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Late Career Work Disengagement and Thriving at Work as Predictors of Pre-Retirement Anxiety among Nigerian Nurses

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ABSTRACT

This study examined late career work disengagement and thriving at work as predictors of pre-retirement anxiety among Nigerian nurses. A total of 278 nurses (61 men and 217 women) from five (5) hospitals in the Southeast of Nigeria participated in the study. Their age range was between 50-60 years, with average age of 55 years (SD = 8.64). Three instruments were used for data collection, namely; Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale, Thriving at Work Scale and Work Disengagement Scale. Hierarchical multiple regressions were used in the statistical analysis. Two hypotheses were postulated. Results of the analyses showed that late career work disengagement was not a predictor of pre-retirement anxiety. Thriving at work negatively predicted pre-retirement anxiety, showing that increase in thriving at work was associated with lower pre-retirement anxiety. This showed that the more Nigerian nurses thrive at work the lesser the likelihood that they would feel anxious prior to retirement. Organizational practices, programs and policies aimed at facilitating thriving at work, late career work disengagement and flourishing in pre-retirement should be implemented in the healthcare sector.

Introduction

Retirement is one of the most important life transitions in late adulthood which has implications in employee's general activity (Hurtador, Gabriela, & Topa, 2018). It is a process of leaving a vocation, job, occupation, profession, career or work life which can be as a result to sickness, voluntarily retirement or at due age (Anyebe, Yamah, Philip, & Lawal, 2018). It can challenge employee's social and financial roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (Serrat, Villar, Pratt, & Stukas, 2017). For this reason, retirement may break long standing friendship plus support with networks of nurses in a particular work setting, environment and culture which might create loneliness through worry in pre-retirement and retirement. When these happen, employees' think about how they can cope with and adjust to the possible loss of interpersonal relationships and social activities in relation to work place by trying to develop new interpersonal relations and extra-work or social activities within and outside their workplace (Ogu & Ekeh, 2018). Since retirement entails changes in a person's general activity, nurses close to their retirement may become worried or if ill prepared for the change, will be afraid of being taken off the world of work. Some might be prepared, yet, harbour an unreasonable fear of failure because they are leaving a workforce and community that they are fitted-in, have link with and have sacrificed a lot for (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004).

Pre-retirement is a period (below five years) before retirement that is accompanied by anxiety.

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, worry, uneasiness, and fuzzy that stems from an overreaction to a situation that is only subjectively seen as menacing (Temitope, 2015). Temitope (2015) defined anxiety as a pervasive and unpleasant feeling of tension, apprehension, and feeling of impending disaster which can be appropriate, but when it is too much and continues for too long, the individual may suffer from anxiety abnormal related behaviour. Anxiety is different from fear. Fear is a response to a clear and present danger. Thus, anxiety is often a response to an undefined or unknown threat which may stem from internal conflicts, feeling of insecurity, or forbidden impulses. Therefore one can ascertain that pre-retirement anxiety simply involves irrational fears, apprehensions and worries about the future of the individual as a result of the separation from or cessation of active working life, or at the thought of retirement and its implications (Ugwu, Enwereuzor, Mefoh, Ugwu, & Onyishi, 2019). It involves worries or apprehensions that usually result from adaptation to change before retirement (Arogundade 2016; Baba, Garba, & Zakariyah, 2015; Oluseyi & Olufemi 2015), more especially, for older workers and this might make them disengage from work after thriving at work for so many years. Lack of retirement goal clarity, absence of work social services, recovery need, psychological retirement planning, work enjoyment and basic need satisfaction might create pre-retirement anxiety (Anyebe, Yamah, Philip, & Lawal, 2018; Baba, Garba, & Zakariyah, 2015). The aim of the current paper is to examine the contributions of late career work disengagement and

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thriving in pre-retirement anxiety among Nigerian nurses.

Late career work disengagement as the first predictor variable is defined as mental detachment from work by older workers (Mabry & Bengtson, 2005). Damman, Henkens and Kalmijn (2013) defined work disengagement as a psychological disconnection or detachment from work by older employees' in an organisation with the view of impending retirement transition or as career plateau approaches. The authors also suggested that older workers who are close to retirement age develop a "short-timer's attitude", due to adjustment, transition, worry, apprehension and fear of impending separation from work with other social services plus satisfaction that the workplace brings (Damman, Henkens, & Kalmijn, 2013). Late career work disengagement results in loss of priceless, organization-based benefits that are valuable and time-consuming to replace. It sets in at about the age of 55-60 and could perhaps be caused by health-related issues when retirement becomes impending (Hochschild, 1975). There is scarcity of literature linking late career work disengagement to pre-retirement anxiety, but there are related studies on it. Olatunde and Onyinye's (2014) study showed that civil servants' perception of retirement significantly influenced their attitude towards pre-retirement counselling with respect to income and expenditure management, health related issues, management of loneliness and change in physical environment. Damman, Henkens and Kalmijn (2013) in their study on work disengagement in the preretirement period found that many older employees disengage more from work when getting closer to their planned retirement age. Furunes, Mykletun, Solem, de Lange, Syse, Schaufeli and Ilmarinen (2015) revealed that interviewees were positive about continuing to work in their current positions until retirement. There is scarcity of literature concerning late-career work disengagement in relation to pre-retirement anxiety.

Thriving at work is the second factor in this study which is viewed to be associated with pre-retirement anxiety. Gibson, Porath and Spreitzer (2012) stated that thriving at work is an important mechanism for understanding the human dimension of sustainability in employment, preretirement and retirement. Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sxonsenshin and Grant (2005) defined thriving at work as the joint sense of vitality and learning, which communicates a sense of progress or forward movement in an employee's self-development. Thriving is indicated by the dual occurrence of vitality and learning in and outside of work (Gibson, Porath, & Spreitzer, 2012). The two simultaneously occurring dimensions (vitality and learning) which most times are collapsed into one construct captures both the affective and cognitive aspects of psychological growth, which is needed not just in pre-retirement, but also in retirement. It is expected that older nurses close to retirement would on the average, experience less vitality and learning than younger workers. Thriving in and outside work is all about staying healthy, lively and relating to colleagues, people within the home community and things that they care about most in pre-retirement and retirement.

The continuity theory (Atchley, 1971; 1989) may be used to explain the connection of late career work disengagement and thriving at work with preretirement anxiety. The theory states that older individuals or employees usually try to

maintain the same activities, behaviours, attitudes, and relationships as they did in their early years of life when they are thriving at work (Atchley, 1993). Employees want to continue with those learning and vitality instead of disengaging from their work in their late career which will make them to worry, become apprehension, and have fear plus anxiety which has effect on their flourishing prior to retirement and in retirement (Atchley, 1971). A central premise of continuity theory is that, in making adaptive choices, middle-aged and older adults attempt to preserve and maintain existing internal and external structures and that they prefer to accomplish this objective by using continuity (that is, applying familiar strategies in familiar arenas of life) (Atchley, 1971; 1989). The assumption of continuity theory is that retirement provides the retirees with opportunities to continue with activities that they had learned earlier, for example, the activities in which retirees participated prior to retirement will assume more significance after retirement.

The nucleus of continuity theory is that prior to retirement, employees continue to hold an occupational identity even after they retire (Atchley, 1993). Osborne (2012) asserted that when workers retire, they usually take their extant characters, attitudes, and behaviours into retirement, which is an implication of the continuity from preretirement to retirement. Potential retirees may need to develop a lifestyle, role and outlook that they would like to have prior to retirement and may try to take the lifestyle, role and outlook into the transition; especially if their current outlook in life is pessimistic and produces little sense of well-being (Olatunde & Onyinye, 2014). By implication, this can result in anxiety or fear of retirement for older workers who are close to retirement such as older nurses/midwives. Recent published studies (e.g., Lytle, Foley, & Cotter, 2015; Prem, Ohly, Kubicek, & Korunka, 2017; Taneva, Arnold, & Nicolson, 2016; Van der Walt, 2018) showed that experiences of thriving leads to lower preretirement anxiety for nurses below 55 years, but are higher among nurses aged 55 years and over. Thriving at work has a positive association with older workers behaviour, career and retirement (Lytle, Foley, & Cotter, 2015)). Niessen, Sonnentag and Sach (2011) found a positive relationship between employees' positive experience and meaning at work in the morning, because they feel more vital at the end of the workday and have a higher sense of learning. The present study hypothesized that late-career work disengagement will significantly predict pre-retirement anxiety among nurses. It is also expected that thriving at work will significantly predict pre-retirement anxiety among nurses.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and seventy eight 278 prospective retiree nurses (21.9% men and 78.1% women) participated in this study. They were purposefully sampled from six different hospitals namely; National Orthopedic Hospital, Enugu, Bishop Shanahan Hospital, Nsukka, Enugu state, University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku Ozzala, Enugu State; Enugu state Teaching Hospital, Parkalane, Enugu state; University of Nigeria, Medical Centre Nsukka and Enugu state campus; and St. Charles Boromio Hospital Onitsha, Anambra state, because of non availability of prospective retirees (that is,

those that have less than five years to retire). The researchers identified the actual population of interest (that is employees who have less than 10 years to retire) and sampled them with the assumption that they possess characteristic that is of interest to us. The participants age ranged from 50-60 years with mean age of 55 ($SD = 8.64$). From the population sampled, 239 (86.0%) were permanent workers and 39 were contract workers with different educational qualifications like: 75; 27.0% had Bachelor of Science Certificate, and 61; 21.9% were Master of Science holders.

Instrument

General Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale (GPS)

The 15-item General Pre-retirement Anxiety Scale was developed by Ugwu, Enwereuzor, Mefoh, Ugwu and Onyishi (2019), to assess pre-retirement anxiety of potential retirees. Items are scored on a five-point likert scale format ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. Sample items include: "I will not want to retire because I will not be able to offset my health related bills"; "Part of what worries me is that I may not be able to assist my relations before retirement"; etc.. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the last statements regarding their present level of pre-retirement anxiety. Five positively worded items were reversed scored. Higher scores indicate high pre-retirement anxiety and low scores indicate low retirement anxiety level. The GPS has three dimensions: moral obligations (6 items which deals with basic duties expected from employees as a result of their status, e.g., providing shelter, food and security as a father/mother), preparedness (5 items; that deal with financial savings and investments) and social alienation (4 items; which deal with fear of being neglected and irrelevance in the family or society). The authors reported internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha (α) of .81. In order to establish the validity of the scale for the present study, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .48, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity was 202.88 ($p < .001$), indicating that the sample was enough to test for factorial validity of the scale. A one-factor structure of the pre-retirement anxiety was extracted, and it accounted for 15.87% of the variance in the construct. Loading of the items ranged from .35 - .76. The items yielded a total reliability coefficient of .73.

Later Career Work-Disengagement Scale

Late Career Work Disengagement Scale was developed by Damman, Henkens and Kalmijn (2013) to assess employees work activities and investments which older workers might reduce in the preretirement period. It has six items which are measured on a five point-likert scale ranging from 1 = completely agree to 5 = completely disagree. Sample items include: "I do not keep up as well with the latest developments in my field as I did five years ago" (reverse scored); "I think they should assign new responsibilities to younger persons" (reverse scored); "I am still as motivated for my work as two years ago"; e.g. High scale scores represent high disengagement levels. The items yielded internal consistency reliability,

Cronbach's alpha (α) of .79 (Damman et al., 2013). In order to establish the validity of the scale for the present study, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .65, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity was 139.78 ($p < .001$), indicating that the sample was sufficient to test for factorial validity of the scale. Loading of the items ranged from .30 - .76. with reliability cronbach alpha (α) of .93.

Thriving at Work

Thriving at work scale is a 10-item questionnaire developed by Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson and Garnett (2012) to assess an employee's learning and vitality at work. This measure includes five items for learning and five items for vitality and scored on a five point-likert scale ranging from 1 = completely agree to 5 = completely disagree. Sample items for learning include: "I continue to learn more and more as time goes by"; while sample item for vitality include "I feel alive and vital." The alpha reliability coefficient reported by Porath, et al. (2012) was .93. In order to establish the validity of the scale for the present study, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .75, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity was 308.12 ($p < .001$), indicating that the sample was sufficient to test for factorial validity of the scale. A one-factor structure of the TAWS was extracted, and it accounted for 32.44% of the variance in the construct. Loading of the items ranged from .34 - .76. The items yielded internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha (α) .87.

Procedure

We obtained approval from the management of the hospitals for the study to be conducted. The nurses were approached in the hospital wards and the objective of the study was explained to them. The questionnaires were given to the targeted nurses who volunteered to take part in the study for completion. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and they were encouraged to provide honest answers to the questions asked.

Design/Statistics

The study employed the cross-sectional survey research design. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses for the study. Multiple regressions analysis was used because it allows researchers to simultaneously use several independent variables (late career work disengagement and thriving at work) in order to explain the variation in the criterion (preretirement anxiety) and hence be able to make more accurate predictions (Mendenhall, Beaver, & Beaver, 2009).

Results

Results in Table 1 showed that majority of the participants were in late adulthood with an average age of 55.00 years ($SD = 8.64$). The average length of service by years was 28.00 ($SD = 3.88$ years).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of study variables

Variables	Range	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	50 - 60	55.00	8.64
Number of dependents	0 - 4	3.23	1.01
Years of service	25 - 31	28.00	3.88
Late Career Work Disengagement	7 - 31	18.50	5.38
Thriving	7 - 70	26.63	16.27
Pre-pre-retirement anxiety	35 - 92	62.46	10.85

Table 2: Correlations of demographic variables, late career work disengagement and thriving at work in pre-retirement anxiety

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	-							
Gender	.26***	-						
Number of dependents	.35***	.01	-					
Years of service	.59***	.14*	.42***	-				
Monthly salary	.57***	.16**	.39***	.66***	-			
Educational qualification	.08	.08	.10	.14*	.30***	-		
Late Career Work Disengagement	-.14*	-.12*	-.07	-.20**	-.14*	-.02	-	
Thriving	-.10	-.18**	.06	.00	-.08	-.01	.01	-
Pre-retirement anxiety	-.08	.09	-.01	-.01	-.07	-.01	.00	-.14*

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; Gender: (0 = male; 1 = females).

In Table 2, older age for Nigerian nurses was associated with being a woman ($r = .26, p < .001$), having more number of dependents ($r = .35, p < .001$), longer years of service ($r = .59, p < .001$), and higher salary ($r = .57, p < .001$), but lower late career work disengagement ($r = -.14, p < .05$). Being a woman as a Nigerian nurse (coded as 2 whereas men was coded 1) was associated with longer years of service ($r = .14, p < .05$), more monthly salary ($r = .16, p < .05$), less career work disengagement ($r = -.12, p < .05$), and less thriving ($r = -.18, p < .01$). More number of dependents was associated with more length of service ($r = .42, p < .001$), and higher monthly salary

($r = .39, p < .001$). Having higher years of service was associated with more monthly salary ($r = .66, p < .001$), higher educational qualification ($r = .14, p < .05$), and less late career work disengagement ($r = -.20, p < .01$). Monthly salary correlated positively with educational qualification ($r = .30, p < .001$), but had a negative relationship with late career work disengagement ($r = .14, p < .05$). Educational qualification did not correlate significantly with pre-pre-retirement anxiety ($r = -.01$). The relationship between late career work disengagement and thriving was not significant ($r = .01$).

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression predicting pre-pre-retirement anxiety by late career work disengagement, and thriving at work with monthly salary, gender and years of service as covariates

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	B	β	T	B	β	T	B	β	t
Gender	2.70	.10	1.70	2.73	.10	1.70	2.11	.08	1.30
Years of service	.74	.06	.74	.76	.06	.76	.94	.08	.94
Monthly salary	-1.38	-.12	-1.12	-1.38	-.12	-1.54	-1.56	-.14	-1.75
Late career work disengagement				.02	.01	.17	.02	.01	.16
Thriving							.09	-.13	-2.16*
R ²	.02			.02			.04		
ΔR^2	.02			.00			.02		
F	2.70(3, 274)			1.22(4, 273)			1.93(5, 272)*		
ΔF	2.70(3, 274)			.03(1, 273)			4.67(1, 272)*		

* $p < .05$; ΔR^2 = Change in R²; ΔF = Change in F.

Results of the hierarchical multiple regressions for the test of the hypotheses are shown in Table 2. In step 1, three demographic factors (gender, number of years of service, and monthly salary) were added to the regression model because they significantly correlated with pre-retirement anxiety in Table 1. Results showed that gender did not significantly predict pre-retirement anxiety, $\beta = .10, t(278) = 1.70$. Years of service did not significantly predict pre-retirement anxiety, $\beta = .06, t(278) = .74$. Monthly salary did not significantly predict pre-retirement anxiety, $\beta = -.12, t(278) = -1.54$. The contribution of the demographic factors in explaining the variance in pre-retirement anxiety was 2% ($\Delta R^2 = .02$), and the F

statistics of the model was not significant, $F\Delta(3, 274) = 1.63, R^2 = .02$.

Step 2 indicated that late career work disengagement did not significantly predict pre-retirement anxiety, $\beta = .01, t(278) = .17$. The contribution of late career work disengagement in explaining the variance in pre-retirement anxiety was 0% ($\Delta R^2 = .00$), and the F statistics of the model was not significant, $F\Delta(1, 273) = .03, R^2 = .02$.

In the third step (Step 3) thriving at work negatively predicted pre-retirement anxiety, $\beta = -.09, t(278) = -2.16, p < .05$. The B showed that for each one unit rise in thriving at work, pre-retirement anxiety reduces by -.09 units. The contribution to the variance

in pre-retirement anxiety explained on the account of thriving at work was 2% ($\Delta R^2 = .01$), and the $\Delta F(1, 272) = 4.67, R^2 = .02$ was significant. All the variables in the regression model accounted for 4% of the variance in pre-retirement anxiety ($R^2 = .04$).

Discussion

The present study investigated late career work disengagement and thriving at work as predictors of pre-retirement anxiety among Nigerian nurses. It was predicted that late career work disengagement and thriving at work would predict pre-retirement anxiety among Nigerian nurses. Results showed that late career work disengagement did not significantly predict pre-retirement anxiety. The first hypothesis which stated that late career work disengagement would predict pre-retirement was not confirmed. However, this finding is found to be consistent with Cumming, Dean, Newell and McCaffrey's (1960) theory of disengagement, which proposed that a disengaging process may be primarily intrinsic, and secondarily responsive, and as such it leads to a "disengaged state". Disengagement theory further maintained that ageing employees in anticipating retirement gradually withdraw from work, physically, psychologically, and socially because they want to prepare for their retirement transition and also to help them prepare for other family, societal and career transition roles they will face in retirement.

It is possible that late career work disengagement did not predict pre-retirement anxiety because older nurses, who are already expecting retirement in relation to age, often have increase in their pay (Bal, 2015). They may most likely prepare (psychologically and financially) for the final transition in their work life which is retirement (Bayl-Smith, & Griffin, 2014). Some of older nurses may have already established a private or an individually owned/family enterprise and other entrepreneurial establishments on or before retirement to enhance financial status.

Findings of this study confirmed the second hypothesis, which predicted that thriving at work will significantly predict pre-retirement anxiety. Thriving at work was found to negatively predict pre-retirement anxiety. In other words, it was found that that increase in thriving at work was associated with lower pre-retirement anxiety. The older nurses thrive at work, the less they have feelings of fret, worry, apprehensions or feel anxious as retirement becomes impending. The finding is also consistent with other studies on thriving at work and related constructs (Lytle, Foley, & Cotter, 2015; Furunes et al., 2015; Niessen, Sonnentag, & Sach, 2011; Prem, Ohly, Kubicek, & Korunka, 2017; Taneva, Arnold, & Nicolson, 2016) showing that experiences of thriving leads to lower anxiety. Atchley's (1971; 1989; 1993) continuity theory, had proposed that individuals in making adaptive choice that will help them maintain both internal and external structures continue to hold an occupational identity (what they had learned) even after they retire. Hence, they have no fear of retirement transition.

A notable limitation in this study is the sample characteristics such as gender. There were more of the female participants than the males. The study was also conducted in Enugu state and Anambra state only. This may not allow generalization to entire Nigerian population. The total sample size

used in the study was small and it also limits the generalization of the result obtained in the study. Based on these problems identified, it is suggested that further researcher should get larger sample of nurses (both men and women) from other states in Nigeria involving all the nursing specialties.

In conclusion, this study showed that thriving at work negatively predicted pre-retirement anxiety among Nigerian nurses, which implies that the more Nigerian nurses thrive at their work, the less they feel anxious about retirement. If older Nigerian nurses feel worry, apprehension and have increased fret prior to retirement, it might lead to unintentional poor performance because more attention is being paid to retirement and life after retirement instead of giving much attention to patients and lifesaving. This can have adverse effects on productivity and patient care in the hospitals. Pre-retirement anxiety can influence the commitment of nurses and services they render with the organisation as well. Organizational practices, programs and policies aimed at facilitating thriving at work should be implemented in the healthcare sector.

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