



Securing The Retirement of Your Dreams: A Blueprint for Nigerian Civil Servants

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Abstract : The Comprehensive Retirement Plan for Nigerian Civil Servants (COREPLAN) Blueprint is presented in this article to address a pressing need within the Nigerian civil service. The main goal is to provide public workers with a thorough and practical handbook to help them navigate the complex world of retirement preparation. This guide is built on a thorough analysis of 35 peer-reviewed empirical publications on retirement planning and the authors' substantial personal experience as Nigerian civil workers. A useful and thorough framework for retirement planning was created using the evidence synthesis from this in-depth research. For Nigerian public officials, the COREPLAN Blueprint serves as a practical and user-friendly blueprint, providing step-by-step instructions on how to accomplish their retirement ambitions. It equips people to solve not just financial issues but also psychological, physiological, and social ones by embracing a holistic approach. It was found that to acknowledge that good retirement planning goes beyond financial concerns, the COREPLAN Blueprint is organized into four interconnected phases. It assigns equal weight to psychological, health, and social responsibilities to live a fulfilling post-retirement life.

IndexTerms - Retirement planning, Civil servants, Psychological planning, health planning, Social planning, Critical review, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Civil servants around the globe have embraced high levels of public service motivation to spend decades of their lives contributing to the sustainable growth and development of their national economies (Hameduddin and Engbers, 2022). It is thus quite reasonable that these civil servants should be expected to be rewarded for 30-plus years of service by living fulfilled and enjoyable lives after retirement. For civil servants in European countries like the Netherlands, Iceland and Denmark, this reward is usually attained in full (Ang, 2021). For example in Iceland, retiring civil servants are provided a full pension with two components: mandated contributions from employees and employers, as well as voluntary payments to state-approved pension schemes (Fritz, 2022). Its systems have a high contribution rate that results in a large state pension that Icelandic retirees can access (Fritz, 2022). The country also has a low gender pension gap, which means that the difference in the mean female pension and male pension is small—especially when contrasted to many other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Fritz, 2022).

However, in developing countries like Nigeria, the harsh reality for civil servants is that they cannot rely on the Government for a secure life after retirement but have to make proactive and concerted plans to ensure that the actual reality of life after retirement matches their ideal retirement lifestyles as closely as possible. This is because the government-backed pension scheme is riddled with corruption, mismanagement of funds and haphazard and often incomplete payments of gratuities and monthly payments (Nwozor et al., 2022). For example in 2019, Abdulrasheed Maina, the former head of the disbanded Pension Reform Task Team, was arraigned before a Federal High Court on a 12-count charge of money laundering of alleged pension funds totalling N2 billion (about \$5 million) (Godwin, 2022). These problems have made many Nigerian civil servants fearful of retiring poor and destitute and this has made some of them resort to corrupt practices as a means of securing their retirement incomes, further worsening an already corrupt civil service (Udoh, 2022).

It is against this backdrop that this paper sought to develop a comprehensive retirement blueprint for Nigerian civil servants that takes cognizance of the peculiarities of the Nigerian public service landscape and recommends a practical and proactive approach to lawfully securing a fulfilled life after retirement. To develop this blueprint, the paper conducted a critical review of 35 peer-reviewed empirical articles on retirement planning and then combined the insights gained from the review with the researcher's over three decades of experience as a Nigerian civil servant. The outcome of this paper was a four-phase retirement plan tagged the Comprehensive Retirement Plan for Nigerian Civil Servants or COREPLAN.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: first, the methodology used to conduct the critical review of empirical retirement planning articles is presented. Second, the findings of the review and their implications for the development of the blueprint are discussed. Third, the COREPLAN blueprint is presented and discussed, and the paper ends with a conclusion.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper had four research questions restated as follows:

- i. Has retirement planning improved the quality of life of retirees?
- ii. What was the evidence that retirement planning led to improved quality of life for retirees?
- iii. How were retirement plans successfully implemented to ensure quality of life for retirees?
- iv. What obstacles prevented retirement planning from ensuring improved quality of life for retirees?

To address the first research question, information was obtained from the abstracts of the articles reviewed. The articles reviewed were divided into two (2), i.e.: (i) articles that revealed retirement planning had led to improved quality of life of retirees; and (ii) articles that revealed retirement planning did not lead to improved quality of life of retirees. In answering the second research question, information was obtained from the results and discussion section of the reviewed articles. In addition, the articles were grouped based on the measure of success used in them that retirement planning had led to improved quality of life of retirees. For the third research question, information was extracted from the introductory section of articles reviewed while the grouping was based on the implementation of the retirement plans or strategies emphasized in each article. The fourth question was answered similarly to the second research question. That is to say, information was extracted from the results and discussion section of the articles reviewed. The obstacles to improved quality of life for retirees due to poor or inadequate retirement planning were highlighted in the articles reviewed.

All articles reviewed were empirical because data collection was carried out to extract evidence to answer the four research questions. Furthermore, all the articles were obtained from fifteen publishers namely: Allen Press, Bentham Cambridge, Elsevier, Emerald, Harvard, Inderscience, Ingenta, Jstor, Oxford, Palgrave, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Francis, Wiley. These major publishers have been proven to be reputable academic publishers (Sacramento State Public University Library, 2021). In addition, searching for articles using the above publishers ensures a robust and thorough search for extant literature on retiree quality of life needed for this review.

To identify suitable empirical papers from the chosen publishers, the search engine **Google Scholar** was used. The main reason for using **Google Scholar** was because it allows easy access to scholarly articles like peer-reviewed journals, books, thesis etc. (University of St.Thomas, 2022). The **advanced search function (on the left sidebar)** in Google Scholar was instructed to search articles using different search terms. First, **“retirement planning satisfaction** in the title was used. During the second search, **“retirement planning quality”** in the title was applied and lastly, in the third search, **retirement satisfaction** in the title was used. During each search, there was no time frame specified because retirement planning has been practised throughout the years. In this respect, the name of each publisher chosen for this review was specified (one after the other) during each search to obtain only articles from those publishers. Citations on the Google Scholar’s search page were not included during the search to obtain only full articles.

After the search for journal articles, empirical studies were selected by reading the abstract or sometimes downloading the full article and reading through to ensure that only articles specifically investigating the impact of retirement planning on the quality of life of retirees were selected. Books and book chapters were all included in this search. Final articles were collected from the chosen publishers on the **2nd of June 2022**.

For the search term **“retirement planning satisfaction”**, a total of 6 articles were found and selected because they met the selection criteria. For the second search term, **“retirement planning quality”**, only 2 articles were found, out of which 1 was selected. For the third search term, **retirement satisfaction**, a total of 158 articles were found, out of which 24 met the selection criteria. Using all three search terms, a total of 166 articles were found, out of which 33 articles met the selection criteria as shown in Table 1

Table 1: List of publishers, total number of articles and number of articles selected per publisher for the three search terms

S/N	“retirement planning satisfaction”			”Retirement planning quality”		“retirement satisfaction”		TAF	TAS
	P	AF	AS	AF	AS	AF	AS		
1.	Emerald	0	0	0	0	6	0	6	0
2.	Elsevier	1	1	0	0	12	3	13	4
3.	Sage	1	1	0	0	42	3	43	4
4.	Springer	1	1	1	0	15	4	17	5
5.	Taylor and Francis	2	2	1	1	36	7	39	10
6.	Wiley	1	1	0	0	13	4	14	5
7.	Inderscience	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8.	Ingenta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9.	Cambridge	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1
10.	Oxford	0	0	0	0	31	3	31	3
11.	Jstor	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
12.	Harvard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13.	Allen press	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14.	Bentham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15.	Palgrave	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
								166	33

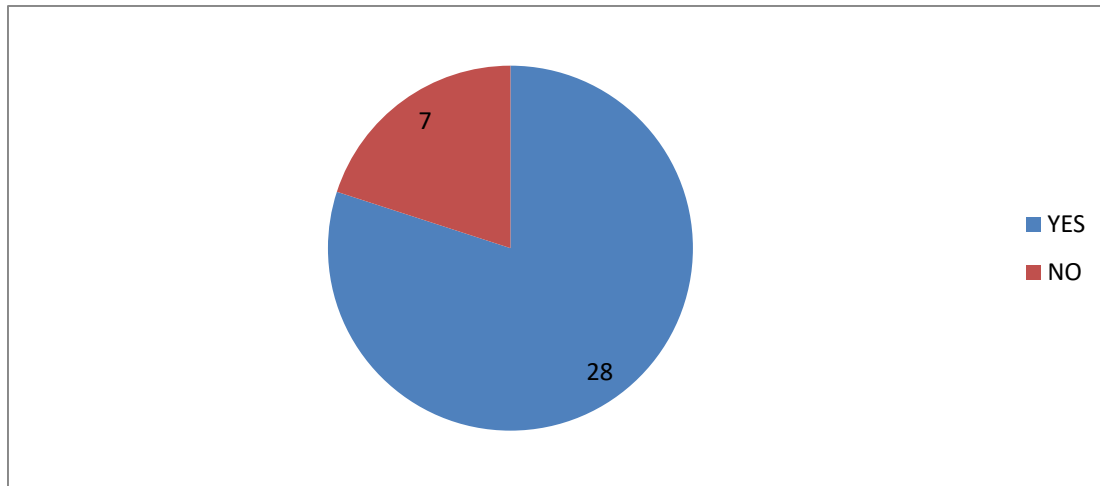
Key: AF=Articles Found; AS=Articles Selected; P= Publisher; TAF= Total Articles Found; TAS=Total Articles Selected

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses and presents the findings of the four research questions. It also examines the implications of the findings to the development of achievable and workable retirement planning for Nigerian public workers. Accordingly, each question is discussed based on the findings from the empirical articles downloaded thus indicating how it has helped workers achieve quality of life after retirement or otherwise, how and where such successes were implemented.

3.1 Has retirement planning improved the quality of life of retirees?

Figure 3.1: Answer to the first research question

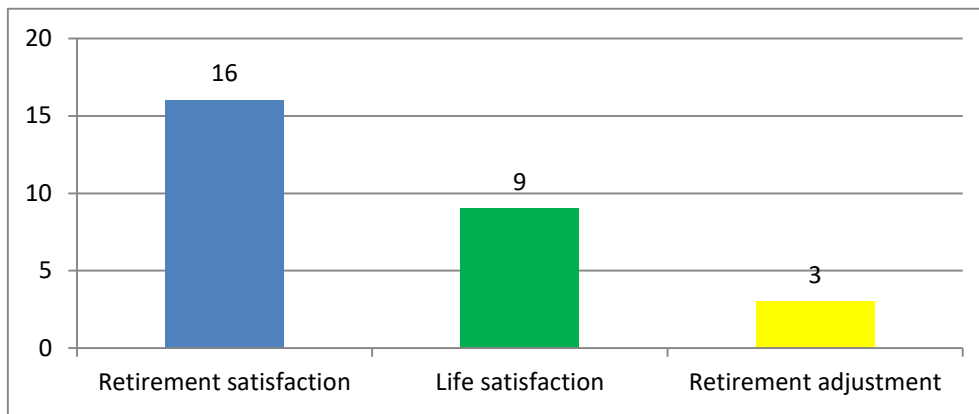


It can be observed from Figure 3.1 that 28 of the 35 articles reviewed found that retirement planning had improved the quality of life of retirees. For example, Amorim and de Freitas Pinho Franca (2020) found that the extent to which 1194 Brazilian retirees planned for retirement had a significant impact on their satisfaction with life during retirement. Similarly, Calasanthi et al. (2021) discovered that American male retirees who had made proper plans to ensure sufficient financial resources for life after retirement reported increased life satisfaction during retirement. Furthermore, Hetherington et al. (2021) revealed that Canadian retirees who had psychologically prepared for life after retirement reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their lives during retirement.

On the other hand, only 7 out of the 35 articles found that retirement planning had no impact on the quality of life of retirees. Clarke (2012) found that despite receiving the expected outcomes of proper financial retirement planning in terms of social security benefits and pensions, longitudinal data of American retirees revealed that these retirees had low levels of satisfaction with their lives after retirement. Principi et al. (2020) also found that retirement plans did not predict retirement satisfaction as evidenced by the fact that retirees from Italy, England and the United States disclosed that they had adjusted well to retirement life despite not making a specific plan during their working careers. Woo et al. (2021) revealed that despite planning properly for retirement, the amount of pension after retirement tended to be insufficient for South Korean retirees leading to a sub-standard quality of life during retirement. Consequent to the foregoing empirical findings, given the Nigerian context, civil servants in the country will find retirement planning unnecessary due to the delay in pension payments. While in service, the income was inadequate to allow for any kind of savings. It is a known fact that the average Nigerian worker, while in service spends most of his earnings on rent, foodstuff and school fees for children, medical care for the family and in some cases support for extended family needs. In such a situation, it will be very difficult to save in preparation for retirement. Based on interactions with many colleagues and personal experience, most workers survive on continuous loans to meet monthly demands. The fact that 80% of the papers reviewed revealed that retirement planning is an important predictor of the quality of life during retirement, indicates that Nigerian public workers have to adopt a proactive approach to retirement planning as soon as possible to secure for themselves a high level of satisfaction with their lives during retirement. However, these civil servants must be cognizant of the fact that they cannot rely on traditional pension payments from the Government after their retirement due to decades of unreliability in this regard from the Government (Nwoke et al., 2022).

3.2 What was the evidence that retirement planning led to improved quality of life for retirees?

As indicated in Figure 1, 28 out of the 35 articles reviewed showed that retirement planning was an important predictor of quality of life during retirement. In this subsection, the various evidences used to validate the positive impact of retirement planning on retirement satisfaction are presented and discussed. Figure 2 presents the evidence:

Figure 3.2: Measures of the success of retirement planning

It can be seen from Figure 3.2 that the 28 studies reviewed that found that retirement planning led to improved quality of life for retirees relied on one of three measures to confirm this success: Retirement satisfaction (16 out of 28), 2) Life satisfaction (9 out of 28) and 3) Retirement adjustment (3 out of 28). All three measures used relied either on the interview or survey of both male and female retirees regarding their retirement planning activities and quality of life after retirement. These methods of data collection are to be expected as the retirees themselves are in the best position to provide information about their quality of life during retirement.

Retirement satisfaction refers to the extent to which an individual's expectations of life after retirement reflect the reality as perceived by that individual. The closer the reality meets the individual's expectations, the more satisfied the individual is with his life after retirement (Hetherington et al., 2021). Wang and Matz-Costa (2019) found that men who had planned for a strong social network after retirement exhibited a high level of retirement satisfaction.

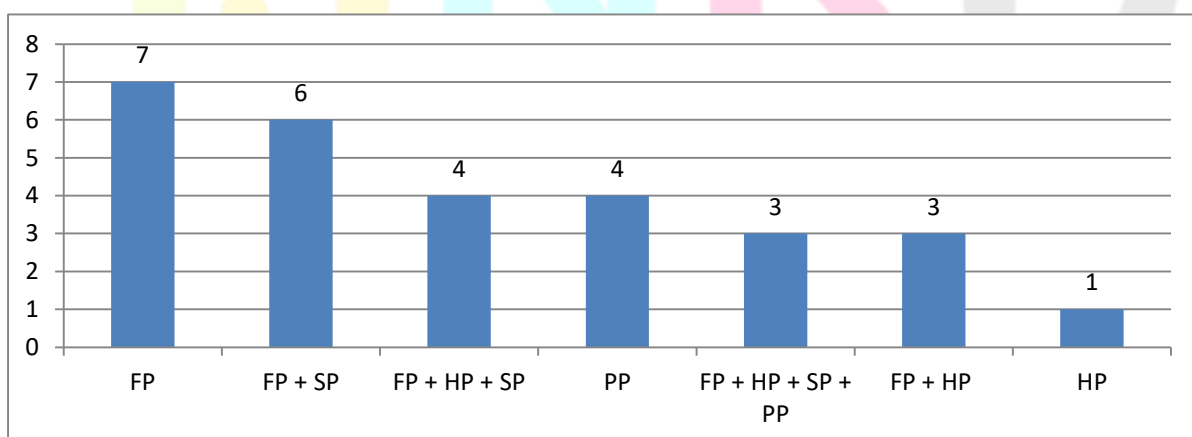
Life satisfaction, on the other hand, is a broader concept than retirement satisfaction in that it indicates an individual's overall assessment of his or her life in totality, thus including life before and after retirement (Calasanthi et al., 2021). Hansson et al. (2017) found that the extent to which Swedish retirees made financial, health and social plans pre-retirement had a significant impact on their life satisfaction.

Retirement adjustment refers to the extent to which an individual can make peace with the changes in routine and lifestyle once retirement begins (Alsemgeest, 2019). It differs from retirement satisfaction and life satisfaction in that it connotes a sense of adapting to a new reality rather than the level of happiness with life after retirement or life in general. It can thus be considered as the lowest form of quality of life after retirement. Martin Jr. et al. (2016) found that hiring a financial planner helped American workers to adjust quickly to life after retirement.

Although all three variables which were used to measure success were apt, retirement adjustment is perhaps most appropriate for Nigerian public workers. This is because there is societal pressure to maintain pre-retirement standards of living even during retirement even though the financial income stream is no longer the same. This mentality has led many retirees to struggle mightily after retirement. The most successful Nigerian retiree is thus one who can overcome the tendency to want to keep up with the Joneses but rather faces the reality that adjustments need to be made during retirement.

3.3 How retirement plans were successfully implemented to ensure the quality of life for retirees?

In this subsection, the specific components of retirement planning successfully used to enhance the quality of life of retirees are identified and discussed; these components are highlighted in Figure 3.

Figure 3.3: Retirement planning components used to enhance retirees' quality of life

Key: FP – Financial planning; SP – Social planning; HP – Health planning; PP – psychological planning

Four distinct components of retirement planning are used to measure the success of the quality of life of retirees: 1) Financial planning, 2) Social planning, 3) Health planning and 4) Psychological planning. Financial planning refers to plans undertaken by the worker to ensure that he or she is financially secure upon retirement (Ryan & Cude, 2020). Social planning refers to plans to ensure that the worker has a schedule of activities to participate in upon retirement; these could be leisurely activities or

even new job opportunities (Wang et al., 2019). Health planning includes all steps taken by the worker to ensure that he or she enjoys good health upon retirement (Zhang et al., 2017). Finally, psychological planning involves mental and emotional preparation for the changes that will inevitably occur after retirement (Topa & Valero, 2017).

From the 28 papers reviewed to measure the success of retirement planning for the quality of life of retirees, it is observed from Figure 3 that they conceptualized retirement planning using one or a combination of the four components of retirement planning described in the previous paragraph. Seven of the 28 papers reviewed focused exclusively on financial planning and its impact on retirees' quality of life. For example, Donnelly and Taylor (2019) found that among 245 American retirees, the extent to which they felt financially secure strongly predicted their level of retirement satisfaction.

Six of the 28 papers focused on investigating the impact of financial and social planning on retirees' quality of life. Cho and Lee (2013) found that the quality of retirees' financial and health was a strong determinant of their life satisfaction in Germany, Switzerland and South Korea. Four papers focused on a combination of financial, social and health planning while another four papers focused on psychological planning. Representing the first group of four papers, Amorim and de Freitas Pinho Franca (2020) found that the extent to which Brazilian retirees planned for their financial, social and health situations after retirement served as a significant predictor of their satisfaction in retirement. As for the second group of four papers, de Bresser and van Soest (2015) found that Dutch workers who had prepared mentally and emotionally for life after retirement tended to have a high level of retirement satisfaction.

Three studies reviewed conceptualized retirement planning as consisting of all four types of planning (financial, health, social and psychological planning) while three other studies combined health and financial planning. An example from the former group of studies is Elder and Rudolph (1999) who relied on secondary data on American retirees collected by the Health and Retirement Survey carried out by the National Institute of Aging. Analysis of data on 1,781 retirees using an ordered probit model revealed that all four components of retirement planning had a significant positive impact on retirement satisfaction. As for the latter group of studies, Heybroek et al. (2015) conducted a longitudinal survey on 724 Australian retirees and found that the level of financial and health planning engaged by these retirees had a significant impact on their life satisfaction.

Only one study (Gorry et al., 2015) conceptualized retirement planning strictly from a health planning perspective. Utilizing panel data on American retirees, the study found that ensuring proper access to a full pension and health services during retirement had a significant positive impact on the life satisfaction of retirees.

The major lesson for Nigerian civil servants from these findings is that they must broaden their outlook towards what constitutes retirement planning. Typically, the focus is on ensuring financial security by hoping that pension benefits will be paid in full upon retirement along with regular monthly payments. These studies have revealed that workers must prepare psychologically for the reality of retirement, and must also make plans for a healthy life during retirement. Additionally, regular activities that will keep the retirees engaged and satisfied during retirement must also be included in the retirement planning process.

3.4 What obstacles prevented retirement planning from ensuring improved quality of life for retirees?

To answer this research question, the seven articles (see Figure 1) that found that retirement planning did not lead to an improvement in quality of life during retirement were exclusively relied on. The three major reasons emphasized by these articles for this lack of success were identified and these are presented in Figure 3.4

Figure 3.4: Reasons why retirement planning does not always equate high quality of life

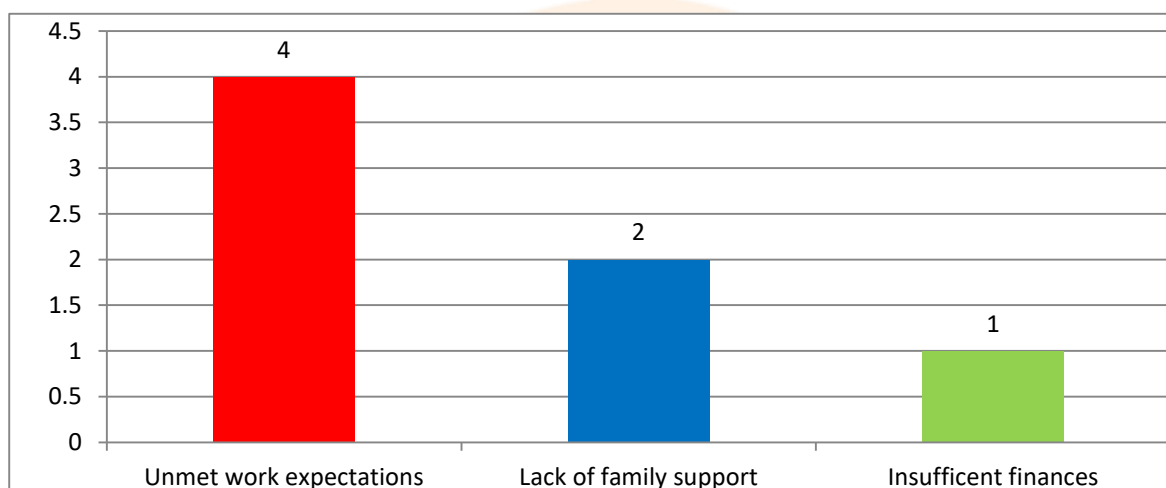


Figure 4 indicates that “unmet work expectations” was the most common reason why retirement planning did not always translate into high quality of life levels for retirees (4 out of 7 papers reviewed). Retirees who felt that they did not meet their career goals before having to retire reported low levels of satisfaction with life after retirement in Spain (Potocnic et al., 2013) and in the Netherlands (Dingemans & Henkens, 2013); this was despite them have extensive retirement plans that secured their financial, social and health needs.

“Lack of family support” was the second reason why retirement planning wasn’t always successful (2 out of 7 papers reviewed). Principi et al. (2020, p.2) found that “the quality of family relationships was a particularly important element for retirement satisfaction or dissatisfaction” among retirees in England, Italy and the United States of America. The third reason for retirement planning not translating into a high quality of life after retirement was insufficient finances. Woo et al. (2021) found that despite having access to personal pension savings, employee-funded contributions and social security, the actual financial amount received

by South Korean retirees was typically insufficient to meet their financial needs after retirement, only accounting for 45% of pre-retirement income. This caused them to be dissatisfied with life after retirement despite diligently planning for retirement.

For Nigerian civil servants, unmet career expectations are not typically a problem as most civil servants are primarily motivated by the prospects of regular monthly salaries (Nosike & Nosike, 2022). As for the issue of family support, difficult economic times for most Nigerians mean that a retired civil servant cannot rely on any kind of financial support from his relatives and thus this should not be a fallback plan for life after retirement. Insufficient finances would be the greatest obstacle for Nigerian civil servants in ensuring a high quality of life after retirement, particularly for those relying on pension contributions as the primary source of income after retirement. This is because of regular occurrences of irregular and incomplete payments of pension benefits after retirement (Sims, 2022). The proactive Nigerian civil servant must find alternative strategies to secure his financial future after retirement.

In conclusion, while it is a known fact that retirement is inevitable, retirement planning for an improved quality of life among Nigerian public workers is elusive. Despite how hard one strives to plan for his retirement, such planning is mostly truncated by government policies as they affect pension payments. The Pension Act, 2004 which has the objective of prompt payment of retirement benefits and sustainable pension payment, is yet to achieve that almost two decades after enactment. The creation of the Pension Commission (PENCOM) to provide regulatory services and Pension Funds Administrators (PTAs) under the Act complicated the plight of workers in accessing retirement benefits. Workers still battle with how to receive retirement benefits after exiting work. As adduced from the empirical articles, retirement planning is beyond planning for streams of income after retirement, but other issues such as social, psychological and health planning are key considerations in ensuring the quality of life in retirement. Adjusting lifestyle after a 'regimental lifestyle' for many years and accepting new social values will assist workers to have an improved quality of life after retirement.

Finally, the government must ensure that have taken and used the most valuable part of its worker's lives (from the youthful age of 25 years) to the retirement age of (60 years), adequate arrangements must be put in place that will guarantee the quality of life of retired public workers. On their part, from day one, workers must realize that there is an exit day. Accordingly, one should plan a lifestyle that will give him life satisfaction.

COMPREHENSIVE RETIREMENT PLAN FOR NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVANTS (COREPLAN)

The insight obtained from a critical review of 35 high-quality articles on retirement planning as well as the researcher's over three decades of experience as a civil servant in Nigeria, provides the basis for the development of this comprehensive retirement planning blueprint tagged the Comprehensive Retirement Plan for Nigerian Civil Servants (COREPLAN). Figure 5 presents the four phases of the COREPLAN. The first and key element that comes to mind for many people when thinking about retirement planning is to have adequate financial resources to enjoy a relaxing and fulfilling life after retirement. As opposed to this mindset of many people, it can be observed from Figure 5 that the COREPLAN places the financial plan as the final step of a retirement plan for Nigerian civil servants. While this might appear strange because finance holds high in most planning, the blueprint argues that it is important that the first three plans must be prepared before determining the financial needs of achieving each one of them in the final phase of the blueprint, i.e. the financial plan of the blueprint.

The first phase of the COREPLAN blueprint is the 'psychological plan' which recommends that a civil servant must first come to terms with the fact that all things being equal, he or she will have to retire after 35 years of service or attaining the age of 60 years whichever comes first as per the civil service rules of Nigeria (Cascant-Sempere, 2022). The blueprint argues that this psychological acceptance of the reality of retirement should be attained at the inception of his or her civil service career rather than when retirement is only a few years away. This calls for a radical shift from the short-term quick-fix thinking that Nigerians typically adopt to a more long-term and strategic way of thinking (Hofstede Insights, 2022). By thinking critically about retirement from the onset of one's civil service career, the civil servant has more than enough time to properly envisage how he or she would like to live life after retirement, and this leads to the second recommended step of the psychological plan. The second step of the psychological plan suggests that the civil servant develop a clear vision of his or her ideal life after retirement. This allows the civil servant to have a clear focus regarding his or her retirement plans and serves as a reference point for developing coherent and interrelated strategies that will enable him or her to achieve that vision in three and a half decades. The final step of the psychological plan is thus to develop practical strategies that will enable the civil servant to achieve his or her retirement vision.

The second phase of the COREPLAN blueprint is the 'health plan'. As the popular saying goes, 'Health is Wealth' and this could not be more accurate than in the context of retirement planning. Being reasonably healthy is critical first, to enjoy a productive civil service career and second, to enjoy life after retirement. The term 'reasonably healthy' is used in recognition of the fact that having periods of ill health is a natural part of life. This phase has four recommended steps. The first step requires the Nigerian civil servant to adopt a proactive approach to the management of his or her health by conducting a comprehensive medical check-up to identify any underlying health issues that need to be managed or treated. This will form the foundation of a long-term wellness strategy to ensure that one is healthy enough to enjoy life after retirement. This step requires civil servants to change their attitudes towards healthcare from a reactive one where hospitals are only visited due to ill health, to a more proactive one where prevention is valued more than curing ailments. Perhaps this change of attitude can be made easier by the fact that these civil servants are beneficiaries of the National Health Insurance Scheme which only requires them to pay 10% of most medical costs. These benefits expire upon retirement and so it was wise for the civil servant to take advantage of the scheme as a means of securing his or her long-term health.

The outcome of the baseline health check will help the civil servant to develop appropriate eating and drinking habits (step 2 of the health plan) that will hopefully facilitate a healthy working life as well as a healthy retirement life. For example, a civil servant who finds out that he or she has a life-threatening disease can make the necessary dietary changes to properly manage the disease. Similarly, a civil servant who is obese can focus on eating healthier and reducing or eliminating foods that are high in sugar and saturated fats.

Most civil servants in Nigeria spend a significant amount of their 35 years of service behind a desk and thus are not very active physically during this period. It is with this sedentary behaviour in mind that the third step of the health plan recommends that civil servants deliberately create time during the week for a regular exercise regime that will facilitate their overall well-being. The World

Health Organization recommends that adults spend a minimum of 150 and 300 minutes a week on moderate-intensity aerobic activity (World Health Organization, 2020). The fourth step of the health plan suggests that civil servants undergo yearly check-ups to ensure that they avoid a variety of diseases and detect other ailments early. It also keeps them more informed about their health status, keeps their doctors constantly informed about any development with regards to their health status and hopefully results in a healthier life during pre and post-retirement.

The third phase of the COREPLAN blueprint is the 'social plan' which is the outcome of the second step of the psychological plan which represents the retirement vision of the civil servant. Broadly speaking, the blueprint suggests that a civil servant can have one of two retirement lifestyles: a lifestyle of leisure or a second career. A lifestyle of leisure refers to life after retirement where the civil servant envisions himself or herself enjoying leisure activities such as visiting friends, reading books, watching television, playing sports and travelling the world. On the other hand, a civil servant who seeks to pursue a second career after retirement will need to ensure that the competencies needed for the second career are obtained before retiring from his or her first career. The choice between a retirement life of leisure or an active second career will have a profound impact on the retirement strategies a Nigerian civil servant will adopt.

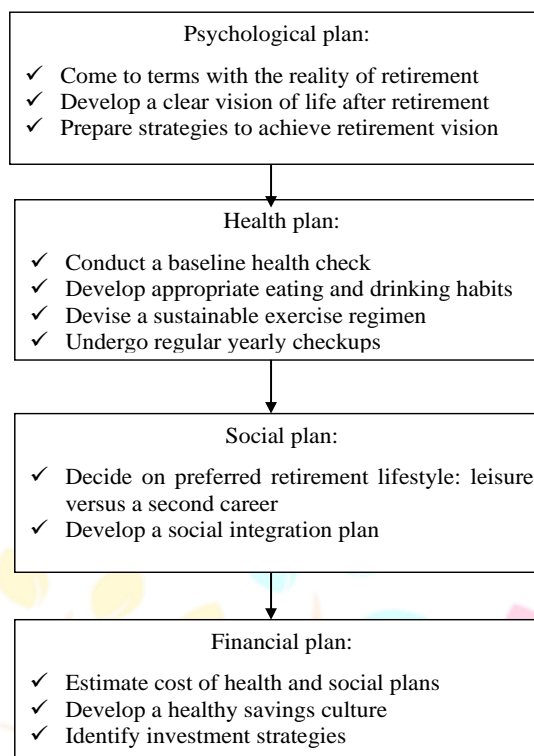
An important second step of the social plan is the civil servant ensuring that he or she maintains strong bonds with his kith and kin particularly those living in the civil servant's village or hometown. This is because most civil servants work in urban areas away from their localities and it is very easy to lose touch with relatives back at home. Without strong ties with these relatives, life after retirement can become very lonely, particularly for civil servants with grown-up children living in different parts of the country. However by keeping ties with relatives regularly during their professional careers, life after retirement promises to be filled with strong companionship with these relatives and long-time friends. This social integration strategy adds a level of psychological and emotional satisfaction during retirement.

The fourth phase of the COREPLAN blueprint is the financial plan. This phase requires civil servants to deal with the reality that the retirement he or she has envisaged in the earlier phases comes to fruition through adequate finances. The first step of this phase recommends that the civil servant develop comprehensive cost estimates for his or her health and social plans. Having a good grasp of the potential cost implications of his or her retirement vision will encourage the civil servant to develop a sound savings culture. In this regard, his vision for a fulfilled life after retirement will strengthen his or her resolve to give up some short-term pleasures for long-term benefits. It is however important to acknowledge the current difficult economic times plaguing the country thus making the development of a saving culture a herculean task among civil servants. This is further aggravated by the rising costs of goods and services which make the majority of civil servants' monthly earnings barely enough to meet their household needs, let alone contribute to a savings scheme. However, as mentioned earlier in the paragraph, a long-term retirement vision will hopefully empower civil servants to sacrifice some current short-term wants.

The final step of the financial plan is to identify investment strategies that will help civil servants sustainably grow their savings into a reliable stream of income after retirement. At present, the default investment strategy for a vast majority of Nigerian civil servants is the monthly contributory pension scheme which unfortunately as mentioned in the introduction has proven to be unreliable due to unexplained delays in disbursement and incidences of fraud in pension administration over the years (James, 2022). The blueprint thus recommends that Nigerian civil servants explore alternative investment strategies to grow their retirement income. These strategies will be determined by the kind of retirement lifestyle desired by the civil servant. For example, a civil servant who wants to live a life of leisure after retirement will need significant amounts of passive income to sustain such a lifestyle. Passive income is typically obtained from investments that generate income at specified times with minimal effort from the investor, with a popular example being rental income from real estate investments. Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), corporations or trusts that buy and maintain income property using the combined capital of several investors, can thus be attractive investment vehicles for this kind of civil servants (Fasanya and Akinwale, 2022).

On the other hand, civil servants who intend to pursue a second career will not require as much passive income as the former group but will require a concerted investment in gaining the competencies needed for their second career. For example, a civil servant interested in becoming a university lecturer after retirement would need to invest time and resources into obtaining a higher university degree to excel in his or her second career. A popular second career for Nigerian civil servants is agriculture in terms of crop production or animal husbandry. For such a career, the civil servant would need to invest in land and enrol as a member of cooperatives and thrift societies who can facilitate the realisation of his/her objective as such societies provide land for their members to be paid for in regular instalments. In addition, the civil servant can gain experience before retirement by engaging in agriculture on a small-scale basis via urban gardening. The Kaduna State government in Northern Nigeria recently reduced the work week from five days to four days to encourage civil servants to partake in such agricultural pursuits as a way to supplement their salaries and gain experience for post-retirement careers as agricultural entrepreneurs (Molina, 2021).

Research Through Innovation

Figure 4.1: COREPLAN Blueprint

CONCLUSION

Every year, thousands of Nigerian civil servants have to retire and this causes them great trepidation and a sense of impending doom due to uncertainties about how much of their pensions they will receive and what quality of life they will enjoy. This paper argued that Nigerian civil servants should stop relying on an inherently unreliable Government-funded pension system and should rather be proactive in developing comprehensive retirement plans while still in their primes rather than starting to plan a few years before retirement.

To guide Nigerian civil servants in achieving the retirement of their dreams, this paper conducted a critical review of 35 high-quality empirical studies on retirement planning with the main findings being that effective retirement planning must begin very early in the careers of civil servants and should focus on much more than financial planning alone. These insights along with more than three decades of combined civil service experience by the researcher led to the development of the COREPLAN blueprint which comprised a psychological planning phase, a health planning phase, a social planning phase and a financial planning phase. Decades of bad governance and citizen neglect have made Nigeria a difficult country to live, work and retire in. Civil servants must acknowledge this reality early on in their careers and take proactive and comprehensive steps using the COREPLAN blueprint to successfully navigate the challenges of working in the country and create holistic plans to achieve the retirement of their dreams.

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