages of 55-60 years. Also, most of them with pre-retirement anxiety were experiencing moderate social support.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 1: Summary of the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of treatments on Pre-Retirement Anxiety among Federal Road Safety officers

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1540.114 ^a	16	96.257	1.773	.090	.503
Intercept	520.574	1	520.574	9.590	.004	.255
Covariate	202.164	1	202.164	3.724	.064	.117
Treatment	603.616	2	301.808	5.560	.029	.166
Gender	197.906	1	197.906	3.646	.067	.115
Social Support	209.405	2	104.703	1.929	.164	.121
Treatment * Gender	6.244	2	3.122	.058	.944	.004
Treat*Soc. Support	206.492	4	51.623	.951	.449	.120
Gender * Soc. Support	10.861	2	5.430	.100	.905	.007
Treatment * Gender * Soc. Support	161.518	2	80.759	1.488	.243	.096
Error	1519.886	28	54.282			
Total	77480.000	45				
Corrected Total	3060.000	44				

a. R Squared = .503 (Adjusted R Squared = .219)

The results from Table 1 showed that there was significant main effect of treatments on pre-retirement anxiety among Federal Road Safety officers in Edo ($F_{2, 28} = 4.318$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.116$). This was in contrast to the pre-test difference among the three groups which was not significant as expected. Relying on the result, the mean difference of the participants exposed to the psychotherapy had better reduction than those that were not exposed to any treatment (that is, control group). This suggests that the hypothesis which proposed no significant mean group difference was invalid and stand rejected. Therefore, Person-centred therapy was efficacious in the management of pre-retirement anxiety among FRS officers in Edo. Accordingly, there was a significant main effect of treatments in managing pre-retirement anxiety among FRS officers in Edo.

Table 2: Significant Differences In The Treatment

Treatment	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05
Experimental Group (Person-Centred)	16	41.7333
Control Group	14	44.1333
Sig.		.404

Means For Groups In Homogeneous Subsets Are Displayed.

A. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 15.000.

b. The group sizes were not equal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

From Table 2, the following observations were made:

- i. The mean score of Person-centred therapy statistically revealed its effectiveness in managing pre-retirement anxiety among FRS officers in Edo. The control group had the mean score of 44.13, while Person-centred therapy (41.7). even though the difference was not significant.
- ii. Significant difference was not observed between the mean of participants that received PCT (41.7333) and participants in the control group (44.13). This result also indicates that participants in PCT outperformed their counterparts in control group in terms of alleviating pre-retirement anxiety among FRS officers in Edo.

Discussion

The findings revealed there is a difference in the effect of the treatment with PCT in the management of pre-retirement anxiety among FRS officers in Edo. Though, there is no significant difference in the mean score among the officers that trained in Person-centred therapy to the comparison group. Based on this, the null hypothesis was accepted. This is in tandem with Elliott, Watson, Greenberg, Timulak, and Freire (2013). Their findings in a large prepost revealed that PC therapies are most effective for depression, but for interventions for anxiety difficulties, PC therapies are less effective. Pc therapies are not less effective in anxiety disorders.

Nonetheless, Elliott (2016) discovered that PCT is as effective as CBT. In 22 studies, PCT was equivalent to CBT in the percentage of prepost effect size of 0.06. Therefore, PCT is clinically and statistically equivalent to other therapies. For example, in 100 studies, 91 of which were randomly selected, there was virtually between PCT clients and other therapies in the effect of prepost effect. Therefore, Elliot (2016) advocated for more research on the PCT. Moreover, Rogerians posited that PCT records better outcome after a long period of post treatment.

In conclusion, PCT was effective in the treatment of pre-retirement anxiety, although with no significance difference in the outcome. This is in consonance with Elliott and Macleod

(2011) in an experiment with client having social anxiety. The findings of prepost revealed that the client considerably changed but not substantially changed. Thus PCT is an effective intervention in the treatment of pre-retirement anxiety, but follow-up is recommended to assess the post intervention change to get the accuracy of the intervention.

Qualitative Report

Respondents have different perceptions of the term 'Pre-retirement anxiety'. However, fear, uneasiness and apprehension were identifiable characteristics. Also, some of the causes of pre-retirement anxiety were: instability of the economy, inflation, lack of cooperation and/or support from spouses among others. In addition, the frequency of pre-retirement anxiety was not certain. While a respondent felt it was personal, therefore, not measureable, another felt not less than 60% of about to retire were victims. All respondents unanimously agreed that pre-retirement anxiety could impact on their physical and mental health. Furthermore, respondents identified certain measures to ameliorate this menace as amending the policy on transfer especially for about to retire and suggested that policy makers can make provision for options in their policy for 'bridge career' or 'contract staff' in elongating their services in the system. Hence, having a dependable support system could also help to a certain degree.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the effectiveness of PCT in the management of pre-retirement anxiety among FRS officers in Edo, Nigeria. The anxiety incurred by officers in getting set for their retirement is raised by the economic situation and the nature of their assignment which incurred psychological distress and resorted to anxiety. The fact that retirement and aging are closely related heightened negatively on the psychological wellbeing and health of pre-retirees.

Pre-retirement anxiety, has the tendency to aggravate to physical and psychological ill health such as, palpation, sorrow, sadness, stomach aches, headaches, depression, and invariably suicide ideation if not detected or early treated, jeopardizes the rest and relaxation as presumed aftermath of retirement for an officer. The psychosocial effect could be hammering on the quality of life, physical and mental health of an officer.

This study is anchored to continuity theory of retirement. The theory is psychosocial theory of retirement. Harghurst, Neugarten and Tobin (1968) as cited by Lange propound this theory and Grossman (2014) stated that people tend to sustain the same core values, interests, and behaviours during the transition from middle life to older adulthood. This is parallel to research that shows that people grow to favour familiar experiences over new ones as they age (Nimrod and Kleiber, 2007). Continuity can be exhibited in internal structures, like in personality values and external structures such as social roles, relationships and leisure activities.

Continuity theory promotes identity preservation, purpose, and a sense of control. In reference to these benefits, continuity is particularly adaptive in retirement as a higher sense of control is associated with improved morale and decreased depressive symptoms in retirees (Kim and Moen, 2002). This theory does not describe an absolute change in people's social involvement as they enter later life, but, during middle life will remain active in older adulthood, and people who are more active during middle adulthood will become

more active in older adulthood. That is, older adults will continue to occupy the same general roles they occupied when they were younger. Continuity, according to Lange and Grossman (2014) was the first psychosocial theory of aging that applies to retirement that aging process was not the same for everyone.

Typically, older adults tend to switch from physically taxing outdoor activities to less effortful indoor activities as they age. Similarly, while older adults do not commonly seek out familiar experiences, they are more likely to do so if they are women or experienced the loss of a spouse (Nimrod et al 2007). Thus, to effect adjustment into later life, older adults should maintain continuity while pursuing new interest if they so desire. Research on retirement after resorted to continuity theory, when trying to describe change and continuity across the retirement transition regards retiring as opportunity to maintain social contacts and lifestyle patterns (Atchley 1989; Quick and Moen, 1998). Thus, in line with continuity theory, roles may change but identities are preserved in retirement even in old age. Therefore, this study implemented PCT in the management of pre-retirement anxiety among the officers of FRS. The results revealed PCT is an effective intervention in the management of Pre-retirement anxiety.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is thus recommended that:

1. Wholesome retirement transitional packages should be put in place with effective counselling intervention processes and strategies.
2. Institutions should consider tactical contributions from professionals.
3. Psychological testing should be applied periodically to ascertain the mental wellbeing of their officers, while relevant interventions should be given as necessary.
4. Government and private institutions are to employ the services of qualified therapists in helping their staff to allay their pre-retirement anxiety by providing pre and post retirement counselling.
5. Life skills inform of bridge career or business acumen should be developed and practiced to a reasonable extent prior to retirement.
6. Reliable mortgage that will ensure accommodation for staff before their retirement should be in place by their employers.

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