

CORRELATION BETWEEN POLITICAL MISTRUST AND PRE-RETIREMENT ANXIETY AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the correlation between political mistrust and pre-retirement. Two hundred and thirty-six Enugu state civil service employees participated in the study. The respondents comprising males and females, were conveniently selected from various agencies, departments, and ministries in the state civil service. They completed a self-report measure of the political mistrust and the Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale. The Pearson's product-moment correlation model conducted on the data showed a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation between political mistrust and pre-retirement anxiety, $r(234) = .47, p < .001$, with political mistrust contributing about 13.7% of the variation in pre-retirement anxiety among the civil servants. The finding has implications for employees' well-being and job productivity.

KEYWORDS: *political mistrust, pre-retirement, anxiety, civil servant, retirees*

INTRODUCTION

The civil service is commonly assumed as the core and permanent administrative arm of any functional government. In particular, the civil service encompasses the relevant body of government officials deployed in numerous civil occupations devoid of political and judicial interference. The term describes a sector of the governmental processes primarily composed of career civil servants. In most societies, the civil service reflects an essential component of developmental processes. Indeed, the institution is central to national development in developed and developing nations like Nigeria (Okorie & Onwe, 2016). Civil service history in Nigeria is traced to the British colonial era and comprised of the federal and state civil services prearranged in departments, ministries, and extra ministerial departments usually controlled by an appointed minister for the national setting and a commissioner heading the state civil service. Accordingly, Nwanolue and Iwuoha (2012) noted that the president appoints the ministers while the state governors deploy the commissioners.

Nonetheless, civil service provides an essential pathway to effective government policy implementation (Ogunrotifa, 2012). Indeed, civil service is indispensable in administering and implementing public policies and programs. In other words, the government at all levels may not properly function without the body of professional civil servants. Thus, civil servants represent the essential drivers of the government's functioning and the development of any given society. Most importantly, career civil servants are government officers that are typically known to occupy a given office in the long-term irrespective of the changes in the government. The permanent nature of the civil servants ensures continuity in the functioning of the government. Indeed, they work behind the scenes and place their skills and energies at the disposal of their political leaders. Accordingly, numerous reports have underscored the relevant factors constraining the development and performance of the civil servants in Nigeria (Ayinde & Obawole, 2019; Eke, 2016; Kayode et al., 2021; Koko, 2020; Omiunu, 2014). However, indications suggest that pre-retirement anxiety is critical among civil servants. Thus, the present paper aimed to examine political distrust as a correlate of pre-retirement anxiety.

Consistent with other developed and developing nations, the Nigerian labor force is hastily aging. A considerable number of civil servants are predicted to be retired from active duty in the coming decade. Indeed, retirement is a ubiquitous part of the civil service and a significant life event (Henning et al., 2021; Yeung & Zhou, 2017). The official retirement age for Nigerian civil servants is about 65 years. However, retirement is a universal phenomenon that affects the living standard of government employees who manage to attain the status of a retiree. The trend is an elongated element of the normative life cycle (Stensel, 2009). Remarkably, the retirement stage has been recognized as a critical issue accompanied by psychological, emotional, and financial concerns (Adeniji et al., 2017) and a turning point in aging. In contemporary societies, the concept of retirement has become increasingly complicated, and there is no uniform definition for it (Wang & Shultz, 2010). Retirement has evolved into a personal and often lengthy transition process rather than a single act of permanent withdrawal from working life. New retirement paths, such as bridgework and gradual or partial retirement, complicate retirement perspectives (Maestas, 2010; Wang & Shultz, 2010). This study is about how people think about retirement and how they feel about it.

Several disparate studies have suggested that the nature and antecedents of retirement have been a topical issue among experts, researchers, and academics (Alavi et al., 2021; Fisher & Ryan, 2018; Fracaroli & Deler, 2015; Henken et al., 2018; Hopkins et al., 2016; Man & Man, 2019; Ng et al., 2011; Rudolphe et al., 2018; Sharbor & Marimuthu, 2018; Shammugam et al., 2017). Retirement generally reflects a critical phase of significant changes in the lives of public servants (Inaja & Rose, 2013). Several employees may consider these adjustments to be upsetting and unsettling. As a result, the shift from active employment to inactivity is the most challenging moment for a government servant. As a result, Atchley and Barusch (2004) attributed retirement difficulties to employees' lack of preparedness for this unavoidable stage of life. Many employees regard retirement as a burden rather than an exciting event worth planning for (Adeniji et al., 2017). Some difficulties adjusting to retirement, on the other hand, might be connected to work satisfaction.

While retirement can be a source of worry, anxiety, and sadness, it can also be a reward after years of hard work. Pre-retirement anxiety describes a persistent sensation of acute worry, discomfort, and uncertainty about retirement that interferes with an employee's mental processes. As a result, it entails active concerns about the future due to the natural aging process, which results in the termination of active working life. Although practically every employee is anxious about retirement, some employees are concerned about the age-related factors that come with it. Such conditions are often challenging, especially when employment is at its highest.

Political mistrust and pre-retirement anxiety

Retirement thoughts provoke several unhealthy concerns that promote negative, detrimental functioning emotions. Previous research has linked pre-retirement worries to work-related factors, aging problems, and life after service. For instance, Baba et al. (2015) identified fear of decreased income, mental health, and accommodation challenges as instigating pre-retirement anxiety among Nigerian civil servants. Also, Ujoatuonu et al. (2018) added that fatigue severity and financial self-efficacy predicted pre-retirement anxiety. Indeed, numerous socio-economic and demographic variables have been identified as predictors of employee anxieties relative to retirement. However, the government's inability to fully cater to senior citizens and the increasing report of non-payment of retirement benefits have birthed mistrust towards the government.

Political mistrust is a term describing the unfavorable attitude held by the citizens towards the political system. The concept of political mistrust reflects a pattern of attitude that resonances with perceptions of dishonesty, fraudulence, untrustworthiness, and selfishness that define the political system and its structures. Thoughts about retirement and the awareness of the government's ineffectiveness in aiding retirees trigger an emotional state of anxiousness. Thus, political mistrust might be an antecedent of pre-retirement anxiety in the civil service. Thus, the trend decreases patriotism and exacerbates negative feelings capable of undermining productivity. The primary purpose of the present study is to examine political mistrust as a previously unexplored correlate of pre-retirement anxiety.

Hypothesis: *There would be a positive correlation between political mistrust and pre-retirement anxiety.*

Method

Participants

This survey included 236 civil servants from the Enugu state civil service. They were conveniently chosen from different departments, agencies, and ministries in the state secretariat. Because retirement ideas are more likely to come at the peak stage of service (Ode, 2004; Maurer and Chapman, 2017), civil servants with five years or fewer to retirement were deemed the target group. There were 116 men and 118 women among the participants.

Measures

Political mistrust

Political mistrust was assessed using a self-report measure of political distrust to ascertain the respondents' overall feelings about the political system. The questionnaire contains 20 items distributed among three factors: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses toward the government. The response pattern was on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher score reveals high political mistrust, while a lower score represents decreased mistrust. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 was recorded in the study.

Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale

The 15-item Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale (NPAS) designed by Ugwu et al. (2019) was used to assess future retirees' pre-retirement anxiety. The responses are organized on a five-point scale, with one strongly disagreeing and five strongly agreed. Participants are supposed to indicate how much they agree with the statements about their current degree of pre-retirement worry. Higher scores imply higher levels of pre-retirement worry, whereas lower values suggest lower levels of pre-retirement anxiety. The scale was shown to have a reliability value of 0.72 by Ugwu et al. (2019).

Procedure

Five research assistants were hired to distribute the study instrument among departments, agencies, and ministries of the state secretariat. They were taught in field data gathering practices as research assistants. They assisted with distributing and collecting the questionnaires between February and April 2022. All participants were advised that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their data would be kept strictly secret. Respondents who filled the consent forms (n = 250) were given the study instrument to fill on the spot. Each set of questionnaires could be completed in about 10 minutes. In total, two hundred and thirty-six copies of the instrument were correctly filled and returned. Thus, the (236) copies were used for the analysis.

Result

A correlation research design was adopted. Two hundred and thirty-six participants responded to the questionnaires. Thus, the data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation model. A preliminary assessment indicated a linear relationship between political mistrust and pre-retirement anxiety, and the variables distributed normally, as inspected by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$). Notably, no outliers were recorded. There was a statistically significant, modest positive correlation between political mistrust and pre-retirement anxiety, $r(234) = .47, p < .001$, with political mistrust contributing about 13.7% of the variation in pre-retirement anxiety among the civil servants

Table 1:

Table showing the correlation, means, and standard deviations for the variables.

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
1. Political mistrust	3.65	0.33	.12**	
2. Pre-retirement anxiety	4.68	0.46	-.47	.47**
<i>R</i> ²	.137			

Note. $N = 236, ** = p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Discussion

The present paper examined whether there would be a positive correlation between political mistrust and pre-retirement anxiety among civil servants in Enugu state. Two hundred and thirty-six respondents participated in the study. The key hypothesis of the study anticipated that the variables would have a substantial positive connection. Political distrust was

a substantial positive predictor of pre-retirement anxiety in the study. Comparable research backs the important association between these factors (Ogu & Ekeh, 2018). The result indicates that civil servants who consider the political system's ineffectiveness in fulfilling their statutory obligation relative to regular payment of pension and other failed responsibilities by the government were more likely to develop anxiousness when retirement is made conscious. Several mechanisms could explain the present finding. Firstly, the disbelief about the government's ability to meet up with their responsibilities, lack of trust associated with income in post-service times, and the awareness that the situation could be worse might indirectly decrease work-related inputs. And lead to a general decline in efficiency and output and exacerbates feelings of extreme worries at the thoughts of retirement. Though the study cannot directly test this mechanism, the finding presupposes that pre-retirement anxiousness is more likely in workers who feel disappointed over the failure of the successive governments to address the issue of retirement in Nigeria's work environment.

Implications of the Findings

The research findings revealed the roles that political mistrust plays in the pre-retirement worries of civil servants in the civil service. The dimensions studied show that the anxiousness linked with pre-retirement thoughts is significantly correlated with disbelief in the political system. The study's finding has implications for early intervention for potential retirees in various organizations to build resilience. Furthermore, the result from this study has implications for directing future research in understanding pre-retirement stress, a rapidly growing field in terms of interest and need. The literature has not adequately covered the associating factors in pre-retirement worries and their associated personal and organizational well-being. This relationship may substantially impact how we understand pre-retirement anxiety and its implication on job performance.

Limitations, strengths, and future direction

The data collection method was entirely self-reported and may raise bias concerns. Also, likely intervening variables in the political mistrust and pre-retirement anxiety relationship could not be determined. However, the study provided valuable data for research, counselors, and administrators. Future research should consider multiple data collection to eliminate the chance of biased information. Moreso, research should adopt an experimental approach to establish cause-effect relationships.

Conclusion

This study found the immense role of political mistrust in pre-retirement anxiety in the lives of most employees, especially civil servants, who are more likely to build a post-service plan on retirement benefits. Thus, the study concludes that political mistrust is a positive determinant of pre-retirement anxiety among pre-retirees. Finally, the well-being of civil servants approaching retirement can be improved by providing social support and alternative retirement plans since experience has shown that retirement benefits might not be feasible in the near

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