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Planning for retirement during active service in Ghana: Insights from pensioners in the Greater Accra Region

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ABSTRACT

Workers often participate in pre-retirement planning activities to gain awareness of the likely changes they may experience when they retire to enable them to prepare accordingly. Although pre-retirement planning is essential for successful retirement and healthy aging, studies on pre-retirement planning activities among older adults in Ghana are limited. This study explored pre-retirement planning actions that were taken by Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) pensioners in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. A sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was adopted to gather data from 437 pensioners aged 60 years and above through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. The results indicate that while in active service, many (309) pensioners were not motivated to plan for retirement due to issues, such as low income, and distrust of financial institutions. When planning did take place, the pensioners favored financial planning over social, mental, and physical planning. The respondents also revealed that they did not prepare adequately for retirement due to low salaries, as well as low knowledge on pre-retirement planning. Policies are needed to encourage pre-retirement planning among workers in Ghana to enable them to have an appreciable quality of life in old age.

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Ghana; older persons; pension; pre-retirement planning; social protection

Introduction

Globally, retirement is a known concept that marks a person's exit from the workforce due to attainment of a mandatory retirement age, working for an agreed duration, ill health, or voluntary withdrawal from work (Wöhrmann et al., 2013). Whereas retirement connotes the exit from a primary career work, it could also lead to an entry into a new occupation or another career (Shultz & Wang, 2011). In Ghana, formal sector workers constitute about 3.8% and 15.9% of the employed population in the rural and urban centers,

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respectively (Sumberg et al., 2019). Akin to several countries, some workers in Ghana's formal sector are usually mandated to retire at the age of 60 years (Dovie, 2017). The exit from Ghana's workforce based on the mandatory retirement age also indicates that a substantial section of the retiree population are older persons.

The proportion of older persons in Ghana is about 6.7% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021) and this figure is expected to reach close to 10% by the year 2050 (United Nations, 2017). Population aging in Ghana could be attributed to the decline in fertility rates, improved health care, and improved nutrition (Kwankye, 2013; Mba, 2010). Care for older persons in Ghana has been the primary responsibility of family members, especially adult children (Ofori-Dua, 2014). However, due to issues such as urbanization and the gradual nucleation of the family (Aboderin, 2004; Dovie, 2019), family support for older persons is on the decline. This development has not only called for the implementation of targeted state interventions to supplement the existing kinship support for older persons (Coe, 2021), but it also necessitates the intensification of retirement planning activities among individuals so that they can adjust to retirement and maintain an appreciable quality of life in old age (Ongoh et al., 2023).

Retirement is often met with mixed feelings, and these feelings are relative to the individual (Dingemans & Henkens, 2014). While some people perceive retirement as a period for relaxation, others appear to be anxious about various issues, including the decrease in income earned (Poterba et al., 2009). Consequently, workers often participate in pre-retirement planning activities to gain awareness of the likely changes they may experience when they retire to enable them prepare accordingly (Peeters et al., 2008). It is during this phase that workers affirm their decision to retire based on various factors, such as the accessibility of health insurance, social security eligibility, finances, and spousal interdependence (Dave et al., 2006). In most cases, retirement planning is considered holistic and capable of guaranteeing an appreciable quality of life if social, physical, mental, and financial resources are all taken into consideration (Leung & Earl, 2012).

Over 1.6 million active workers in Ghana make contributions to the public pension scheme called the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT, 2021). The Social Security and National Insurance Trust is a three-tier pension scheme that encompasses both Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution pension plans. *The first tier and second tier require employees to have 13.5% and 5% contributions, respectively, made from their salaries on their behalf* (Ofei-Kwapong, 2013). The third tier is an optional provident fund managed by non-state licensed service operators, and it requires a payment of 16.5% of a worker's basic salary.

The smooth adjustment to life after retirement could be impeded by some adverse circumstances, including inadequate income (Murphy, 2013; Rameli

& Marimuthu, 2018), as well as some psychological and health challenges (Osborne, 2012; Shultz & Wang, 2011; Wang & Shi, 2014). Available evidence suggests that the inability for some retirees to adjust during retirement could be caused by their sole concentration on financial resources as the key determinant of successful retirement (Knoll, 2011). Consequently, they tend to neglect other essential resources (social, physical, mental) during pre-retirement planning. While some studies have been conducted to explore pre-retirement planning among retirees elsewhere in the world (Jonah & Kanyangale, 2021; Yeung, 2013; Yeung & Zhou, 2017), not much is known about this subject in the Ghanaian context.

In this article we engaged SSNIT pensioners to explore the pre-retirement planning they undertook before retirement. We also ascertained whether they were motivated to plan for retirement. With the rise of population aging in Ghana, coupled with the challenges of ill-health (Brammah & Rosenberg, 2021), psychological distress such as depression (Boima et al., 2020), financial constraints (Abekah-Carter et al., 2022), and social isolation (Issahaku, 2021) reported among some older persons in the country, it is significant to conduct such a study in this context to understand how people plan for retirement. This could offer some useful recommendations on how the prioritization of pre-retirement planning across social, physical, financial, and mental resource domains could be promoted among the working population.

Methods

Study design

The empirical information presented in this paper is from a larger cross-sectional study (PhD dissertation) that examined the survival strategies and quality of life among SSNIT pensioners in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It utilized the mixed-methods design for its usefulness in integrating quantitative and qualitative tools to produce credible research results (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). Specifically, the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was employed. One major merit of the use of this mixed-methods approach is that it allows for the gathering of different but complementing data on an issue under study, and the strengths of both the quantitative and qualitative components addressed the weakness of each other to produce accurate findings (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the quantitative data were gathered first. Following the analysis of this data, qualitative data were also gathered to specifically provide an in-depth insight and clarifications on the reasons behind the pensioners' responses to survey questions related to their motivation to plan for retirement, as well as the adequacy of their pre-retirement planning activity.

Study Area

This study was conducted in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This region hosts a population of 5,455,692 with 2,679,063 being males and 2,776,629 being females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). This region was selected for the study because it accounts for one of the highest pensioner populations in the country. Available statistics show that the number of SSNIT pensioners in the region rose from 30,344 in 2010 to 49,673 in 2016 (SSNIT, 2016). Therefore, it was essential to gain insight from this population regarding the nature of pre-retirement planning they undertook before they retired.

Sample size

SSNIT pensioners aged 60 years and above in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana were the study population. They comprised individuals who retired from public and private organizations in the formal sector. Beneficiaries of the SSNIT pension scheme were selected for this research given the fact that the scheme is the largest manager of pension funds in the country.

The Yamane's formula was used to generate the study's sample size (Yamane, 1967).

$$n = \frac{z^2 p(1-p)N}{z^2 p(1-p) + Ne^2}$$

n = the minimum sample size,

z = the desired level of confidence level. In this study, 95% confidence interval and the z -score corresponding to 95% confidence level = 1.96

p = the proportion of some relevant characteristic

N = is population of pensioners in Greater Accra Region from the records of SSNIT as at December 2016 is 49,673 (SSNIT, 2016).

e = is the degree of precision which would be assumed to be 5%, hence $p = 0.05$

$$n = \frac{49,673}{1 + 49,673 * 0.05^2} = 397$$

A 10% of the sample was also included to address non-response cases

$$10\% * 397 = 40$$

Hence the sample size is $40 + 397 = 437$

Sampling procedure

The total number of SSNIT pensioners in the study area during the conduct of this study was 49,673 (SSNIT, 2016). The stratified sampling technique was

employed to place these SSNIT pensioners into two strata; first according to the public or private sector, and also according to their gender. The total number of pensioners who worked in the private and public sectors were 23,058 and 26,615, respectively. The proportion of each sector was calculated by dividing the total of each sector by the overall total of SSNIT pensioners in the Greater Accra Region, and then multiplying it with the sample size (437). These calculations resulted in the sample sizes of the public and private sectors being 236 and 201 respectively. Following a similar stratification procedure, the number of males and females in the public (male: 127; female: 109) and private (male: 147; female: 54) sectors was also calculated.

To reach potential participants for this study, an introductory letter was sent to the Director-General of SSNIT, who granted permission for the organization to provide assistance. The research unit of SSNIT informed the researchers that the pensioners had an association in the Greater Accra Region which had subsidiaries known as zones. The researchers visited the head office of the pensioners' association to meet the President and ask for his assistance to reach potential participants. It was revealed during this meeting that each zone had their own administrative structures; hence, contact details of the Presidents and Secretaries of each of the 34 zones were provided to the researchers. When these individuals were contacted, they showed willingness in the research and suggested that it would be more appropriate if the researchers visited them on their respective weekly meeting days. When the researchers attended the respective zonal meetings held on different days, the Presidents invited them to explain the motive of our visit and the purpose of the research to the members. After this, the consent of the respondents was sought to participate in the research. It is important to indicate that the recruitment of respondents at the meeting venues based on their availability and willingness had a high tendency to reduce the chance of all the pensioners having a fair chance of being selected. It has to be stated that during that period, this technique was the only suitable one available, particularly for the fact that all the zonal associations declined to give out the names of their members to allow for the random selection of respondents. This notwithstanding, the researchers ensured that there was a high chance for every pensioner to be selected by visiting the meeting points of the respective zones at least three times.

Pre-retirement planning categories

The study categorized pre-retirement planning under four domains, namely, financial, mental, social, and physical. The financial planning consisted of 11 items, while the mental, social, and physical planning categories comprised 3 items each (see results in [Table 3](#)). The selection of these domains was informed by the resource-based dynamic model (Wang et al., 2011).

Proponents of this model assert that retirees could adjust during retirement if they have access to financial (income and assets); physical (e.g., good health); cognitive/mental (e.g., information retirement); and social (e.g., social interaction) resources (Wang et al., 2011). The respective items under each domain were also adapted from an assessment tool known as the Retirement Resources Inventory (RRI) which was developed by Leung and Earl (2012). According to Leung and Earl (2012), the impetus for which this measurement framework was created was to allow for the exploration of the dimensionality that exist among retirement resources. The RRI, which has six components, namely physical, financial, social, emotional, cognitive, and motivational resources, are further categorized into tangible resources (perceived health and physical strength and illness); financial resources (e.g., savings, investment, and perceived income adequacy); mental resources; and social resources (Leung & Earl, 2012; Yeung & Zhou, 2017).

Data collection

A structured questionnaire was developed in English to gather data for the quantitative component of this study. The questions were adapted from the RRI assessment tool (Leung & Earl, 2012). This data collection instrument was programmed on mobile devices using a software known as Insynt. This tool was utilized given the high degree of accuracy it has in the entry of data. It also supported the entry of data without the use of internet. Since an electronic mode of data collected was utilized in this research, the questionnaire was administered to respondents by field assistants who were trained on how to use the software to gather data. These field assistants also assisted respondents who were not proficient in English by verbally translating the questions for them to answer.

For the qualitative component of the research, 52 participants were selected from the total sample size. These participants were engaged via 4 focus group discussions (FGD) consisting of 8 members each, and 20 in-depth interviews (10 males, 10 females). These participants were contacted after completing the survey, and their selection was not only based on their willingness and availability to partake in the qualitative component of the research, but they also showed some level of understanding of the subject matter when answering the survey questions. Additionally, the choice of engaging a participant in a focus group discussion or an in-depth interview was mainly based on their preference for a specific qualitative data collection medium. Two focus groups consisted of males and females from the public sector, respectively. The remaining two groups also consisted of males and females from the private sector, respectively. Each focus group discussion lasted for about one hour thirty minutes, while the in-depth interviews lasted for an average of sixty

minutes. All sessions were audio recorded with the permission of the participants.

The data collection tool for the qualitative section of the study was a semi-structured interview guide that was designed by the researchers. The interview questions primarily sought to explore participants' motivation for pre-retirement planning and the adequacy of their pre-retirement planning. After its initial development in English, this interview guide was also translated into Twi and Ga to address language barrier issues. This was done following Son's (2017) back-to-back strategy. With this approach, a language expert proficient in English and the local languages was contacted to translate the interview guide from the English language to Twi and Ga. Another language expert then retranslated the guide from the local language back into English and the two versions were compared. Where there were disagreements, they were discussed by the two language experts with a third language expert as a mediator.

Data analysis

The quantitative data gathered was screened for non-responses and it was found that all questionnaires were accurately answered, hence, no case was deleted. The data was then exported into Stata 14 for analysis. The demographic characteristics of the pensioners, and the pre-retirement planning categories were presented using frequencies and percentages. Furthermore, chi-square tests were used to explain associations between gender and sector of employment on one hand and motivation for pre-retirement planning on the other hand. Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis test was also used to assess if significant differences existed in the distribution of the number of planning steps taken across subcategories of the demographic variables.

The qualitative data was analyzed using the framework approach; a data analysis tool that is frequently used in policy research to analyze qualitative data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The first stage of this approach entailed the verbatim transcription of all audios. With the engagement of three language experts, the back-to-back approach was utilized again to re-translate all transcripts in the local languages into English. To minimize data loss after re-translation, the language experts conducted independent translations, and their transcripts were compared against each other to check for accuracy and correctness. The second stage entailed reading the transcribed data to identify the emerging ideas and patterns, as well as coding the data and grouping them under themes. The themes were then refined to more specific ones and with reference to the study objective, the relevance of each theme, and the section of the data it covered were identified. Lastly, data from the

respective themes were used to support the findings from the quantitative data analysis.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance and approval was provided by the Ethics Committee for Humanities at the University of Ghana (ECH/006/18–19). The participation of every subject in this research was voluntary, hence, they had every right to opt out of the research at any time. The informed consent of every participant was also sought before they were engaged in the study. Additionally, the identities of all participants were not revealed to any third party.

Results

Sample demographics

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The study sampled 274 males and 163 females who had attained the statutory retirement age of 60 years or above. The educational profiles of the respondents were diverse, and they included primary education, Junior High School education, tertiary education, Vocational education, Secondary education, and those with Diploma. The lowest proportion of respondents completed primary education. Majority of the respondents were heads of households. Furthermore, pensioners from the public sector were more than those from the private sector.

Motivation for pre-retirement planning

As presented in Table 2, many of the respondents (309) indicated that they were not motivated to plan for retirement. Gender-wise, the proportion of men (69.7) and women (72.4) who were not motivated to engage in pre-retirement planning was high. While no relevant association was found between the level of motivation and gender, the proportion of men (30.3) who indicated that they were motivated to plan for their retirement was more than that of women (27.6). Again, higher proportions of respondents who worked in both private sector (64.7%) and public sector (75.8%) were not motivated to plan.

The motives behind a person's willingness to plan for retirement are essential pieces of information that can shed light on the link between predisposing factors and the tendency to engage in pre-retirement planning. During the focus group discussions and the in-depth interview sessions, some participants revealed various reasons that motivated them to plan for retirement. One participant shared that his observation of impoverishment among some

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Variable	% (N)		
	Total	Men	Women
Gender			
Male	62.7 (274)		
Female	37.3 (163)		
Marital Status			
Married	72.8 (318)	85.8 (235)	51 (83)
Separated	8.7 (38)	5.1 (14)	14.7 (24)
Widowed	18.5 (81)	9.1 (25)	34.3 (56)
Household Head			
Yes	83.3 (364)	95.3 (261)	63.2 (103)
No	16.7 (73)	4.7 (13)	36.8 (60)
Sector of Employment			
Private	46 (201)	53.6 (147)	33.1 (54)
Public	54 (236)	46.4 (127)	66.9 (109)
Educational Attainment			
Primary	3.2 (14)	4.4 (12)	1.2 (2)
JHS	34.6 (151)	33.6 (92)	36.2 (59)
Secondary	13.5 (59)	12.7 (35)	14.7 (24)
Diploma	15.6 (68)	9.9 (27)	25.2 (41)
Vocational	14.7 (64)	15.0 (41)	14.1 (23)
Tertiary	18.6 (81)	24.4 (67)	8.6 (14)

Table 2. Motivation to plan for retirement among pensioners by gender and sector of employment.

	Motivated		Not motivated		Test statistic
	N	%	N	%	p-value
Gender					
Women	45	27.6	118	72.4	X ² = 0.356 p = 0.551
Men	83	30.3	191	69.7	
Sector					
Public	57	24.2	179	75.8	X ² = 6.540 p = 0.011
Private	71	35.3	130	64.7	
Total	128	29.3	309	70.7	

pensioners when he was in the workforce motivated him to plan for his retirement:

When I was working, I was observing those who were on retirement. At times you meet some of them and they look so wretched, as if they did not work at all. So, I acquired a plot and I started this structure three years to retirement. I built it to a certain level and completed it when I came on retirement. I also had six acres of land somewhere and I set up a mango plantation farm and that is supporting me” (Male, IDI, Nima).

A female participant also shared that her desire to maintain an appreciable quality of life and live long motivated her plan for her retirement:

Planning for retirement can help one live long. This is because the money (pensions) provided by SSNIT is not enough, so I had to use the little money to plan for retirement. I knew very well that if I didn't plan well, I would suffer and that could lead to my untimely death (Female, IDI, Kwabenya).

The qualitative component of this study also probed to ascertain the reasons why a majority of the pensioners were not motivated to plan for retirement. With a major reference made to financial planning, some participants disclosed that the fraudulent nature of some financial entities as well as insufficient earnings demoralized them. This participant shared his encounter with a financial institution:

I have a personal experience with these financial institutions, and I know some of them are not reliable. I recall “pyram” which was a financial institution many of us invested with and later got the shock of our lives when suddenly this financial institution collapsed, and the owners could not be traced. This seriously demotivated me from engaging in further investments opportunities (Male, FGD).

Additionally, a participant indicated that a worker’s salary was a major determinant of pre-retirement planning:

Sometimes the work you do and the salary you receive will either motivate you or not. Unfortunately, in my case my salary was very small and could not even meet my monthly expenditure (Female, FGD).

Pre-retirement planning among pensioners

The study also examined the pre-retirement planning activities that the pensioners engaged in, and these have been categorized under four main domains (financial, physical, mental, and social resources). The financial planning domain constituted eleven variables (Table 3). The findings revealed that majority of the respondents adopted savings and making contributions to an insurance scheme as major financial planning activities to secure income for retirement. Other forms of financial planning that the respondents adopted included investment in treasury bonds and acquiring new employable skills, among others. The physical domain was centered on variables including access to health insurance, regular health checkups, and physical exercise. Although all SSNIT pensioners are automatic beneficiaries of the National Health Insurance Scheme given the appropriation of 2.5% of all SSNIT contributions to fund the scheme, the study found that majority (58.8%) of the pensioners also patronized other health insurance initiatives. On the other hand, only 35.7% and 15.1% planned to exercise and joined a fitness club, respectively. Notably, a vast proportion of mental planning can be tied to the acquisition of knowledge in financial literacy. This study found that only few respondents engaged in mental planning. Specifically, a small fraction of the pensioners sought counseling on retirement transition (19.0%), attended seminars on retirement (20.6%), and read books on retirement (19.2%). For social planning, the study found that the number of pensioners who did not participate in planning in this domain were more than those who engaged themselves in

Table 3. Pensioners' pre-retirement planning.

Planning domain	%
Financial planning	
Contribute to insurance scheme	86.5
Made savings	76.9
Investment in treasury bills and bonds	35.5
Investment in children	72.1
Build or own a house	69.3
Starting a private business	33.9
Post-retirement employment	26.3
Acquired new employable skills	18.5
Build real estate	14.4
Investment in fixed deposit	13.3
Investment in stock and shares	11.0
Physical Planning	
Health insurance registration	58.8
Plan to exercise	35.7
Planned and joined fitness club	15.1
Mental planning	
Counselling on retirement transition	19.0
Workshop or seminar on retirement	20.6
Read books	19.2
Social planning	
Improved Interpersonal relationship	40.1
Improved social support	26.8
Improved social network	34.1

social planning activities. A majority of the pensioners did not seek to improve their interpersonal relationships (59.9%), social support (73.2%), or social networks (65.9%).

Pre-retirement planning and demographic characteristics

The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed to assess the significant differences that existed in the pre-retirement planning steps taken under each resource domain across subcategories of the demographic variables (Table 4). A study conducted by Silva et al. (2017) is an example of extant research that has indicated that the utilization of this test in examining the differences that exist between subcategories of an independent variable on a dependent variable is useful.

The analysis revealed that the mean number of steps taken with regard to physical planning for the men (1.2) was slightly higher than that of the women (.9), and this was significant ($*p < .05$). Likewise, there was also a significant relationship ($*p < .05$) regarding the mental planning steps taken by males (.8) and females (.6). Additionally, those who were looking after children had a higher mean number of social planning steps (1.0) compared to their counterparts (.6), and this was significant at 5%. Another finding of this study was that the mean number of financial (5.5) and mental planning (1.1) steps taken by SSNIT pensioners who had acquired tertiary level of education were significantly higher than those with a relatively lower level of education. The study also found that pensioners

Table 4. Differences in pre-retirement planning steps taken.

	Mean (SD) of no. of planning steps taken			
	Financial (11 steps)	Physical (3 steps)	Mental (3 steps)	Social (3 steps)
Gender		*	*	
Female	4.6 (2.0)	0.9 (1.0)	0.6 (1.0)	1.0 (1.3)
Male	4.5 (2.1)	1.2 (1.1)	0.8 (1.0)	1.0 (1.2)
Looking after children				*
No	4.8 (2.0)	0.9 (1.0)	0.6 (0.9)	0.6 (1.1)
Yes	4.6 (2.1)	1.1 (1.1)	0.8 (1.0)	1.0 (1.2)
Educational level	***		*	
Primary	3.5 (2.0)	1.4 (.5)	0.4 (.6)	1.3 (1.1)
JHS	4.0 (1.8)	1.1 (1.0)	0.6 (1.0)	0.9 (1.2)
Secondary	4.2 (1.9)	1.2 (1.0)	0.8 (1.0)	1.3 (1.3)
Diploma	4.8 (2.0)	0.8 (1.0)	0.7 (1.1)	.9 (1.2)
Vocational	5.1 (1.9)	1.1 (1.2)	0.6 (.8)	1.1 (1.3)
Tertiary	5.5 (2.4)	1.2 (1.2)	1.1 (1.2)	1.0 (1.1)
Sector of employment	**	***	***	***
Private	4.9 (2.1)	1.4 (1.1)	1.0 (1.1)	1.3 (1.3)
Public	4.3 (1.9)	0.9 (1.0)	0.6 (0.9)	0.8 (1.1)

SD: Standard Deviation. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

who worked in the private sector had a higher mean number of planning steps across all the resource domains than those who worked in the public sector.

Adequacy of pre-retirement planning

The respondents were also asked whether they considered their preparation for retirement as adequate. The study found that a majority (59%) of them did not prepare adequately for retirement. As indicated in Table 5, the respondents attributed their inability to plan for retirement to inadequate income (41.6%), family responsibilities (35.5%), lack of education about retirement planning (19.2%), extended family pressure (18.5%), children's school fees (16%), and limited years of serving (8.7%).

Extracts from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions also corroborated the quantitative findings. Specifically, the pensioners revealed that issues, such as low income and heightened family responsibilities, affected

Table 5. Reasons for inadequate pre-retirement planning.

Reason	% of		
	Total	Men	Women
Inadequate income	41.6	62.6	37.4
Family responsibilities	35.5	60.6	39.4
Lack of education about retirement planning	19.2	58.3	41.7
Extended Family Pressure	18.5	53.1	46.9
Children School fees	16.0	65.7	34.3
Limited years of servicing	8.7	63.2	36.8

Absolute figures are more than the total sample because of multiple responses. Therefore, the table shows the percentage of responses.

their retirement planning. This participant indicated that the low income he earned during his working days prevented him from engaging in any financial planning activity:

The economy in Ghana was not favoring us when we were working. Our salaries were used to pay electricity and water. Transportation to and from work was very expensive. This coupled with taking care of family responsibilities made it impossible for me to plan (Male, FGD, Amasaman).

Similarly, a female participant indicated that a substantial amount of her income was used to cater for the needs of her children:

I could not plan because I had children who were in University and Senior high School, so I spent all my money on them. I was a caterer so I used to do something small to support myself but now that I am old, I cannot work. (Female, IDI, Tema)

Discussion

Available evidence, which affirms the assertions of some of the participants, suggests that the hope to have a comfortable life and be able to meet pertinent needs during old age strongly motivates people to plan for retirement (Nweke, 2015). However, this study also found contrary results as majority of the SSNIT pensioners indicated that they were not motivated to plan for retirement during their working days. According to some of the participants, they were discouraged from planning for retirement due to inadequate income. This finding is consistent with Biggs (2019), who reported that individuals earning low incomes were unlikely to enroll in retirement plans. Moreover, the issue of low income among formal sector worker is well-documented in Ghanaian literature. For instance, a study conducted by Bolang and Osumanu (2019) reported that some formal sector workers earned as little as \$44.44 and \$111.11. This presented some implications in their quest to acquire investment credit from financial institutions. Another factor identified that corroborated existing evidence was the distrust of financial institutions (Baidoo & Akoto, 2019). Thus, the hearsay, as well as unfavorable personal experiences from engaging with some investment agencies deterred some individuals from exploring other financial alternatives that could help them secure adequate income for retirement. It was also evident from the findings that majority of the SSNIT pensioners prioritized financial planning over the social, physical, and mental planning domains. The over-reliance on financial resources as the main determinant of comfortable retirement could be problematic as it does not necessarily cover essential resources that are physical, social, and cognitive in nature. Therefore, including social, mental, and physical factors in retirement planning is more holistic and more likely to guarantee better

quality of life in retirement (Leung & Earl, 2012). It is also noteworthy that, apart from the SSNIT pension scheme and the National Health Insurance Scheme that help address the financial and physical (health) issues among pensioners, the state has not made adequate efforts to introduce specific policy interventions to prepare persons to address their social and psychological needs after they retire. Introducing such initiatives could enhance understanding on pre-retirement planning and life after retirement, as well as encourage the social participation in old age. Also, the relatively high percentage recorded in the patronage of other health insurance initiatives could be attributed to the value many older persons place on healthcare, the health issues associated with old age, as well as the rise in healthcare costs (Mudege & Ezech, 2009). It was also found in this study that pensioners who worked in the private sector engaged more in pre-retirement planning across all the domains than their counterparts in the public sector. This finding supports a study conducted by Thuku (2013), which observed that, generally, private sector workers were better prepared for retirement than their counterparts in the public sector. This finding also suggests that private sector workers are more likely to adjust to retirement more easily than workers in the public sector. A plausible reason for this could be the relatively high wages earned by most private sector workers in Ghana (Burchell & Tumawu, 2014). It would be useful if further studies are conducted to explore and compare the various factors that enhance preparedness for retirement among public and private sector employees. Admittedly, a majority of the pensioners also indicated that they did not prepare adequately for retirement. Akin to findings of other studies (e.g., Biggs, 2019; Wilson & Aggrey, 2012), the pensioners attributed this to limited knowledge in pre-retirement planning and low salaries. Wang et al. (2011) posit that the ability for retirees to adjust to retirement is dependent on their access to resources, such as financial resources (Income and assets); physical resources (e.g., good health); cognitive/mental resources (e.g., information on retirement); and social resources (e.g., social interaction). Some studies also report that a person's health (Kubicek et al., 2011), retirement income sources like savings and investments (van Solinge & Henkens, 2008), emotional resilience, social support, and social interaction (Leung & Earl, 2012), all have some association with retirement adjustment. Consequently, the study findings suggest that the failure for workers to plan adequately for retirement could have adverse implications on their wellbeing in old age. It would be useful if mandated state institutions and employers organize sensitization workshops to educate people on pre-retirement planning and its implication on wellbeing in old age. This could go a long way to inform people on the steps they could take to enhance their ability to maintain a good quality of life in old age.

Study limitations

Despite the relevant information presented in this study, it is also important to outline its limitations. Firstly, this study engaged a relatively small fraction of SSNIT pensioners in Ghana and excluded pensioners who worked in the informal sector and beneficiaries of other Ghanaian pension schemes such as the Ghana Universities Staff Superannuation Scheme. Secondly, this study mainly presented descriptive findings on pre-retirement planning among the study population and barely reports on any causal relationships. Nonetheless, efforts were made to enhance the trustworthiness of this research. To ensure the transferability of the findings, a thorough description of the research process and research participants were provided to facilitate evaluation of whether the results are transferable to other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The credibility, confirmability, and dependability of the study were also ensured by conducting the data analysis in accordance with the research approach, and the interpretation of the results were guided by the information provided by the participants. It is, however, recommended that future studies in this area focus on the correlation between pre-retirement planning and well-being or quality of life among pensioners. Additionally, such studies could employ either quantitative or qualitative approaches to engage pensioners who worked in both the formal and informal sectors on a similar topic.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to provide insight into pre-retirement planning among SSNIT pensioners in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The findings suggest that a majority of the SSNIT pensioners were less motivated to undertake pre-retirement planning. Financial planning was the most prioritized form of pre-retirement activity. Some pensioners attributed their inability to plan adequately for retirement to low income and the limited knowledge they had on pre-retirement planning. It is important for workers to prioritize pre-retirement planning across all the social, financial, physical, and mental domains while in active service. In addition, the state should consider implementing a policy that would require all employers of medium and large firms to enroll their new employees for short courses on planning for retirement. For small firms, the state, through SSNIT and other mandated institutions, could organize an initiative that would offer the same training to employees at a subsidized cost. Induction courses for new employees should include pre-retirement planning fundamentals to motivate workers to prepare for the inevitability of retirement immediately when they start work. This would help enhance their knowledge on pre-retirement planning.

Key Points

- The desire to be capable of fulfilling one's needs amidst the probable loss of capacity in old age motivates workers in Ghana to plan for retirement.
- The ability for retirees in Ghana to have a successful retirement is dependent on their access to financial, physical, mental, and social resources.
- The implementation of appropriate policy measures by the state to assist people to plan adequately for retirement could be critical in assuaging the challenges of retirees in Ghana.

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