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### **Abstract**

Public pension administration plays an important role in the provision of retirement welfare, especially in countries where rapid population ageing takes place. This study investigated the pension administration and the welfare of old people in Nigeria using the mixed methods approach in Osun State. Quantitative data were obtained from 1600 respondents (800 pre-retirement and 800 post-retirement persons aged 50 years and above) while qualitative data were gathered from 24 in-depth interviews. The areas measured were the perceptions of the adequacy of pension payments, timeliness of pension payments and their impact on economic security, health, and social participation. Findings show that there is a definite perception gap between pre-retirees and post-retirees. While pre-retirees had moderate confidence in the pension system, post-retirees felt there were frequent delays and insufficient payments, resulting in financial insecurity, informal work and difficulty in accessing healthcare. The breakdown of the traditional family support further exacerbates the vulnerability of the retirees. The study underscores the need for regular pension payments, financial inclusion and improved social protection policies in improving retirement welfare in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Older people, Pension scheme, Retirement welfare, Social protection, Population ageing, Contributory pension scheme

### **Introduction**

Retirement is a significant life transition, and is usually marked by the changes of income, social roles, and health needs. For older people, it is financial security after active employment that is critical for quality of life, healthcare access and for the realisation of personal dreams. In many developing countries like in Nigeria, welfare of retired workers are closely related to the reliability of pension system which is the major source of post retirement income (Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024; Abere et al., 2023). However, despite reforms to better manage pensions, there is evidence showing that many retired persons continue to experience the consequences of financial hardship, poor access to medical care, and psychosocial stress which tend to impoverish retirement welfare (Adewumi, 2024; Akomea-Frimpong, 2022).

Nigeria's pension system has undergone multiple reforms such as the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) introduced by the Pension Reform Act of 2004 which introduced mandatory regular contribution of employers and employees into individual retirement accounts. The system was established to ensure the payment of pensions on a timely and sustainable basis (Oigbochie&Chenge 2023). While the CPS has introduced transparency and accountability in the management of pensions as opposed to the previously defined benefit scheme, irregular payments and inefficiency in administration currently are still pervasive (Alzua et al., 2024). Reports suggest that some retirees spend months and years before receiving their pensions or gratuity which forces them to sell off personal assets or take up with informal economic activities to make ends meet (Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024). Qualitative accounts report such financial constraints lead to feelings of anxiety, fear and decreased life satisfaction, increasing the human cost of failing to effectively administer pensions.

Retirement welfare is not only income but also social, health and psychological welfare. Inadequate pensions may also lead to restricted access to healthcare, social activity participation and increase dependency on family members, which often comes with stress for both retirees as well as their

households (Adebowale et al; 2022; Bloom, Canning, & Fink, 2011). The risk is particularly high in Nigeria where there are few social safety nets outside the formal pension system (HelpAge International, 2020; International Labour Organisation, 2021). The challenges are complicated by population ageing: Although the overall population of Nigeria is relatively young, the proportion of older persons continues to grow at a steady rate, increasing the pressure on the government's ability to provide adequate pension to all Nigerian citizens (Rustamova et. al., 2025, 2025; Velkoff&Kowal, 2023). In the absence of successful policy interventions, however, a growing population of older people could be disproportionately vulnerable, jeopardizing individual prosperity while also the social equity of society as a whole (Barr & Diamond, 2009; Holzmann&Hinz, 2005).

Despite the attention on pensions and ageing, there is lack of empirical research linking pension administration directly to retirement welfare from the Nigerian context. Much of the literature is dedicated to the structural and policy dimensions of the reform of the pension system with less focus on the impact of these reforms on the day-to-day life and well-being of older adults (Adewumi, 2024; Oigbochie&Chenge, 2023). Addressing this gap is critical to informing policy interventions that would improve the financial security as well as quality of life of the ageing population in Nigeria.

Against this background this study is focused on perception of older adults towards administration of public pension and retirement welfare among old persons in Nigeria. The findings are expected to legitimize the efforts to develop strategy on how to improve the reliability of pension to reduce the vulnerability of the retirees and achieve sustainable welfare for the increasing ageing population in Nigeria.

## Literature Review

The well-being of older people depends on a number of factors such as income security as well as access to healthcare and social integration. Retirement period is a vital time of a person's life and if not well prepared for it, one can find himself or herself in a situation where there is going to be huge financial and psychosocial deficit (Adebowale et al; 2022). In sub-Saharan Africa, the elderly face certain challenges, including lack of social safety nets, as well as being dependent on family support (Aboderin& Beard, 2015). In Nigeria, according to studies, the retirees are usually faced with poor pension incomes, the lack of medical services to cater to their health needs, and the failure to live a standard of life as they did before they retired (Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024).

There is qualitative evidence to suggest that lack of adequate pension income pushes retired people into vulnerable economic activity. Some will resort to selling personal assets, work as menial jobs or in the informal economy to make ends meet (Aberé et al., 2023). While these activities may help in the short-term in terms of relieving financial problems, they may have adverse effects on physical well-being and social well-being. Reports from retirees emphasise that non-disbursement of pension payments not only limit daily living but also causes stress, anxiety and fear that may result in faster deterioration of health (Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024; Adewumi, 2024; Akomea-Frimpong et al, 2022).

Population ageing contributes to the significance of retirement welfare. Although the total population in Nigeria is quite young, the percentage of the elderly is steadily increasing (Rustamova et. al., 2025; Velkoff&Kowal, 2023). The ageing population emphasises the need for efficient pension schemes and social safety nets in order to make the elderly less susceptible. Without proper interventions an ageing population could be faced with rising economic insecurity, social exclusion and health risks (Bloom, Canning, & Fink, 2011; HelpAge International, 2020).

The Nigerian pension system has undergone major reforms changing from a defined benefit system to a contributory defined contribution system with the introduction of the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) under the Pension Reform Act (2004, amended 2014). The CPS requires both employers and employees to make regular contributions to individual retirement accounts in an attempt to ensure the sustainability and reliability of pension payments (Oigbochie&Chenge, 2023, Egye&Ramli, 2024).

Empirical studies show that even with these reforms, inefficiencies in administration and irregular disbursement of pensions remain an overwhelming problem. Delays in pension payments, lack of transparency in how the funds are managed, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms often compromise the retirement age plans of retirees to make appropriate preparations for their post-retirement life (Adewumi, 2024; Aberé et al., 2023). In practice, there is a significant proportion of the retired persons who claim that they have had inconsistent pensions or even had to wait for months to receive pensions entitlements, which translates to lack of trust in the pension system and worsening financial vulnerability (Akomea-Frimpong, 2022; Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024).

The consequences of administrative inefficiency are not just on an individual scale of financial hardship. They have an impact on household stability because retired people may require support from family members, placing pressure on intergenerational relationships. Moreover, the retired people who cannot access timely pension payments are often not able to implement prior personal and financial plans such as investing in businesses, supporting the education of their dependents or buying health insurance. This pattern shows an intersection between the administration of pension and the general welfare outcomes (Alzua et al., 2024; Oigbochie&Chenge, 2023).

Social protection is essential to reducing the vulnerabilities caused by ageing. Social pensions, access to healthcare and community-based support have been found to increase life satisfaction, reduce poverty, improve mental and physical wellbeing among older people in Africa (HelpAge International, 2020; International Labour Organization, 2021; Duflo, 2003). Evidence from empirical research in South Africa indicates that regular cash transfers to older people contribute to increased household welfare, access to healthcare and social participation (Case & Deaton, 1998; Duflo, 2003).

In the Nigerian context, the coverage of complementary social protection outside of the formal pensions is limited. Many retirees, especially those not in government civilian service systems, have little access to social safety nets (Abonyi et al., 2024). As a result, what makes or makes public pension adequate and timely is what makes a difference between economic security and retirement welfare (Okah et al 2024; Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024). Delayed pensions mean that retirees might be faced with food insecurity, inability to buy medications and psychological distress, raising the public health implications of pension administration (Abere et al., 2023; Adebowale et al; 2022).

Population ageing in Nigeria also creates further need for effective social protection mechanisms. Although the population of Nigeria is dominated by young people, projections indicate a steady increase in the number of the elderly people which will exert more stress on the pension systems in terms of fiscal and administrative burden (Rustamova et. al., 2025; Bloom, Canning, & Fink, 2011). Ensuring that pension systems are strong, transparent and reliable is therefore important for the well-being of individuals and societies.

The literature suggested that the administration of pension is not only a financial phenomenon but a multidimensional challenge that impacts the health, social engagement, and general welfare of old people. Studies stress the need for timely, regular and adequate disbursement of pension so as to avoid vulnerabilities in the economy and society (Oigbochie&Chenge, 2023; Alzua et al., 2024). Additionally, there is the need for the strengthening of enforcement mechanisms, increased transparency of how the funds are managed, as well as incorporating of complementary social protection programs for improving the retirement welfare (Adewumi, 2024; Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024).

Pension systems should also be well-designed and this has broader developmental implications. Reliable pensions can help reduce the need for precarious work among retirees to make ends meet, help them participate in household and community decision-making, and contribute to dignity in old age. Furthermore, trust in the institutions may be heightened with the assistance of more efficient administration and regular payments which bolster the functions of governance in social protection (World Bank, 2022; United Nations, 2023).

## **Methodology**

### **Study Area**

Nigeria is the most populated African state having an estimated population of approximately 223 million as of 2024 by the World Bank. The country is also undergoing gradual ageing of its population. Recent estimations show that over 11 million Nigerians are 60 years and above, that is approximately 5% of the total population, and the projections of this age group is expected to considerably increase over the next few decades (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023). As the population becomes older, matters concerning the administration of pension provisions and retirement welfare have acquired increasing significance for the social protection policy.

The study was carried out in the Osun State in southwestern Nigeria. According to the current estimates, the populations of the state are approximately 4.7 million according to the recent projections of the National Population Commission of Nigeria and the National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria (2023-2024). Osun State was chosen for three major reasons. First, the Contributory Pension Scheme created as part of the Pension Reform Act 2004 and amended in 2014 operates under a common national regulatory framework and so findings from an analysis at the state level can be applied to wider discussions within the nation on the administration of pensions. Second, southwestern Nigeria including Osun State, has a

relatively higher percentage of older persons compared with the national average and this is a reflection of emerging ageing patterns in the region. Third, the state is often referred to as a "civil service state" due to the large concentration of public sector employees and retirees whose incomes derive to a substantial extent from salaries, gratuities and pensions. These characteristics make the state a good context in which to examine the relationship between pension administration and retirement welfare.

### **Study Design**

The study used a mixed method approach, which was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative aspect gave measurable patterns of pension administration and retirement welfare and the qualitative interviews a more in-depth insight into the experiences and coping strategies of retirees.

The study population included persons aged 50 years and older who were approaching or had just been retired from any type of formal employment. Two groups were considered: (i) workers with not more than ten years left to official retirement (pre-retirement phase) and (ii) persons who within the previous ten years retired (post-retirement phase). In this way, one was able to compare the expectations of the pension systems prior to retirement and the realities after retirement.

### **Sample Size Determination and Sampling**

The quantitative survey had 1,600 respondents. The sample size was calculated by using a formula for large populations with 95% confidence level and margin of error of 5% using maximum variability,  $p = 0.5$ . The respondents were divided among four labour force transition phases: 10-6 years before retirement, 5-1 years before retirement, 0-4 years after retirement and 5-9 years after retirement. This resulted in 800 pre-retirement and 800 post-retirement respondents. A multistage sampling method was applied. Public-sector establishments were randomly selected from the Federal, state and local government institutions in Osun State. Eligible workers have been identified from institutional records and selected randomly. Retirees were identified through pensioners' associations and verification registers and for interviews respondents were selected systematically.

To supplement the survey data, 24 in-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of people from the quantitative sample. Twelve interviews took place among the pre-retirement workers and twelve among the retirees. Participants were purposively chosen to represent differences in the demographic characteristics, the socioeconomic status, and the retirement experiences.

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered through Open Data Kit (ODK) on android devices. The questionnaire was adapted from world recognised instruments including the Study on Global Ageing and Adult Health (SAGE) developed by the World Health Organization. It recorded information on demographic characteristics, employment history, pension expectations and self-assessed quality of life. The administration of the instrument was in English and then translated to Yoruba where needed.

Qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interview guides that explored the pension experiences, economic coping strategies, health challenges and perceptions of the pension administration.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations to analyse the difference between pre-retirement and post-retirement respondents. Qualitative interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to the topic of pension adequacy, timeliness of payments and retirement well-being. The merging of both data sources gave a better overview of how pension administration affects the welfare of the elderly.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval (No: IPH/OAU/12/981) prior to data collection obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Obafemi Awolowo University.

## Results

The results are presented in three subsections: demographic characteristics, current pension system perceptions, and retirement welfare and challenges, and are a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative results.

### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 1,600 respondents were taken part in the study, consisting of 800 pre-retirement and 800 post-retirement individuals. The majority were men (58%) as the population is a reflection of the gender distribution of the public-sector workforce in Osun State. The participants of the age of pre-retirement were between 50 to 59 years, and the post-retirement were between 60 to 79 years of age similar to the criteria for inclusion of this study.

Education levels were varied with 45 percent of respondents reporting tertiary education, 35 percent with secondary education and 20 percent with primary levels or less. Employment sectors were public schools (primary and secondary), civil service (federal, state, and local), and universities, indicating the variety of sources of formal employment in the state.

**Table 1: Perceptions of the Present Pension System**

Variables	Category		
	Pre-retirement	Post-retirement	Total
Perception about current pension scheme			
Good	333	265	598
	41.63	33.13	37.38
Moderate/Fair	238	224	462
	29.75	28.00	28.88
Bad	229	331	540
	28.63	38.88	33.75
Total	800	800	1,600
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows that while a large number of pre-retirement respondents (41.6%) have a positive view of the pension system, only 33.1% of post-retirement respondents rated the system as good. Of particular interest is the 38.9% of the post-retirees who rated the system as being bad, showing that they were concerned about delayed or inadequate pension payouts.

These findings were reinforced by qualitative data. Many retirees said they were frustrated by irregular payments and insufficient pension amounts:

"Yes, they are not treating all the pensioners well, pensioners face serious problems, which is not supposed to be, some couldn't afford the drugs prescribed for them."

(66 years, Male, Retired,)

"If government pays gratuity one could engage in one activity or the other." An another expressed: "I used to have a car but sold it since there was no money to keep running it."(61 year, female, Retired).

Pre-retirement respondents also indicated worries about the sustainability of their pensions:"It is worrying. If they are not well paid, we may need to do menial jobs to survive after retirement. This may be dangerous because of our health."

(52 years, female,,In-service). These excerpts show the psychosocial stress and financial insecurity related to irregular or insufficient payment of pensions.

The majority of those who analyzed after their retirement had said that pensions and gratuities were not sufficient to meet the basic requirements of them, including food, healthcare and medications. Delayed payments were a particular problem, sometimes lasting as much as nine months, and requiring retired people to subsist on informal economic activities or sale of their own assets.

"Suppose, I am still in the service, I can go to Bank to take loan, but once retired no Bank will help even with guarantor."(72 years, Male Retired). Another expressed: 'For the last three days, I've

exhausted my beverage, no money to buy another one, my children did not buy for me."(66 years, Male retired).These accounts are consistent with the quantitative findings in suggesting that a substantial proportion of retirees are economically vulnerable.

In addition to financial difficulties, the retirees experienced difficulties accessing healthcare and medicines, leading to an increased level of anxiety and quality of life. Many mentioned stress-related diseases and the risk of premature death due to lack of financial support. Pensioners "most of them are sick, some of them are dead, some of them cannot afford drugs, they should pay us right." (59 year, male, In-service)

A participant expressed: "money from government is too small to keep living, so they have to support it with something else."(In-Service, Male, 58 years). These findings show that there is an interconnection between financial and health vulnerabilities and those irregular pensions make these species worse.

The qualitative interviews also revealed that the retirees had to do laborious or menial work often contrary to societal expectations that older people should retire with dignity. This not only impacted on their physical health but also compromised the traditional Yoruba cultural norm that older people are supposed to be cared for by the younger generation. "It is time for rest and not another work for the complex However, when they are not paid and they don't want to be liabilities, they tend to do works they are not supposed to be doing . . . this leads to untimely death. (52years, Female, In-service).

The results highlight how the adequacy and timely nature of pension income are important factors determining the capacity of retired persons to live a dignified and socially respected lifestyle.

The mixed-methods approach gives a much-rounded understanding of welfare in retirement in Nigeria. When the quantitative survey only measures general trends and percentages, the real-life experience and personal story of the figures can be identified through qualitative interviews. For example, the 38.9% of post-retirees rating the pension system as "bad" is explained by stories of delayed gratuities, lack of access to loans, and selling personal property for survival.

Overall, the findings reveal a significant link between pension administration and retirement welfare, pointing out a fact that inefficient administration has real economic, social, and health implications for older people.

## **Discussion**

This research work examined the administration of public pension and retirement welfare to older adults by integrating the quantitative and qualitative data of the pre-retirement and post-retirement periods of older adults in Osun State. The results highlight the complexity of the relationship between the performance of pension systems, economic security, health, and social welfare with implications to public administration and demographic planning(Folorunsho, 2025).

The study found a significant perception gap in pre-retirees and post-retirees. While pre-retirees tended to have moderately positive attitudes regarding the pension system, post-retirees were more discontented with the system, 38.9% of whom rated the pension system "bad." These results are consistent with what we have previously seen in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa in terms of expectations for financial security in retirement is often disappointingly met due to administrative inefficiencies (Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024; Adewumi, 2024; Abere et al., 2023).

Qualitative data showed that delayed or irregular payment of pensions was a major source of frustration and anxiety. Retirees said the fact that they had to wait months for gratuities, sell personal assets or work in informal sector to cover basic needs. These experiences reflect the findings of earlier studies which demonstrate the importance of pension administration inefficiencies in reducing trust in public pension systems and increasing the vulnerability of retirees (Adebowale et al; 2022; Oigbochie&Chenge, 2023; Durodola, &Gbadebo, 2024).

The perception gap implies that the pre-retirees may have overestimated the effectiveness of the pension system because of limited knowledge of post retirement realities. This has implications for retirement planning and communication of policies: Governments and institutions need to be sure that employees approaching retirement are aware of operational realities of the pension system.

A critical finding is the economic insecurity of the post-retirees, found in food insufficiency, inability to afford medications, and engagement in menial or informal work (Akindele et al, 2025). Quantitative results showed that many retirees depend only on pensions and gratuities, which are often not enough and not regular. Qualitative evidence further showed that to cope with inadequate pension income, retirees sell property, take informal loans or do physically demanding work.

These coping strategies not only impact on health and well-being, they are also contrary to cultural definitions of dignity in old age. Similar findings in Africa show that insufficient pensions have a detrimental effect on physical and social well-being (HelpAge International, 2020; Duflo, 2003; Case & Deaton, 1998). Moreover, the poor access of retirees to financial services such as loans or cooperative schemes, can point to structural barriers to achieving full financial inclusion (Abere et al., 2023; Adewumi, 2024).

The interdependence of pension adequacy and health outcomes is observed. Many retired people could not pay for prescribed medications, leading to the worsening of chronic conditions and psychological stress. The need to work beyond their physical capacity because of insufficient pension income adds to the risk of health problems. These findings are consistent with previous studies on the relationship between financial insecurity in old age and higher rates of morbidity and premature mortality (Adebowale et al; 2022; Oni-Eseleh&Badaiki, 2024).

## **Implications for Policy**

The results show important areas for public administration and social protection policy. Timing and predictability of disbursement of pensions is critical since delays directly affect the well-being of retirees. Pension adequacy needs to take into account cost of living, healthcare and household responsibilities for a dignified lifestyle. Ultimately, if we are to improve pension administration we need to join hands with government agencies, policy-makers and public institutions. Transparent monitoring of pension disbursements, regular audits and feedback mechanisms can help to increase accountability and trust. Furthermore, the interconnection of pension systems and social and health programs can help reduce the negative impact of financial insecurity on the well-being of older people. By tackling both the administrative inefficiency and the socio-economic realities of the retirees, Nigeria can enhance its system of social protection, improve the quality of life of the retiring population and prepare for the demographic changes that will come with an older population.

## **Acknowledgement**

The study was funded by the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA).

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author did not declare any conflict of interest

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