



Social Protection in the Informal Sector; Evidence from Ghana's Informal Sector

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Ghana's economy is dominated by a large informal sector employing a significantly higher proportion of the total workforce. Studies have shown that majority of informal sector workers work under bad working conditions, and earn low remuneration culminating into high social insecurity especially during their old age. This paper sought to find out if government, institutional and market oriented failures deter rational individuals and households from participating in a pension scheme by examining the level of awareness among informal sector workers when it comes to the existing third tier pension scheme, and to investigate if informal sector workers employ other means of social protection. A sample of 300 informal sector workers participated in this study, and findings showed that majority of informal sector workers are not subscribed under the third-tier pension scheme, citing financial issues, institutional bottlenecks and awareness creation as major hindrances to getting cover under the pension scheme, and about 64% of the participants do not have any retirement plan and among those who claimed to have, majority see investments in their children as their retirement plan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social protection according to International Labour Organization [1] is having security in the face of vulnerabilities yet research has shown that only 27% of the world's labour force are eligible for this benefit, and only about one in five of the world's population has adequate social security coverage. Those without coverage tend to work in the informal economy, and are disproportionately found in the developing world. In addressing the social protection needs of Ghana's informal sector, the Informal Sector Fund, a subsidiary pension scheme operated by the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) was set up to cater for the needs of the significant workforce in the informal sector, and this led to the enlargement of the Pension Scheme under the National Pension Regulatory Authority (NPRA) with the introduction of the third-tier pension scheme in 2010. Thus, the pension Scheme in Ghana became structured as a three-tier system namely;

- A mandatory basic national security system (SSNIT) which is a defined benefit scheme,
- A mandatory fully funded and privately managed occupational pension scheme which is a defined contribution scheme, and
- A voluntary fully funded and privately managed provident fund and personal pension scheme: defined contribution scheme.

This third-tier pension scheme was instituted primarily for those in the informal sector because they were not covered by the first two pension schemes and by May 2011 about 83,448 contributors had enrolled under the scheme SSNIT, [2].

According to the World Bank pension advocates, having different tiers may help to provide greater security by serving as a means of pension fund diversification, since the first two pension schemes are subject to risk. Holzmann [3] opined that the principal advantage of a three-tier scheme lies in risk modification. Not all the population's retirement portfolio will be held hostage to political and demographic risk". Merton et al. [4] concluded already before the World Bank pension agenda that the integration

of social security and private pensions could be viewed as means to realize an optimal portfolio.

With little or no access to organize market, basic infrastructure and legal recognition, it is not surprising that workers in the informal sector are subjected to informality constraints, such as income insecurity and vulnerability. Therefore, provision of social protection to these workers hinges critically on the elimination of such constraints, and making the informal sector more "visible".

The implementation of the third-tier pension scheme is therefore a step in the right direction, and given the likely advantages discussed in the preceding paragraph, we can only hope for a change in the fortunes of the numerous individuals in Ghana's informal sector. However, it has been five years since the implementation of this scheme and it is only rational to evaluate the level of participation of informal sector workers in the scheme, given that that, income and social insecurity is increasingly dominating the informal sector leaving the workers at a great risk especially in their old age (Stewart and Yermo, [5]). This study therefore was aimed towards;

- Determining if government, institutional, or market oriented failure deter the informal workers from participating in pension schemes by examining the level of awareness among informal sector workers when it comes to the third-tier pension scheme.
- Investigating the other means employed by informal sector workers when it comes to securing their retirement and old age.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Social Protection

Before our era, people work tirelessly without envisioning the vulnerabilities they may face in their old age. This situation brought about much suffering, poverty and vulnerabilities among the aged, which often culminates in a nation's economic crisis and thus social injustice to the labour force. This has made it necessary for a nationwide Social Security Scheme which was established in 1965 due to the implementation of the Social Security Act; Act (766), (Abebrese [6]).

Norton et al. [7] defined social protection as “public actions taken in response to the level of vulnerability, risk and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given society”. Although the term is used particularly in the context of developing countries, the core policy responses are social assistance and social insurance. However, owing to the fact that social protection dominantly addresses vulnerabilities and poverty reduction, Barientos [8] remarked that it emphasizes more on social assistance than social insurance.

According to the ILO [1], Social Protection is about “having security in the face of vulnerabilities and contingencies, it is having access to health care and it is about working in safety”. Currently, as a result of modernization, people tend to save towards securing their post retirement lives and this ideology in the views of ILO advocates has contributed to the increasing number of life insurance companies these days. The ILO approach to social protection can be seen to emphasize the provision of measures to to offset the absence or substantial reduction of income from work resulting from various contingencies (notably sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, in validity, old age, and death of the breadwinner), the provision of healthcare, and a means of sustainability for dependants.

It can be noted that ILO’s perspectives on social protection does not mention explicitly the need to raise workers’ incomes. Social protection is considered to include not only public social security schemes but also private or non-statutory schemes with similar objectives such as mutual benefit societies and occupational pension schemes. The various social protection mechanisms for workers, identified and assessed by the ILO report can therefore be viewed in two folds; the first are Schemes that aimed at maintaining the earning capacity of the worker during the working career, and secondly schemes that provide income security to the worker and his/her family after the end of the working career, and thereby minimizing the risk of falling below the poverty line.

But do people take advantage of these government oriented pension schemes? Is there a creation of good awareness on the existence of this pension schemes in Ghana? What other means are being used by informal sector workers to secure their retirements? and Does the level of education of an informal sector worker influence

the decision to participate in pension schemes? This study will seek to address these questions.

2.2 Informal Sector Participation in Pension Schemes

Anuwa-Amarh [8] conducted a study on informal sector participation in Ghana using a sample of 5000 respondents from the 10 regions, the study was published by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), they came to the conclusion that about 56.3% of informal sectors nation wide to not participate in SSNIT’s informal sector Pension Fund, it was further opined that majority of informal sector employers and employees’ main provision towards old age and retirement is in the form of personal savings. The reasons given for the poor participation in the scheme were irregular and insufficient incomes coupled with ignorance of the existence of the scheme.

The study by FES gave an overview of the prevailing situation in the whole of Ghana, it does not give region specific details, and thus necessitating further studies that provide a description of what is obtainable in each of the 10 regions, and thus this study focused on Volta Region.

2.3 The Concept of Informal Sector

There is currently no definition of the term informal sector that is comprehensive universally accepted since the introduction of the concept by Hart [9]’s in 1970 seminar work on the urban informal sector in Ghana. A number of attempts made by different researchers and national authorities to define the concept have resulted in diverse definitions. Enste, Dominik & Schneider, Friedrich. Enste and Schneider [10] stated that ‘attempts to measure the shadow economy (i.e. informal sector) first faced the problem of defining it. Several schools of thought have discussed this aspect of the economy, often in connection to developing countries. One perspective views the informal economy in positive terms, as a livelihood for the working poor with a “pool” of entrepreneurial talent. The international labour organization (ILO) in the year 2000 referred to the informal sector as that segment of the labour market in the developing countries that have absorbed significant numbers of job seekers, mostly in self-employment, and to workers in very small production units’.

The informal sector in Ghana can be classified into two namely the Rural informal sector, and

the urban informal sector based on the survey of Ghana's Trade Union Congress in 1995. However, for the purpose of this study, only the urban informal sector would be examined. The urban informal sector in Ghana, as elsewhere in Africa is remarkable for its heterogeneity and variety. Studies on the urban informal sector in Ghana revealed a wide range of operations that can be grouped under (i) services; (ii) construction; and (iii) manufacturing (ILO, 1997).

This study focused on the urban informal sector workers based on the premise that significant proportion of informal sector workers seek opportunities in urban territories where they feel they are more likely to make a decent living, in addition to this, the third-tier social protection scheme appears to be primarily engineered to cater for the needs of informal sector workers who are resident in urban areas since all pension offices and modes of registering and participating in the scheme are only accessible in the urban areas.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted quantitative research approach with descriptive design, this approach according to research guides from the University of Southern California, is a precursor to more quantitative designs, it yields rich data by allowing the researcher to collect data without influencing the subjects and this leads to important recommendations in practice, it help provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and how associated with a research problem; thus it helps to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon and to describe what exists with respect to variables or conditions in a situation.

3.2 Population and Sample Size

Ghana's informal sector is unstructured, hence there was no sampling frame for this study, however, a sample size of 300 respondents were chosen to participate in this study. This number of participants was deemed adequate in view of the use of exploratory factor analysis in the study, based on the recommendations of Field [10] who reviewed many suggestions about suitable sample size for factor analysis and gave the recommendation that about 300 cases are

probably adequate provided the communalities after the factor extraction and 0.5 and above.

3.3 Sampling Technique and Data Collection

The sampling technique adopted in this study can be viewed as a blend of both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling procedures. The probabilistic element was introduced by dividing the study area (Ho Township) into five strata comprising Aho/Heve Area, Civic centre, Market area, Dome, and Ho Technical University. This was done to enhance the chances of the sample being representative of the population under consideration. Furthermore, in order to enhance the systematic distribution of the sample gathered, the use of constant distance i.e. the distance between two electric poles which is 50meters was adopted in four of the selected strata namely; Aho/Heve Area, Civic centre, Dome, and Ho Technical University (Adedibu & Jelili [11], this was done to capture the distribution pattern and variation within the selected areas. However, this systematic approach was not applicable in the market hence, the use of convenience sampling which is a non-probabilistic technique was adopted.

The instrument of data collection was a self administered closed ended questionnaire, the questionnaire was designed using a 5-Point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to capture the primary data gathered, both exploratory and inferential statistical analysis were conducted. The exploratory analysis was in the form of tables, charts and percentages, which was adopted to display the the distribution of the data gathered. To draw reliable and valid inferences from the study, this study employed the use of binomial analysis, and exploratory factor analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Attributes of Respondents

The distribution of the respondents by gender shows that majority of the participants in this study were females accounting for about 60% of responses with males being 40%.

Table 1. Gender and age distribution of respondents

Indicator	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	120	40.0
Female	180	60.0
Total	300	100.0
Age		
below20	20	6.7
20-29	52	17.3
30-39	107	35.7
40-49	68	22.7
50 and above	53	17.7
Total	300	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data (2015)

This relative disproportionate number of males and females might perhaps be attributed to the generally held views that more females work in Ghana's informal sector than males especially considering the fact that Ho main market was chosen as a stratum, since there are more females in the market than males, another reason for this might also be the use of non-probabilistic sampling in the form of convenience sampling in which no deliberate attempt was made to have equal proportions of both genders in the study.

However, the higher number of females in this study should be quite good for the findings from the study given that there are generally more women than men in the market, and the market accounted for more respondents than the other four strata, it therefore means that about 60% of the times, findings from this study regarding the adoption of the third-tier social protection scheme might be attributed to the views of females working in the informal sector. The age distribution of respondents revealed that about 36.3% of the respondents are within the age group of 30-39, other age groups appear to be evenly spread in the sample gathered with respondents within the age groups 20-29, 40-49, and those who are 50 years and above representing about 17.3%, 22.7%, 1 and 7.7% respectively.

4.2 Level of Awareness of the Third-Tier Pension Scheme among Informal Sector Workers

Table 2 shows that a highly significant proportion of about 70% of those engaged in the informal

sector claimed not to be aware of the existence of the third-tier pension scheme, with only about 20% of them saying they are aware of the scheme with about 10% being uncertain when it comes to knowing about the scheme. What is paramount in this finding is the fact that a staggering number of informal sector workers are not even aware of the scheme, hence it is to be expected that participation in the scheme would be low among informal sector workers.

Table 2. Level of awareness of the third tier SNNIT pension scheme

Verdict	Frequency	Percent
Yes	61	20.3%
Uncertain	29	9.7%
No	210	70.0%
Total	300	100.0%

Source: Field Survey Data (2015)

Since there is such a very low level of awareness of the third-tier pension scheme, one would therefore ask; how do those in the informal sector plan for their requirement? The next output gives an insight into this question.

Table 3. Personal retirement plans among informal sector workers

Retirement plan	Frequency	Percent
Children's support	39	13.0%
Investing in buildings	25	8.3%
Business investment	29	9.6%
Savings	15	5.0%
No retirement plan	192	64.0%
Total	300	100.0%

Source: Field Survey Data (2015)

Table 3 shows that a very high number of informal sector workers do not have a retirement plan as shows by the 64% of respondents in this study saying they have no retirement plan, about 13% claim that their children support is what the envisage as a retirement plan, whilst 9.6% said they have business investments, 8% claimed to have investments in buildings with about 5.0% said they have savings as their social protection plan.

With such a large proportion of respondents not having retirement plans, the next focus of this study was aimed at evaluating the informal sector workers' willingness to participate in the third-tier pension scheme, Table 4 shows the output.

Table 4. Proportion of people who wish to participate in the third-tier pension scheme

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Willingness to take the third tier pension scheme	Group 1(Yes)	250	.84	.50	.000
	Group 2(No)	47	.16		
Total		297	1.00		

Source: Researchers' Construct (2015)

At $P(0.00) < 0.05$, the test is statistically significant, there is a significant difference between the number of informal sector workers who are willing to participate in the third-tier pension scheme and those who do not wish to. This is shown by about 84% of the workers saying yes with only about 16% saying they do not wish to do so.

4.3 Factors Responsible for Poor Level of Awareness and Participation in the Third-Tier Pension Scheme

The correlation matrix presented in Table 5 shows the bivariate correlation among the fourteen indicators. Variable X8 and X9 recorded the highest correlation value of 0.73, implying that about 73% of the times a change in the rating of variable X8 by respondents will also cause a change in the rating of variable X9. More so, there is a relatively high correlation among the following pairs of indicators; X1 and X2, X3 and X4, X3 and X5, X4 and X5, and variable X13 and X14.

The inter-correlations among the indicators give evidence that sub-groups can be formed; and thus the following 5 groupings may be obtained;

- F1= {X1, X2, X12},
- F2= {X3, X4, X5, X8, X9},
- F3= {X6, X7},
- F4= {X12, X13, X14},
- F5= {X10}

Furthermore, the bivariate correlations among the variables are not so large, and thus the condition of multi-collinearity does not exist, making it feasible to subject the 14 indicators to factor analysis, the adequacy of performing factor analysis was further enhanced by the KMO value of 0.66, and Bartlett's test of sampling

adequacy having a *P value* of 0.00. Thus, the correlation matrix, the KMO test, and Bartlett's test of sampling adequacy all gave indication that the 14 indicator variables can be subjected factoring.

The next output presents the number of components adequate for extraction based on the Eigen-value greater than one rule.

Table 6 indicates that only five factors are adequate for extraction using the Eigen-value greater than one rule, the five components accounts for about 70.23% of the total variability in the 14 original indicators. The rotated factor matrix provides an easier way of interpreting the five components.

After the rotation, it was observed that the loadings on the first factor are now on X3 (Income insufficiency), X4 (Amount of premium required) and X5 (Irregular flow of income). This implies that people rank these indicators highly to be a major factor for not taking the third-tier pension scheme. Hence the first factor can be termed the "**Finance factor**".

The second factor has its high loadings from X1(Age), X2 (Education), X11 (Difficulty in accessing the office) and X12 (Because I have a family), these four indicators appear to be related to the socio-demographic factors, and we can therefore refer to this factor as "**Socio-Demographic factor**".

The high loadings on factor three were recorded by indicator X6 (Difficulty in accessing benefit), X7 (Low confident on scheme), X10 (Inflexible payment mood), X11 (Difficulty in accessing the office). It could be noted that these indicators have something to do with the institution and its obligations, therefore these are enough to explain the factor "**Institutional factor**".

Table 5. Correlation matrix

	x1	x2	x3	x4	x5	x6	x7	x8	x9	x10	x11	x12	x13	x14
x1	1.00													
x2	0.56	1.00												
x3	0.18	0.28	1.00											
x4	0.29	0.36	0.54	1.00										
x5	0.09	0.28	0.59	0.51	1.00									
x6	0.13	0.24	0.21	0.25	0.25	1.00								
x7	-0.03	-0.07	0.19	0.16	0.26	0.44	1.00							
x8	0.03	0.15	0.46	0.27	0.37	0.10	0.30	1.00						
x9	-0.01	0.03	0.33	0.11	0.29	0.01	0.24	0.73	1.00					
x10	0.05	0.10	0.14	0.16	0.19	0.29	0.30	0.27	0.20	1.00				
x11	0.33	0.16	0.13	0.26	-0.04	0.37	0.14	0.05	0.09	0.29	1.00			
x12	0.37	0.33	0.09	0.18	-0.01	-0.02	0.11	0.03	0.13	0.11	0.37	1.00		
x13	0.06	-0.02	0.29	0.09	0.28	0.08	0.19	0.16	0.27	0.29	0.14	0.15	1.00	
x14	0.16	0.13	0.19	0.17	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.06	0.20	0.15	0.22	0.38	0.52	1.00

Source: Field Survey Data (2015)

Table 6. Total variation explained

Components	Initial Eigen Values		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.81	27.26	27.26
2	1.94	13.88	41.14
3	1.58	11.32	52.46
4	1.37	9.76	62.21
5	1.12	8.01	70.23
6	0.80	5.69	75.92
7	0.73	5.24	81.15
8	0.60	4.31	85.47
9	0.50	3.57	89.04
10	0.42	2.98	92.01
11	0.36	2.58	94.60
12	0.31	2.21	96.81
13	0.24	1.71	98.51
14	0.21	1.49	100.00

Source: Researchers' Construct (2015)

Table 7. Rotated factor matrix

Variable	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
x1	0.21	0.79	-0.01	-0.10	0.00
x2	0.46	0.67	-0.02	-0.02	-0.12
x3	0.76	0.09	0.07	0.29	0.17
x4	0.71	0.31	0.18	0.06	0.00
x5	0.83	-0.08	0.12	0.15	0.18
x6	0.30	0.05	0.80	-0.20	-0.02
x7	0.13	-0.12	0.71	0.21	0.14
x8	0.32	0.00	0.17	0.86	-0.06
x9	0.10	0.01	0.08	0.89	0.19
x10	0.02	0.09	0.61	0.23	0.14
x11	-0.12	0.5	0.54	0.02	0.11
x12	-0.14	0.73	0.03	0.17	0.34
x13	0.16	-0.04	0.11	0.12	0.84
x14	0.10	0.20	0.15	0.01	0.83

Source: Researchers' Construct (2015)

Table 8. Varimax transformation matrix

Component	1	2	3	4	5
1	0.60	0.38	0.46	0.39	0.36
2	-0.12	0.83	-0.06	-0.54	-0.03
3	-0.65	-0.07	0.50	-0.04	0.56
4	-0.18	0.23	-0.70	0.44	0.48
5	-0.41	0.33	0.20	0.60	-0.57

Factor four has high loadings from X8 (Low knowledge of scheme) and X9 (Little awareness creation on scheme). They appear to have the highest loadings from the factor matrix. This is being supported by the highest value of 0.73 they recorded in the correlation matrix, and these factors depict the level of awareness among informal sector workers when it comes to the third-tier scheme, and we can therefore refer to this as “**Awareness factor**”.

The last factor has its high loadings from X13(The scheme only takes care of long term financial needs) and X14(Bank regulations in acquiring benefit). These indicators are related to the respondents benefit acquisition process, this factor can be explained as “**Benefit acquisition factor**”.

The Varimax transformation matrix in Table 8 presents the five factors in order of their importance.

The first factor *i.e.* **Finance factor** appears to be the highest rated factor when it comes to deterrents to participating in the third-tier scheme, the next most important factor contributing to the problem is the **Social status**

factor, the **Awareness factor** is the third most important factor followed by the **Benefit acquisition factor**, and lastly the **Institutional factor**.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Findings from this study appeared to be consistent with the findings from the study published by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), and authored by Anuwa-Amarh [8], it was titled; Understanding the Urban Informal Economy in Ghana. Starting with the demographic attributes of the informal sector workers, FES reported that about 72.25% of informal sector workers are youths within the age bracket of 15 years to 35 years, and this although a bit higher than the 60% of informal sector workers in Ho being those who are below 20 years and up to 39 years, but it is still consistent with the views that most Ghanaian youths are in the informal sector.

Furthermore, FES drew the conclusion that about 56.3% of informal sector workers in Ghana do not participate in the informal sector Pension Scheme, and this is in accord with the findings from this study that about 70% of the informal sector workers are not aware of the informal

sector pension scheme, although this is significantly higher, thus indicating that the national proportion of about 56.3% mentioned in FES's study must have been influenced by regions with relatively higher proportion of participation thus lowering the national average reported in FES report.

This study also found out that only about 5.0% of informal sector workers in the Volta Region use personal savings as their planned means of support after retirement or old age, and this contrasts significantly with FES report that majority of those who do have a pension plan used personal savings, whilst FES report on the reliance on personal savings is consistent with indeed contrary to what was stated in the ILO's 2014 report that "due to the increase in modernization, people in the informal sector tend to save towards having a better life when aged", the findings from this study appears not to support this finding, and thus a higher proportion of about 13% of workers in the Volta Region region reported reliance on child/children support as a means of sustenance.

When it comes to the factors responsible for this low level of participation, the findings from this study aligns with the views expressed in the FES report, that irregular and insufficient incomes which is the finance factor identified in this study, coupled with ignorance of the existence of the scheme i.e. the awareness factor. It can further be argued that awareness factor, and the benefit acquisition factors are both related to institutional factors or failures, thus the five original factors can further be pruned down to finance factor, socio-demographic factor, and institutional failures on the part of the government and other stake holders thus harmonizing with the findings of Stewart and Yermo [5] who stated that financial issues and the minimal control of Government on the informal sector as constraints preventing the informal workers from participating in pension scheme.

5. CONCLUSION

Evidence from this study showed that there is significantly low level of awareness creation on the existence of the informal sector pension scheme, and this can be classified as an institutional failure, which is one of the objectives investigated in this study, thus it can be inferred that institutional failures have been a deterrent to participation in the pension scheme, this study therefore drew the conclusion that three main

factors deter participation in the scheme namely; Finance factor, socio-demographic factor, and institutional failures on the part of the government and other stakeholders.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings and conclusions drawn from this study suggest the following course of action;

Since a significant proportion of informal sector workers (70%) are not aware of the existence of the third-tier pension scheme, there is need for the Pension regulatory authority (SSNIT) to embark on a nationwide campaign on awareness creation, doing this will enhance the participation of the workers.

Secondly, Workers in the informal sector should be discouraged against the reliance on their children as means of sustainability during their retirement and old age, since this is not reliable as their children might be facing their own financial struggles when they need them to support them, apart from that, the eventuality of unforeseen occurrences such as the death or incapacitation of their children through illness or accidents makes this a very unreliable source of incomes and support during old age and retirement.

Lastly, since significant proportion of informal sector workers are youths, there is need to focus on delivering on the "basics" such as education for the youth, health, good governance and macroeconomic stability to create an empowered youth for employment generation and wealth creation.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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