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SELF-CONCEPT AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS CORRELATES OF PRE-RETIREMENT ANXIETY OF PUBLIC SERVANTS IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated self-concept and emotional intelligence as correlates of pre-retirement anxiety of public servants in Edo State, Nigeria. The study adopted correlational research design. The sample for this study was 1,800 public servants under the auspices of the Edo State government using multi-stage sampling technique. Three instruments were adapted and used for this study. They include; Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale (PAS) 0.83, Self-Concept Scale (SCS) 0.79, Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) 0.97 respectively. Three research questions as well as one corresponding hypotheses were formulated and used for the study, while research questions one to three were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient and Regression Analysis for testing the three null hypotheses at P<0.05 level of significance. From the analysis, the result revealed that self-concept and emotional intelligence significantly correlated with pre-retirement anxiety among public servants in Edo State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that public servants should start preparing for retirement as soon as they are employed because it is a fact that as one enters the service, he or she will one day leave the service either voluntary or compulsorily.

Keywords: Self-Concept, Emotional Intelligence and Pre-retirement Anxiety.

Introduction

In everyday life, human beings come across different things, issues, and events that pose challenges to them. The way an individual perceives such challenges could generate diverse changes within the individual, which may lead to psychological, mental, and emotional changes. Any of these changes if not properly controlled could result in anxiety in the individual. Globally, anxiety is a problem or phenomenon with a trending effect on people across different socio-economic demographic strata. All public servants will have to retire at one time or the other in their work lives. It is however unfortunate that the thought of retirement relatively short time a lot of changes occur in one's life. While the public servant should be constantly planning for retirement during his/her pre-retirement years, concerns such as risk tolerance, ability to save and the priorities set for retirement may all

change throughout the pre-retirement years, relatedly pre-retirement is the stage of life before retirement and offers an opportunity for one to plan and save solely for retirement years (Raymond, 2016). The thought of retirement to some public servants may breed anxiety. Anxiety is a pervasive and unpleasant feeling of tension, apprehension and feeling of impending disaster (Raymond, 2016). Anxiety According to American Psychological Association (2012) could be seen as an emotion characterised by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure. Anxiety according to Egbochuku and Obodo (2005) is a feeling of uneasiness and apprehension about a situation particularly one with an uncertain outcome. Obi (2011) stated that anxiety is a situation where one experiences fear towards daily life activities that one ought not to experience. According to her, anxiety should be seen as an unreasonable fear, a condition where one emotionally or physically experiences distress. According to Oghogho and Nwankwo (2022) pre-retirement anxiety is a feeling of intense fear, discomfort, and uncertainties that consistently interfere with prospective retirees' thought processes and preparation for their retirement.

Despite the reforms of civilian administration in Nigeria since 1999, there have been various challenges facing public servants in Nigeria. Pre-retirement anxiety by its nature involves worries about the future of public servants as a result of the cessation of active working life (Dada and Idowu, 2010). Pre-retirement anxiety may arise when such public servants recall the predicaments often associated with retirement. Life in retirement could be very challenging especially to the uninformed and the unprepared, it involves fear that usually results from change. As it stands, a good number of public servants in service experience anxiety with an unpleasant feeling of apprehension or worry regarding the uncertain, unpredictable, and potentially disruptive consequences on public servants in service. More so, public servants anxiety is fear of the unknown and worries about the future as a result of the cessation of active work life holds that anxiety about retirement is a constant companion of most public servants behaviour right from the day of engagement in public service. Therefore, public servants who is about to retire may have the anxiety of the changes that will come from a routine work role to less or no work role, inadequate financial resources and the psychological fulfillment of going to work and coming back home that would no longer be there. The unceremonial way of retiring people, often without notice, late payment of gratuity, irregular payment of pension and other psychological distress which would be encountered have made many individuals in the public service to see retirement as a death sentence. The effect of anxiety on prospective retirees could be characterised by different factors such as self-concept

and emotional intelligence of the individual public servants. This paper focusses on pre-retirement anxiety is pertinent because of the nonexistence of proper research on it in Edo State and especially in Nigeria. The study of pre-retirement is justified because retirement challenges have precursors; these precursors if well taken care of, could most likely prevent some future retirement challenges. Therefore, gender which has to do with a state of being male or female may influence individual's choice, opinion and decision-making processes. Butler and Smith (2016) described gender as the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. These gender roles according to him are learned. Pre-retirement is perceived differently and the way people react to it also differs. Seccombe and Lee (2016) observed that some people assumed that women are primarily family and home oriented and that pre-retirement is not problematic to them. Others believed that women in their retirement have little problems to cope with because of the assumption that most of their responsibilities are shouldered by their husbands. For this reason, most retiring female civil servants are not afraid of pre-retirement. Pre-retirement is not a homogenous experience for everyone. According to Strudsholm (2011), women are more likely to experience fewer difficulties adjustment than men because they have many other roles on which to rely on when they leave employment. Research confirmed that the factors or variables which created pre-retirement anxieties for male public servants also do the same for female public servants.

First, one of the hallmarks of a mature mind is the ability to control emotions to be able to achieve success in any situation or relationship. According to Egbule (2019), emotional intelligence is the ability to validly reason with emotions and use it to enhance thoughts. It involved the ability to utilise emotional knowledge to accurately perceive, understand, generate, access, and assist feelings or emotions to promote emotional intellectual growth. Emotional competence indicates one's ability to effectively respond to emotional stimuli elicited by various situations, having a high self-concept and optimism. Emotional maturity is reflected in the behavioural pattern exhibited by individuals while dealing with themselves and others, balancing and adopting the state of heart and mind flexibly. Emotional sensitivity indicates the capability to effectively understand the intensity of emotional arousal and to manage the immediate environment. It is the ability to have regard and respect for people's emotions. According to Goleman (2014), the most important of emotional intelligence is empathy which is the ability to accurately perceive emotion in others and sense what they are feeling.

Secondly, self-concept is directly or indirectly influenced by various

factors. It can be shaped by our life experiences, relationships, culture, education, sexual orientation, emotional maturity, age, gender, and even appearance. So, the number of identities and the specific content of each of them vary from person to person, the specific content of the self-concept is dependent on the situation. As such, the self may be seen as a collection of modular processing structures (self-schemas) that are elicited in different contexts or situations and have specific cognitive, affective, and behavioural consequences. Similarly, self-concept is how an individual thinks, views, and evaluates his or herself, and acts out his or her various life roles. In addition, our idea of ourselves arises, to a large extent, from our experiences of how we react to the behaviours of others, and how others react to us. Therefore, is way a pre-retiree views and sees his or her role may affect how his or her thinking pattern. But again, it is observed by the researcher that the problem of fear, worry, anxiousness, apprehension, uneasiness, tension, confusion, restlessness, dread, panic, uncertainty, irritability, and the working conditions in Nigeria's context have posed a great set back to pre-retirees effectiveness and efficiency in service, and again, it is important to note that experience has shown that pre-retirees have exhibited some form of serious concern concerning pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State. It, therefore, draws concern and encourages the researcher to find out if there is any relationship between public servants' self-concept and emotional intelligence of pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship existing between emotional intelligence and pre-retirement anxiety of public servants in Edo State?
2. What is the relationship existing between self-concept and pre-retirement anxiety of public servants in Edo State?
3. What is the relationship existing among self-concept and emotional intelligence pre-retirement anxiety of public servants in Edo State?

Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Method

The research design to be used for this study will be correlational research design. The design will be applicable since the event is presently ongoing. The study will be conducted in Edo State. The population for this study will comprise all 25,463 public servants serving under the auspices of the Edo State government. (Source: Information Communication Technology Agency, Government House, Benin City, Edo State 2024). This group is considered appropriate for this study because it is believed that

public servants of this class are mainly adults who do not want to be victims of pre-retirement anxiety. The sample of this study will comprise 1,800 public servants under the auspices of the Edo State government. A multi-stage sampling technique will be adopted in the selection of respondents. The researcher adapted three different scales which was modified and titled; Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale (PAS) 0.83, Self-Concept Scale (SCS) 0.79 and Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) 0.97 respectively and was used for data collection, which was structured into a 5point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha reliability method. The coefficient alpha of 0.83 was obtained. The instrument was therefore considered reliable because of the very high coefficient alpha. Five research assistants were used to distribute the questionnaire. Direct approach was used in data collection. The data collected from the study were analysed using SPSS 21. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 were answered using summated scores. The null hypotheses 1 2 and 3 were tested using t-test analysis. The norms of the instrument guided the decision of the researchers on research questions.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship existing between public servants' emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State?

Null Hypothesis I: The relationship existing between public servants' emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State will not be significant.

Table 1: Pearson r on the public servants' emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State

Source of Variation	N	Emotion. Intell. r	Pre-retirement anxiety r.	Cal t	0.05	Remark
Emotional intelligence	1555	1.00	0.025	0.649	0.517	Very Low +R
Pre-retirement anxiety	1555	0.025	1.00			

In table 5 it was observed that there is very low positive relationship of 0.025 existing between public servants' emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State. Also it was observed that at 1553df and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t 0.649 with p-value 0.517 which is greater than 0.05, the first null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore there is no significant relationship between public servants' emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship existing between public

servants' self-concept and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State?

Null Hypothesis 2: The relationship existing between public servants' self-concept and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State will not be significant.

Table 2: Pearson r on the public servants' self-concept and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State

Source of Variation	N	Self-concept r	Pre-retirement anxiety r.	Cal t	0.05	Remark
Self-concept relationship	1555	1.00	0.443	13.43	0.000	Low
Pre-retirement anxiety	1555	0.443	1.00			

Table 6 shows that there is low positive relationship of 0.443 existing between public servants' self-concept and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State. Also it was observed that at 1553df and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t 13.43 with p-value 0.000 which is less than 0.05, the second null hypothesis is not accepted. Therefore there is significant relationship between public servants' self-concept and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State.

Research Question 3: What is the correlation existing among public servants' self-concept, emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State?

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no significant correlation existing among public servants' self-concept, emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State.

Table 3: Regression analysis on the correlation existing among public servants' self-concept, emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	%	df	Cal. F	P<0.05	Remark
0.469	0.220	0.219	21.9	1551	146.17	0.000	S

Table 4 reveals that public servants' self-concept, emotional intelligence had R^2 adjusted of 0.219. This indicates that public servants' self-concept, emotional intelligence, contributed 21.9 percent of their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State. Furthermore, at 3df numerator, 1551df denominator and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated F146.17 with P-value 0.000 which is less than the 0.05, the fourth null hypothesis is not accepted. Therefore, there is significant correlation existing among public servants' self-concept, emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement anxiety in Edo State.

Discussion of Findings

The result analysis of this study revealed that, there is significant correlation existing among public servants' self-concept, emotional intelligence and their pre-retirement

anxiety in Edo State. Therefore, the result indicated that self-concept, emotional intelligence significantly correlate with pre-retirement anxiety among public servants. The result of this study however agrees with an earlier study by Odunayo (2016) who found that self-concept, emotional intelligence jointly accounted for the variance attributable to pre-retirement anxiety. He further explained that workers possessing low self-concept, emotional intelligence had higher pre-retirement anxiety compared to their counterparts who possessed high emotional intelligence. Also a study by Amadi (2014) found that, low self-concept, emotional intelligence significantly influenced pre-retirement anxiety among servants in public servants' Edo State. He further maintained that persons who scored low on self-concept, emotional intelligence where unable to coordinate themselves properly and face the challenges associated with retirement.

Conclusion

Pre-retirement is a very important stage in human development and an inevitable phenomenon in the lives of public servants. Public servants especially those on the verge of retirement usually have many concerns such as; money or financial security, emotion, family life, health, and other crucial issues that demand a person's attention. All of these worries aptly describe pre-retirement anxiety which results in frustration with intense psychological distress, diminished interest in social activities, feelings of detachment from others, suppressed emotional feelings and a sense that the future is bleak and empty. More so, counsellors, psychologists and others in the helping profession should assist persons retired or about to retire to maintain a high self-concept and self-confidence, as this will enable them to better handle problems that may come their way.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Public servants should start preparing for retirement as soon as they are employed because it is a fact that as one enters the service one will one day leave the service either voluntary or compulsorily.
2. Counsellors, psychologists and others in the helping profession should assist persons retired or about to retire to maintain a high self-concept and self-confidence. This will enable them to better handle problems that may come their way.
3. The government should endeavour to introduce skill acquisition programmes that public servants can engage in and fall back on when they eventually retire from work. This will help to reduce the fear about retirement.
4. The government should also endeavour to pay public servants their salaries.

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