

Strategies for a positive retirement experience from the perspective of retired teachers and their families

Estratégias para uma vivência positiva da aposentadoria na perspectiva de professores aposentados e de seus familiares

Estrategias para tener una experiencia de jubilación positiva desde la perspectiva de los docentes jubilados y sus familias

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to understand the strategies used by retired teachers and their families to experience retirement positively. **Method:** this is a qualitative study anchored in constructivist Grounded Theory and in the light of the Symbolic Interactionism premises. Data collection took place between August 2021 and June 2022, through individual interviews with 18 retired teachers from a public university and eight family members. **Results:** some strategies were considered important for experiencing retirement positively: family and social support in relocating retirees, enjoying one's own company, preparing for retirement and finding other activities to fill free time. **Final considerations:** to have the support of family members; to be able to build themselves up individually; to know how to enjoy their own company; to have prepared for retirement; to develop activities that they enjoy; to occupy themselves with new activities, including consultancies, voluntary services and social projects are all strategies for a positive retirement experience.

Descriptors: Work; Retirement; Retiree; Faculty; Family.

RESUMO

Objetivo: apreender as estratégias apontadas por professores aposentados e seus familiares para vivenciarem positivamente a aposentadoria. **Método:** estudo qualitativo, ancorado na Teoria Fundamentada nos Dados, vertente construtivista, e à luz das premissas do Interacionismo Simbólico. A coleta de dados ocorreu entre agosto de 2021 e junho de 2022, mediante entrevistas individuais com 18 docentes aposentados de uma universidade pública e oito familiares. **Resultados:** algumas estratégias foram consideradas importantes para experienciar positivamente a aposentadoria: apoio familiar, social na realocação dos aposentados, apreciar a própria companhia, se preparar para a aposentadoria e encontrar outras atividades para preencher o tempo livre. **Considerações finais:** ter o apoio e suporte dos familiares; se constituir individualmente; saber desfrutar da sua própria companhia; ter-se preparado para aposentadoria; desenvolver atividades que goste; ocupar-se com novas atividades, entre as quais consultorias, serviços voluntários e projetos sociais constituem estratégias para uma experiência positiva na aposentadoria.

Descritores: Trabalho; Aposentadoria; Aposentado; Docentes; Família.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: comprender las estrategias que mencionaron los docentes jubilados y sus familias para vivir positivamente la jubilación. **Método:** estudio cualitativo, basado en la Teoría Fundamentada en los Datos, vertiente constructivista, y a la luz de las premisas del Interaccionismo Simbólico. La recolección de datos se realizó entre agosto de 2021 y junio de 2022, a través de entrevistas individuales a 18 docentes jubilados de una universidad pública y ocho familiares. **Resultados:** algunas estrategias se consideraron importantes para vivir positivamente la jubilación: apoyo familiar y social en la reubicación de los jubilados, apreciar su propia compañía, prepararse para la jubilación y encontrar otras actividades para ocupar el tiempo libre. **Consideraciones finales:** contar con la ayuda y el apoyo de los familiares; constituirse individualmente; saber disfrutar de la propia compañía; haberse preparado para la jubilación; realizar actividades que disfrute; ocuparse de nuevas actividades, como consultoría, servicios voluntarios y proyectos sociales, son estrategias para tener una experiencia positiva en la jubilación.

Descriptores: Trabajo; Jubilación; Jubilado; Docentes; Familia.

INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, life expectancy for the year 2022 was 75.5 years, an increase on previous years, which represents the greater ageing of the population¹. Ageing is a natural stage in the life cycle that can bring about significant physiological changes, characterized by a gradual reduction in the body's structural integrity. Over time, these

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changes tend to hamper functionality, cognitive and work capacity, due to a reduction in muscle strength, aerobic capacity, flexibility and balance, resulting, for example, in limitations in the range of movement².

Reduced working capacity is not only influenced by ageing, but also by lifestyle, working conditions and individual characteristics³. In any case, with advancing age, the retirement process tends to become more common. This represents a monthly income for life, most often granted on the basis of age combined with time spent contributing to the National Institute of Social Security (*Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social*, INSS), but also for permanent disability or due to work carried out in special conditions that compromise physical integrity or health, and can occur on a compulsory, early or voluntary basis⁴.

Considering the high number of people who retire by age, it's fair to say that retirement usually comes at a time in life when there are many important transitions⁵. Most of the time, this means stopping full-time work, which brings inevitable changes that can be experienced differently by retirees⁶. This diversification is related to the way in which the worker has experienced working life over the years, and the meanings they attribute to work⁷. For some individuals, work provides a framework for their lives, their goals and their identity. In these cases, the cessation of this activity can trigger significant changes in their individual conceptions and experience⁸.

For those whose identity was formed solely in the workplace, retirement can mean the most significant loss in their lives, as well as being associated and occurring concomitantly with the aging process, the absence of ties related to work activities, a drop in occupational status and economic losses. These circumstances can compromise the psychological system and cause biopsychosocial illness⁹. Others, however, may experience this stage of life in a positive way, attributing to it meanings of greater satisfaction, better functioning and quality of health, which gives them successful ageing¹⁰.

Aware that the family is one of the systems anchored in symbolic interactions⁷ that provides health and contributes to improving the quality of life of individuals¹¹, it is believed that the family plays a key role in the experience of retirement. At the same time as its members can offer support to retired family members, the family itself is influenced by this condition, with changes occurring in its dynamics¹² and in the meanings attributed to family relationships.

At this juncture, it is essential to know the strategies used by retirees and their families to help them experience retirement in a beneficial way, as there has been little research on this subject from the perspective of family members and retirees¹³. Therefore, this study aims to answer the question: What is the perception of retirees and their families in relation to the strategies that can be used for a positive retirement experience?

The aim of the study was to understand the strategies used by retired people and their families to experience retirement positively.

Theoretical framework

Symbolic Interactionism (SI) is a theoretical perspective centered on how individuals construct meanings and interpret the world around them through social interaction. According to this perspective, human conduct and experience, whether individual or group, must be understood in a social way, considering that human beings are in a continuous process of adaptation and social change, based on social interactions⁷.

According to SI, human beings act in relation to things based on the meanings they have for them. These meanings, in turn, are not inherent in objects, but are socially constructed: they are formed and modified through social interactions. In these interactions, individuals use symbols, words, gestures and behaviors to communicate and construct meanings. Symbols and meanings are interpreted based on the context and perspective of individuals, so understanding is subjective and can vary from person to person⁷. It should be emphasized that the meaning that certain contexts and objects have for the individual is what directs their actions and interactions⁷.

METHOD

This is a qualitative study, using Kathy Charmaz's Constructivist Grounded Theory (GT) methodological framework, which emphasizes the active role of the researcher in the construction of knowledge and theory. The author recognizes that both the data and the emerging theory are co-constructions of the researcher with the participants, influenced by the contexts and interactions during the research process¹⁴.

This strand offers a way of understanding how knowledge is created in complex and subjective contexts. It is also particularly useful in research involving social and human phenomena, where personal experiences and social interactions play a crucial role in shaping reality. By recognizing the active role of the researcher and the constructed nature of knowledge, this approach allows for the elaboration of theories that are deeply rooted in the lived experience of the participants and the interpretations of the researcher¹⁴.

The participants were selected intentionally, from August 2021 to June 2022, and were professors who worked at a public university located in Paraná's northwest region. This setting was chosen due to the ease of access to the study participants, as one of the researchers had previous contact with the institution and with some retirees who had worked there. The university where the participants were based had previously run retirement preparation programs which had been discontinued. In 2023, the program was resumed, targeting internal and external civil servants close to retirement. There was also the right to a permanence allowance, relative to the amount of the social security contribution, granted to civil servants who meet the requirements to retire but choose to continue working¹⁵.

The study was authorized following a request to the human resources department, where the institution provided a list containing the name, date of birth, date of entry and retirement, and sector of employment of all the civil servants who had retired in recent years and who could possibly take part in this study. Subsequently, some retired teachers were contacted by telephone or e-mail, where they were given information about the purpose of the study and invited to take part. Upon verbal or written acceptance, a date and time were scheduled, depending on the availability of the teachers, although four of those contacted declined the invitation.

Family members were selected through the retired teachers who took part in this research, who provided the telephone number or e-mail address of their family members. The form of invitation and scheduling was identical to that of the retirees.

The operationalization of all the data collection was based on individual interviews, in a single moment, by the first author of this research (a doctoral student with experience in collecting qualitative data), via video call through Google Meet®, lasting a mean of 70 minutes. After authorization from the participant, the audio recorded on a digital device was transcribed in full. The interview was guided by an open-ended instrument, based on the guiding question: Tell me about your life after retirement. For family members: How was the process of experiencing your family member's retirement? As the interviews continued and the data was analyzed, new hypotheses emerged, and other supporting questions were used.

The study consisted of five sample groups, in which the 26 study participants were distributed: 18 retired teachers and eight family members, making up the theoretical sample. It is worth noting that only the first sample group was intentionally predefined (retired teachers), using the criterion of people who had experienced the phenomenon under investigation. The first eight members of this group were retired health professionals who had worked alongside one of the study's researchers, who did not take part in the data collection. After this, and as the participants' responses and the data analysis progressed, hypotheses emerged and, in order to answer them, specific people were sought out, with the aim of broadening the points of view on the study object. Other sample groups were thus formed, as shown in Figure 1.

The inclusion criterion for the first sample group was: being a retired teacher, regardless of the type and year of retirement. For the second group: having worked as a teacher in a field other than health. Third group: being retired and still performing work activities on a regular or occasional basis. Fourth group: being a family member of retirees who found it difficult to experience retirement. Fifth group: family members of retirees who enjoyed retirement. The exclusion criterion for all the sample groups was, as follows: manifesting aphasia, which could hinder the interview, and no cases were identified.

The collection was finalized with the fifth sample group, due to reaching theoretical saturation of the data, with the recurrence of information on the phenomenon under study and the absence of new information.

As they were conducted, the interviews were analyzed simultaneously, and the data categorized using constant comparative analysis in the MAXQDA® Plus 2020 Student software. This coding process took place in two interdependent stages: initial coding, in which the data was coded word for word (*in vivo* code) and/or line by line and/or incident by incident, with these codes being provisional, comparative and based on the data; in focused coding, the most significant and/or frequent codes from the initial coding were identified, thus separating, classifying, synthesizing/integrating and organizing these codes, with the aim of conceptualizing the empirical material. Analytical tools - diagrams and memos - were also used, produced as an intermediate stage between data collection and the writing of the study reports¹⁴.

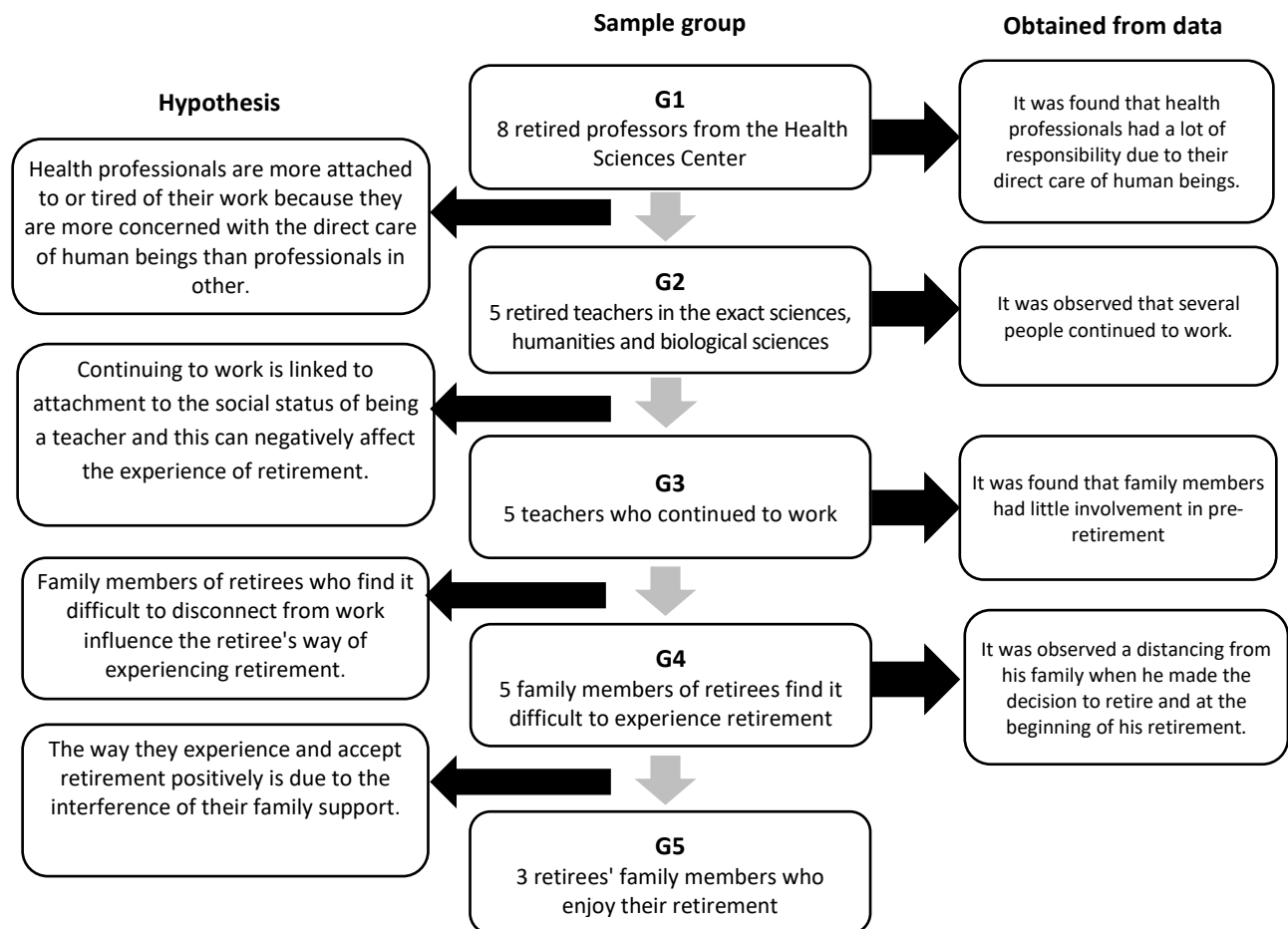


Figure 1: Diagram of the theoretical sampling route. Maringá, PR, Brazil, 2022.

The SI was used for results interpretation, which made it possible to construct the substantive theory: “Experiencing the complexity of retirement and its changes in life: the link between social and family interaction with ageing”. This paper presents data from the category “Identifying strategies for living retirement well”.

The study followed the guidelines of Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council and the Guidelines for procedures in research with any stage in a virtual environment - CONEP/2021. The research protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the signatory institution. The study participants' identities were preserved by using codes consisting of the initials E (retired teachers) or F (family members), followed by the Arabic number referring to the order in which the interview proceeded and the indication of the sample group: (E1G1); (F3G2). All the participants signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF). In preparing this report, the recommendations of the Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) guide were followed.

RESULTS

A total of 18 retired teachers took part in the study, aged between 57 and 77, 11 of whom were women, 15 married and 16 with a PhD. Seven of them worked in the Nursing Department, three in biology, two in history, two in psychology and one in the following departments: mathematics, literature, pharmacy and pedagogy. Nine of them did not do any kind of work, five did voluntary work in higher education teaching, two occasionally acted as *ad hoc* referees for journals or on master's or doctoral defense boards, and two carried out occupational activities related to their area of expertise.

In relation to the retirees' eight family members, seven were female, four of whom were children and three spouses, all of whom had completed higher education, and another five had a partner.

Figure 2 shows the category “Strategies for living well in retirement”, with its subcategories and codes, which showed that in order to experience retirement positively, the self⁷ and interaction with the family are important, due to the support they offer, and with society, which favors relocation and opportunities to develop pleasurable activities.

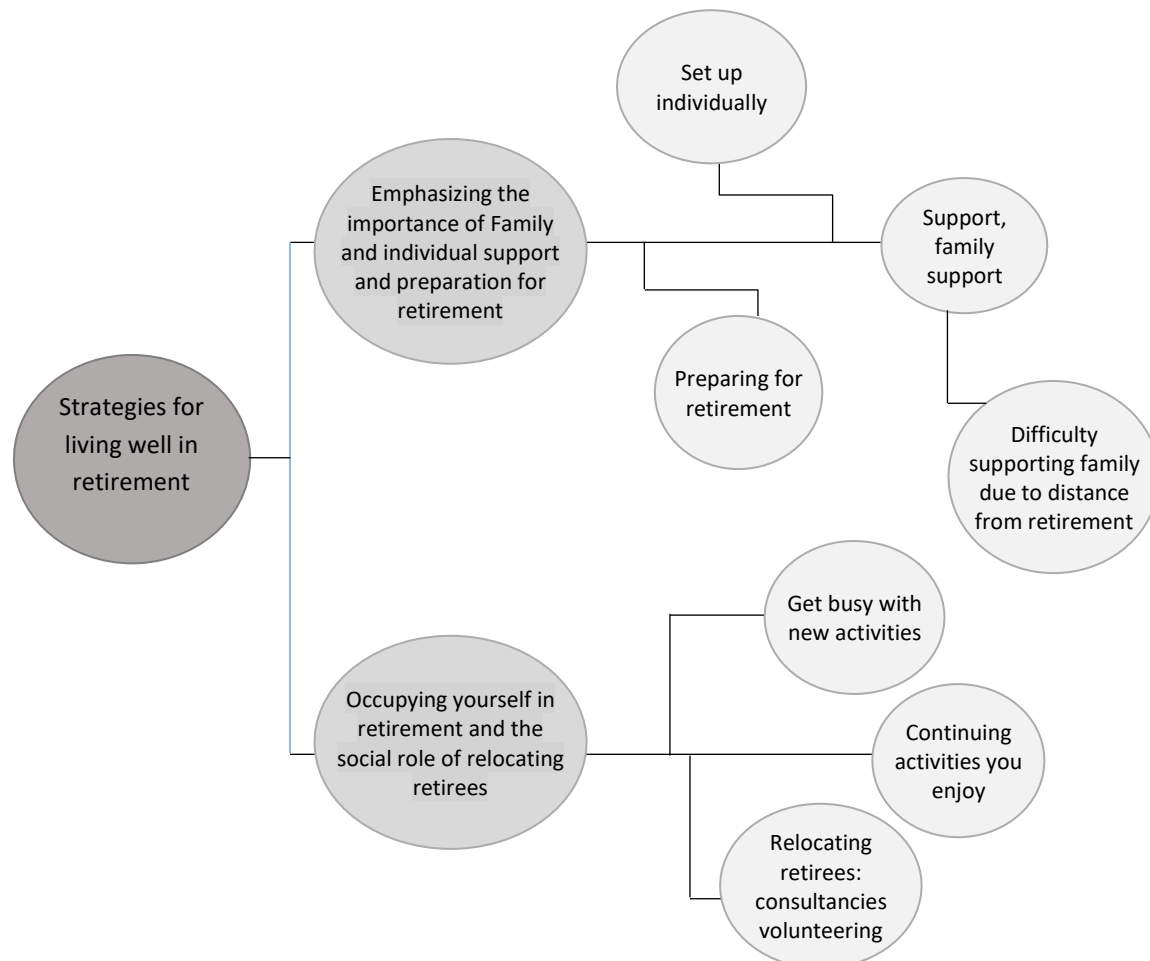


Figure 2: Diagram of the “Strategies for experiencing retirement positively” category. Maringá/PR, Brazil, 2022.

Emphasizing the importance of family and individual support and preparation for retirement

Family support makes it possible for retirees to realize that, despite the loss of social interaction with people they used to work with on a daily basis, they are not alone in this new stage of life. In order to overcome the suffering resulting from this loss, it is essential to have more interaction with people close to them - family members. When family members understand that the early days of retirement represent a time of emotional instability, they can offer help, encourage the development of new activities, support the plans and wishes of retirees, enabling them to experience this stage positively:

The possibility of involving the family, because then you really find yourself surrounded, no longer by the professionals who used to work with you, but by close family members, who are also often in need of you, who are also exchanging ideas and information, participating in your life. (E13G2, 15 years of retirement)

To support, to ask if the person has any plans, if they're really going to change activities or if they want to go into another career [...]. Always taking the person's wishes into account [...], because if I came to my mother and said: Oh, Mom, now you've retired, I'm going to have a child and you're going to look after the child so I can carry on working. And that's not her wish, she wouldn't be happy like that, there's that [...] you have to take the person's wishes into account. (F26G5)

To be willing to ask how the person is coping and to listen, but not to say what they should or shouldn't do, [...] to find out: How are they? What are they feeling? What does it mean to them? If she's noticing any changes

From the beginning and during the retirement process, it's essential. [...] supporting people who are going through this moment in their lives [...] I've seen from my experience that it's really important to be attentive to the person who is going through this process, because it's usually very unstable. (F15G4)

[...] and also show other sides, like me, now that some time has passed, I said: You have to travel, you have to do other things, I influence him to look for other hobbies, to do other things, to look for other things to do, that aren't focused on his work. (F19G4)

Over time, as they get to know and reflect on the retirement process, the family tends to focus on the retiree's needs and offer greater support:

At first, as I didn't know about the whole thing, I had little experience in this sense, I thought it was a moment of celebration and she could turn to herself and that would be it [...], but then I realized that she's really still going through this process, it's not just between being able to retire and a short time later, it can last for years [...], it's not something that has passed, I think she's still going through this process. (F15G4)

From the institutions' point of view, from the family's point of view, I think it would be trying to understand better, maybe putting yourself in the shoes of saying: No, great, I'm going to have free time, but what am I going to do with my free time? Then it changes radically. It's difficult [...] because it's distant for those who are still working. (F20G4)

The participants pointed out the importance of preparing for this stage of life in order to preserve their mental health, especially since this cycle is often marked by feelings of empty nest and attachment. They considered it feasible to enjoy retirement when work or concern for others is not the center of their lives:

Because here's the thing: the woman, she dedicates herself to the children, to the house and suddenly, if she hasn't built something for herself, something of her own, she's even more lost [...] she gets depressed, she suffers, she feels dissatisfied with herself [...] (E1G1, two years and five months of retirement)

It is to look inside yourself and be prepared to live in your own company, because during our family life, for example [...] when the children get married, leave or graduate and go to work elsewhere [...] the nest becomes empty, and people become emotionally ill because of the lack of children. (E24G3, one year and six months of retirement).

I don't think life can be restricted to work or university either [...] (E22G2, four years of retirement)

If people didn't work 30, 40 years for the same thing. If they created a life within their workplaces, I think it would help a little. I believe that when you don't work your whole life in one place, it's easier, less complicated, less painful. (F19G4)

What enables a person to become an individual and therefore to experience retirement in a positive way is their way of seeing the world, which in turn stems from social interaction and their self, the balance between carrying out work and social activities and their spirituality:

What makes me feel good about myself is my relationship with God, my spiritual relationship. I've always been a person who puts God at the forefront of my life [...] I've always put God at the forefront of my decision-making [...]. I think that's a characteristic of my personality, it goes hand in hand with my spiritual side [...] and that makes it much easier for me [...] I'm a very emotionally well-resolved person in these respects. (E2G1, three years of retirement)

I think that, for me, the soft part is part of life, because you also have to have balance, rest, enjoy yourself [...] I don't want to die at a desk, I've never thought about it, dying at a desk or retiring already ill, very old, with those problems that often come with age, health problems [...] (E22G2, four years of retirement)

Preparing for retirement is fundamental, especially for people who believe they will suffer during this phase. It's important to retire of your own free will, at your own time, and not because of pressure from society. And this preparation can take place through the help of family members, psychotherapy and a process of self-reflection:

I think some people really need to prepare for retirement. Those who think they're going to suffer in retirement, they have to prepare themselves, because they're not going to be well off [...]. (E4G1, two years and six months of retirement)

It's something you have to want. They don't have to retire because everyone is putting social pressure on them. They have to retire when they see that this is the time of their life, to be sure that this is what they want for their life. (E11G1, six years of retirement)

I think it's important for people to prepare for retirement. My mother prepared; you know? She had a plan. So it's important to have a plan, so you don't feel lost and all, so I think it's nice. (F26G5)

I don't think that's a reason to suffer, because there are some people who do. [...] If it makes you suffer, then don't retire, keep working [...] (E4G1, two years and six months of retirement).

It's important to plan for this, make a schedule and, suddenly, even seek help from therapy to get to know yourself better, to know what can be done [...] (F16G5)

Occupying yourself in retirement and the role of society in relocating retirees

Having a purpose, doing something, having a role in retirement is healthy. Occupy yourself with new opportunities to experience the world, perceiving retirement as a moment of new beginnings and not the end of life.

Look, basically, it's about taking good care of your health, preserving yourself and not letting your head get empty. Always try to have something to do that gives you pleasure: looking after the family, the house, a voluntary activity [...]. It's reading and reflecting, trying to improve yourself, trying to keep a positive mindset [...]. I also see it as a very good purpose for those who can live financially on retirement alone to dedicate themselves to something social. (E25G3, 20 years of retirement)

People who want to retire have to have this goal, to know that retirement is not the end. It's the beginning of a new life. A life that can have many doors and you have to know how to find the right key to open each one. (E14G2, three years of retirement)

Society has a fundamental role to play in reallocating retirees to activities that they can occupy themselves with on a daily basis, so that they don't feel empty. This can be done through consultancies, voluntary services and the inclusion of inclusive policies in the retirement process:

There should be strategies on the part of society to replace these people. Even if it's in voluntary service, so that people don't feel empty. They should have goals. (E25G3, 20 years of retirement)

Mediations are needed, which can even be produced by the institutions themselves, to implement the work of making this transition, this passage, for example, a teacher continuing to give guidance, not necessarily taking on a student and committing to two years, four years. But, for example, a consultant, a person with experience who can be consulted in a time of need, who can give important tips. Wow, that would be fantastic! I think there's a need for this openness, to create a culture of thinking about policies, including public policies, in relation to this retirement process, until the person themselves, for example, says: "I don't want to be a consultant anymore". But it would be a transition between working and suddenly not doing anything anymore. (F20G4)

DISCUSSION

The participants in this study pointed out some strategies that they believed would enable them to experience retirement in a positive way, based on their symbolic interactions, among which they highlighted the importance of enjoying their own company individually, having the support of family and society and not feeling idle.

The support of family members triggers the feeling that retirees are not alone. Family members can act with empathy, offer help according to their needs, indicate new activities that are in line with their autonomy and desires, allowing retirees, through their self-interaction (self), to redefine their actions, which is essentially intrinsic to dealing with the changes in their retirement routine. This redefinition gives a formative character to human interaction, giving rise to new objects, conceptions, relationships and types of behavior, making the life of the human group a process of development¹⁴. This perspective is in line with IS's⁷ premise in revealing that meanings are modified by people as a result of their interactive processes, a fact that reverberates in new behaviors, perceptions and actions about their reality.

Social interaction with people close to them - family and friends - about goals, plans, limitations and fears, allows retirees to discover new possibilities and purposes in life, because the meanings attributed to retirement derive from the social interaction that retirees have in their social relationships⁷. Qualitative research carried out with 40 retired people in Slovakia found that, through social interactions, they were able to assign new meanings to life and began to carry out/value more diverse activities that were not of a social nature, such as hobbies⁷. In these circumstances, retirement tends to be more satisfying¹⁶.

It should be noted that the social interaction of retired people with family members often leads to a redefinition of relationships and the people who take part in their lives. In other words, new actors become part of their daily lives, while others are removed, and this can be a factor that generates emotional and social instability. This instability can be accompanied by negative feelings - anguish, a sense of loss and uselessness. One of the strategies that minimizes or can abolish this situation is to have a positive attitude towards life, which plays

an important role in adapting to changes and preserving satisfactory levels of meaning in life, attributed to various senses of living¹².

The participants in this study pointed out that family support can be of little consequence once retirement begins. Hence the importance of preparing for retirement, which can be developed within the field of occupational health in nursing. This preparation, within the scope of nursing, can also involve family members, making them better prepared to act more assertively when defining the ideal time to start retirement. This positive symbolic construction related to this stage of life is fundamental and needs to take place through social interaction with family, friends and society in general, so that they can offer support to the individual who is going to redefine their actions in order to experience retirement positively.

It is therefore essential that health professionals, especially occupational nurses, society, public bodies and work institutions develop activities that lead to retirement planning and counseling, including psychological support, financial planning or potential relocation¹⁷. It is important that these interventions are individualized, so that social interaction stimulates reflection on how people interact with the object of retirement, encouraging a process of self-reflection on the meaning of retirement.

This self-reflection can also be done through scientific reading on the subject. It is worth highlighting the importance of professionals who work / develop activities with pre-retired people considering the fact that those with a higher educational level and who, in general, develop activities with less physical occupational wear and tear, are also those who may have a greater bond and attachment to work¹⁸. Thus, in the study in question, university professors showed that attachment to their work and the difficulty in completely disengaging from it, at least in the early years of retirement, is common among them.

It is therefore important to place greater emphasis on the process of preparing for retirement, especially for teachers at public universities. The participants pointed out that staying at the same institution for a long time can favor the development of institutional identity. This is due to the fact that public institutions offer employees stability in the company, as well as the opportunity for professional growth through career plans, positions and salaries¹⁹.

In this respect, one suggestion made by the participants was that retirees should build themselves up individually, give themselves value, priority, focus and meaning in their lives. This will help them to enjoy a fulfilling life in the transitional stages, such as retirement. A reflection study carried out in the United States showed that a sense of identity and purpose in life transcends work and is only a natural part of a person's identity. In other words, it represents only one part of who the individual is, which is made up of multiple roles / facets²⁰. In this way, their social representation goes beyond being a professional in the field, and they can be, for example: father, husband, son, brother, neighbor, and, as a result of the activities that are pleasurable to them and that they do frequently, they can also be recognized as an athlete, gardener, artist, cook, neighbor, carpenter, among others.

In Australia, a qualitative study carried out with 11 retirees found that people who have a very strong attachment to their work feel that with retirement they lose their identity, and this can create an existential vacuum, making them feel lost and aimless²¹. It is therefore important that the meanings related to retirement are based on a positive interpretation⁷ of this stage of life, in such a way that they are not strictly linked to the retiree's professional identity. This highlights the importance of maintaining or adapting one's identity during retirement²¹. In this context, retirement can bring mental health challenges or feelings of worthlessness. It is essential to have psychological and social support programs in place to help retirees adapt to this new phase of life²².

Retired professionals may experience an increase and/or severity in depressive symptoms²²⁻²³, in addition to facing psychological distress, feelings of loneliness and isolation²³. These individuals are also more likely to have uncontrolled blood pressure²⁴. Research carried out in Sweden has indicated that the effects of early retirement differ according to pre-retirement income, with individuals with higher incomes tending to benefit, while those with lower incomes perceive no or very little benefit from early retirement²⁵. It is therefore important to consider the profile of the individual before retirement in relation to various aspects, including income, in order to develop individualized health promotion and disease prevention strategies for this public.

This highlights the importance of implementing interdisciplinary strategies to prepare for retirement, especially for people whose identity was formed primarily in the workplace. This will be important so that they can redefine its meaning, reverberating in their social action, develop and engage in new activities, relationships, behaviors and plan what they are going to do¹⁷. This can happen through retirement preparation programs,

instituted through policies and implemented in public and private institutions, during the pre-retirement phase, providing workers with subsidies to plan their post-career lives with quality²⁶.

In this sense, in Brazil, Law 14.423/2022 emphasizes the importance and encouragement of preparing workers for retirement, which must be done at least one year in advance, by encouraging new social projects, according to their interests, and promoting guidance on citizenship and social rights²⁷.

It's important to have public policies that focus on preparing for retirement and on offering/making available new activities, encouraging work in consultancy services and participation in social projects, among others, which can help retirees not to feel idle²⁸. Institutions can implement retirement education programs to improve retirees' quality of life by offering emotional support and preparing them for this new phase of life²⁹.

Brazilian legislation stipulates that the public authorities must promote the creation of and encourage participation in programs aimed at keeping the older adults socially, physically and mentally active, thus improving their quality of life. Higher education institutions must offer these people in-person or distance learning courses and extension programs, consisting of formal and non-formal activities; support the creation of open universities for the elderly; provide the right to exercise professional activity, respecting their intellectual, mental and physical conditions; and encourage private companies to hire elderly people at work²⁷.

A systematic review study, which synthesized the results of research with adults aged 65 and over who carried out voluntary work, identified that the majority preferred to carry out this type of activity in community settings, and to participate more frequently in work related to health care or social assistance. It also found that these people perceived positive influences of volunteering on their lives, mainly in relation to mental health, well-being, knowledge and helping skills³⁰.

It should be noted, however, that increasing involvement in voluntary work may not always be a fruitful strategy for improving life satisfaction³¹. Ideally, based on the self's reflection on its current conditions in terms of health, relationships and support network, people should try to maintain a balance between the different facets that arise at this stage of life: socializing with family and friends; self-care actions, represented by greater dedication to preparing a healthy diet; the practice of physical and leisure activities; the adoption of hobbies and volunteer work.

The research carried out with retirees in Australia, in addition to identifying that people with a strong attachment to work feel that, with retirement, they lose their identity, also found that work experiences can influence the way they experience retirement. In this sense, the authors state that occupational therapy can provide healthy and active ageing, helping future retirees to remain in the job market, and/or to find a balance between occupational activities and other areas of life and, based on this, to select the activities that can be carried out in retirement²¹.

Successful adaptation to retirement for individuals who see work as central to their lives needs to be based on the availability of resources for new occupations, the reconstruction of the meaning of work and of their own condition as a retiree, through sources of generativity, spirituality, leisure, the Open University of the Third Age and various other activities¹². According to the results of this study, a strategy for a positive retirement experience is the development of pleasurable activities, even those linked to work, such as: being an *ad hoc* referee, continuing to sit on final exam boards, advising companies related to your area of training, as well as random activities: reading, watching TV, looking after the family, doing voluntary work and hobbies.

The results of this study also make it possible to consider the importance of people respecting their own time to retire, doing so of their own free will, without social pressure, and being able to choose what to do in retirement. It is therefore essential that institutions enable retirees to make choices, such as doing what they like until the moment they want to. If they are physically and intellectually able, they should have the opportunity to carry out the activities, even voluntarily, which tends to generate benefits mainly for their mental health. However, for some people this choice can be difficult, either due to occupational illnesses or compulsory retirement. Thus, for the majority of retirees, whose working life comes to a more sudden end, family and grandchildren tend to be a more available source for activities related to generativity¹². For this reason, the family becomes a mediating link in the retirees' interpretation of their retirement experience as a stage of life, fostering positive human responses to this moment.

Nursing plays a crucial role in promoting a healthy retirement through various strategies. Firstly, by providing health education, nursing professionals advise on healthy habits, stress management and disease prevention

throughout life, applying this knowledge during the transition to retirement to help individuals maintain a healthy lifestyle after leaving work³².

In addition, nursing tends to offer emotional support during the retirement transition, helping people deal with feelings of loss, issues related to professional identity and uncertainties about the future³³.

This study made it possible to understand the strategies developed by teachers and their families to experience retirement positively. These new results make significant contributions to the health and nursing fields, since professionals can provide guidance on adapting lifestyles to meet the specific needs of retirement, such as the importance of having your own identity, physical activities, healthy eating, and taking part in social activities and hobbies. It is essential to know the difficulties that this population can face, especially in terms of mental health and quality of life. By knowing the strategies, it is possible to implement them to guide and welcome these individuals with empathy and compassion, reinforcing in them the importance of family and social networks.

Study limitations

This study was challenged by the fact that the interviews were carried out online during the COVID-19 pandemic, which, especially for retired people, reduced the possibility of contact with individuals and their families in order to produce the data. In addition, the results represent a specific context, and mainly a population with higher financial conditions. However, it is believed that the context studied is useful for understanding other similar scenarios. Further studies exploring different perspectives, locations and workers from different sectors of society are therefore suggested.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Retirees and family members pointed out strategies for experiencing retirement positively: the importance of family support; making the most of their own company; having a sense of identity and purpose in life that transcends work activities. To this end, it is necessary to prepare for retirement by actively reconstructing the meaning of work and the meaning of life. This can be done by maintaining pleasurable activities, as well as engaging in new ones: consultancy, voluntary services and social projects. In this sense, the role of social and public policies in relocating retirees is substantial, enabling them to continue doing the activities they enjoy.

The findings of this study contribute to the advancement of knowledge about the beneficial experience of retirement, which can be facilitated through the process of self-reflection and action planning at the individual, family and group levels, enabling individuals to enjoy this stage of their lives. These strategies can be included in public health policies, aimed at raising awareness about the social and family role of retirement and implementing activities aimed at workers' health that can be carried out during the pre-retirement phase.

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