The Effect of Financial Literacy on Retirement Planning

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Abstract

Financial literacy is the basis of successful retirement planning. We examine the relationship between financial literacy and effective retirement planning using the National Financial Capability Study. Our main focus was to demonstrate the difference between females and males as well as Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics. Our results show that there are differences amongst genders and races. The policy implication of our study is to demonstrate a need for workshops and seminars to tackle the issues of financial know-how and retirement planning.

1.0 Introduction

For many years, the United States of America has been understood to be the land of freedom and economic opportunity. The American Dream is based on the idea that anyone in the United States can succeed through hard work, regardless of his or her social class, and it is implicit that financial stability is an important element. Financial stability is becoming an increasingly difficult goal to attain, given the complexity of new financial instruments. It is understandable that the general American populace is lacking in knowledge of all of these new tools and instruments, but are they financially literate, to the degree of being able to achieve the goal of financial stability?

Many researchers have the role of gender, race, and background on financial literacy levels in the United States. These factors undoubtedly contribute to financial instability, but the correlation between financial literacy and financial stability is not well studied. We examine how financial literacy affects an individual's saving behavior and decision-making behavior for retirement planning.

The paper proceeds as follows: section 2.0 provides a review of the literature, which we have broken down into four major categories: behavior and attitudes, gender, background and race. The data and methodology are outlined in section 3.0; section 4.0 is a brief discussion of our findings; and section 5.0 gives a brief conclusion.

2.0 Literature Review

Previous studies have examined the correlation between financial literacy levels and effective retirement planning. When we refer to financial literacy, we are referring to the understanding each individual has when it comes to financial concepts, such as inflation rates, compounding interest and risk diversification.

Research has shown that gender, race, background, behavior, and attitudes have an impact on retirement planning. Furthermore, studies show that education plays a part in all of the categories mentioned above. Many Americans fail to understand critical financial concepts, which are a major cause of low levels of financial literacy, ultimately leading to the issue of ineffective retirement planning (Mitchell et al, 2007).

The following section is a summary of previous researches discussing the factors that affect a consumer's decision-making and retirement planning.

2.1 Behavior and Attitudes

Four major characteristics have been established to examine household savings behaviors (Lusardi, 2003). The characteristics are:

1. Expectations about the future: This refers to how the individual sees himself or herself in the future. For example, when a person speaks about their future expectations, they may be referring to the probability that home prices will increase, social security will become less generous, and their income will increase as they grow professionally. In addition, an individual may also anticipate having to provide major financial help to family members in the next ten years.
2. Past economic circumstances: Past economic circumstances directly influence each individual's behavior. Some of the negative shocks include, losing their jobs, unforeseen medical emergencies that made it difficult to meet financial needs, or financial hardships that one may have experienced. The positive financial gains include receiving inheritances, collecting money from insurance settlements, or unexpected financial gifts and awards such as the lottery.
3. Preferences: Lifestyle choices such as smoking and drinking can adversely affect savings behavior. They create additional expenses and can make saving difficult.
4. Pension and Social Security Wealth: Many individuals still rely on social security. However, it is important to realize that this option may not be available due to the scarcity of resources reserved for current and future retirees.

Furthermore, each individual will have a different attitude or behavior when it comes to saving for retirement. There is a link between an individual's retirement confidence and their actual planning for retirement (Kim et al, 2005). If an individual feels that he or she is well prepared, then they are likely to be confident about retirement and subsequently this will lead to a positive outlook towards retirement.

Other characteristics have been identified to explain retirement attitude, such as gender, race, education, marital status, dependents, household income, health status, and employer contribution. It has been found that males are more likely to have a positive attitude towards retirement than females (Atchley, 1982). The authors also find that minorities, including African

Americans and Hispanics, have lower retirement confidence and less retirement preparation, primarily due to lower income and lower levels of education.

Research indicates that decision-making techniques impact the behavior associated with retirement planning. There are four behavioral categories, which may hinder individuals to becoming financially secure. The categories are informational issues, heuristics and biases, intertemporal choice and decision context. Informational issues - refers to the availability of information, which can alter an individual's decision making; heuristics and biases are the thought processes behind an individual's decision. Intertemporal choice is the psychology behind decision making; and decision context is how individuals make decisions depending on how the information is presented or compared to other alternatives. As individuals, we encounter these decision-making behaviors more often than we may realize. For example, information issues occur when an individual turns to someone they feel is more knowledgeable for an answer or avoids making a decision because all relevant information is unclear or unknown. Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of the various types of decision-making within the four broad categories of decision-making (Knoll, 2010). .

Despite what researchers have found about the correlation between retirement planning and attitudes, variances can occur because each researcher will measure attitudes differently (Davis, 2007).

2.2 Background

Family members who have experienced pleasant or unpleasant financial events can impart financial literacy. Planning for retirement is shaped by the experience of other individuals like siblings, parents or yourself (Lusardi, 2012). Some authors focus on parental influences as they analyze background. Researchers have documented that college students are highly influenced by parents in their monetary habits. In fact, it was found that 94% of students ask parents for financial advice. We must also consider experience when we speak of background. Let's take a look at a college student who makes a purchase and makes minimum payments each month. Once they see the interest accruing, they get a real understanding of the purchase cost. Once this realization occurs, the student then adjusts to either make higher payments or pay it off all at once. Many times pulling from a past experience allows an individual to either make better decisions or to avoid a potentially disastrous situation. The final result of Jorgenson's research illustrates that those students who were taught to manage their money effectively at a younger age, were more financially responsible, as opposed to those students who had learned little or nothing from their parents (Jorgenson, 2007). A study targeted towards young adults determined that these individuals are highly influenced by their parents (Jorgenson et al, 2010). But what happens when the parent giving the advice, is not financially literate himself or herself? You are then left with a case where a financially illiterate person is giving financial advice.

2.3 Gender

Women have unique considerations in retirement planning, which are frequently overlooked. Women must factor issues such as, shorter time in the workforce due to childbirth, care giving, and social security of spouses (since women live longer than men). Under allocating or simply forgetting to allocate costs for any of the above points can drastically affect an individual's retirement. Studies showed that 68.5% of women did not realize the short-term costs of providing care and 83.5% of caregivers did not realize the long-term financial effects of providing care (Orel et al 2004).

Efficient retirement savings relies heavily on successful retirement planning. Research has shown that 30.9% of older women age 50 and up are simple planners (made at least one retirement savings calculation), 20.3% are serious planners (developed a plan), and 17.4% are committed planners (developed a plan and followed it) (Lusardi et al, 2008). Given the gender-specific requirements of retirement planning and the general unpreparedness of women, it has been suggested that retirement programs should be tailored to gender.

Gender also affects retirement planning through financial literacy, as men typically possess more financial expertise than women. Despite having more financial expertise than women, it has been found that males tend to see retirement as a natural progression in life (Grace et al, 2010). This perspective often causes males to overlook the need for retirement planning thus leaving them in the same state of retirement unpreparedness as their female counterparts. Women are very mindful that unplanned obstacles may occur during the course of their life, which could potentially impede their financial stability in retirement. Being aware of these obstacles may cause women to save more for short-term rather than saving for retirement. These obstacles may also pose an issue in the amount of money devoted to savings overall (Hayhoe et al, 2000).

2.4 Race

Racial differences have been said to play a major role in retirement planning or lack thereof in the US. The two largest minority groups in the United States are African Americans and Hispanics. Hispanics are projected to be the largest minority representing one quarter of the U.S population and African Americans are projected to become approximately 15% of the U.S. population in the coming years. Studies have shown that the majority of Hispanic and African American families are low-income households with minimal financial future planning (Prudential, 2011).

It has been proven that low education and low income are the two major reasons these two minority groups do not have retirement savings and live off their monthly income (Prudential, 2011). The lack of financial knowledge of African Americans and Hispanics in comparison to other ethnicities, such as Caucasians and Chinese, is also correlated to their poor savings and their investment behavior. Researchers find that in members of minority groups, education affects retirement savings as much as receiving an inheritance, holding a checking account, or having a long-term retirement plan. It is unclear why households with high education save more than those with little education. The low education minorities are not only less likely to invest in high-return assets, but they do not even invest in basic financial assets, such as checking and savings accounts (Lusardi, 2005).

Understanding the saving and investment behavior of African Americans and Hispanics is critically important for implementing policies that can be effective in shaping the behavior of families where saving is scarce. A solution proposed by Lusardi was the implementation of financial seminars directed to different groups that have different needs, with the purpose of increasing their financial literacy. However by doing so, some individuals may feel discriminated against. Furthermore, the perception that financial planners are only a resource for the wealthy has undermined the ability of these disadvantaged groups to obtain financial literacy through outside resources (Mitchell et all, 2011).

Below is a literary survey of our research grouped by paper topics.

Table 1: Background and Financial Literacy

Author	Issue	Key Findings	Time Period	Database
Jorgensen, Bryce L.	Are financial Literacy levels influenced by parents and peers?	1) 65% of students given opportunity to take financial course but only 21% did take financial course even though they thought it would help them in the long run 2) Parents influence at younger age and peer influence during college yrs. 3) 94% students turn to parents for advice yet parents are not educated themselves	2007	Surveys given and CSFLS (College Student Financial Literacy Survey), SPSS, ANOVA used to analyze
Lusardi, Annamaria	Planning and Saving for Retirement	Planning is shaped by experience of other individuals: individuals learn to plan for retirement from older siblings.	2003	Survey
Jorgensen, Bryce L. Savla, Jyoti	What is the impact that parents have on shaping and developing	1) Men who learned implicitly about finances from their parents had a significantly higher financial knowledge score, yet women’s financial	October 2010	Survey given by CSFLS, Questions chosen from various sources, expectation

	children's financial understanding?	knowledge score did not significantly differ by how they learned about finances from their parents. 2) Both men and women learned financial attitudes more through explicit financial teaching than implicit only teaching		maximization procedure for missing data, PRELIS Version 2.8 to test model
Lusardi, Annamaria	Financial illiteracy is spread worldwide and negatively affects savings	1) Results held true for countries outside of the US. Not just a US issue	Summer 2012	Survey given and analysis conducted but no information of analysis given, scholarly article
Mitchell, Olivia S. Lusardi, Annamaria	Financial Literacy and Retirement Planning in the United States	This paper shows that people that score higher on the financial literacy questions are also much more likely to plan for retirement.	2011	Netspar, FINRA.
Kim, Jihnhee Kwon, Jasook Anderson, Elaine A.	Factors related to retirement confidence: Retirement preparation and workplace financial education	The results suggest that those who calculated their retirement fund needs, had more savings, higher household income, better health and who received workplace financial education and advice had higher levels of retirement confidence than others.	2005	2004 Retirement confidence Survey.
Gough, Orla Sozou, Peter D.	Pensions and retirement savings: cluster analysis of consumer behavior and attitudes.	The aim of this article is to obtain a better understanding of people's motivation and behavior with respect to provision for their retirement	2005	Questioner survey to people in England.

Davis, Guyla D.	From Worker to Retiree: a validation study of a psychological retirement planning measure	Psychological retirement planning did contribute to the explained variance of attitudes toward retirement, but results are mixed depending upon how attitudes are measured.	2007	The data was collected from 369 workers. An exploratory analysis was used to condense items into four cohesive factors.

Table 2: Gender

Author	Issue	Key Findings	Time Period	Database
Lusardi, Annamaria Mitchell, Olivia S.	Women and their financial literacy	Older women in US tend to have low levels of financial literacy; Imperative that people become financially literate to be successful for retirement	2008	Health and Retirement Study (HRS)
Orel, Nancy A. Ford, Ruth A. Brock, Charlene	Women save less do to interruptions in life	45% of those surveyed caring for parents; 62% of respondents not sure if they will have sufficient income for retirement; 83.5% did not know the long-term financial costs of providing care; 68.5% did not see the immediate financial costs of providing care	2004	138 female respondents aged 18-74 years old given questionnaire
Atchley, Robert C. Robinson, Judith L.	Attitudes Toward Retirement and Distance from the Event	Retirement attitude was correlated with gender, health, and perceived income	1982	Scripps Foundation
Grace, Debra Scott, Weaven Mitchell, Ross	Consumer retirement planning: an exploratory study of gender differences	The findings from the interviews indicate that males and females adopt different perspectives when it comes to retirement. Males tend to adopt an individual choice. Women in the other hand, makes no assumptions or predictions about future life stages.	2010	Semi-constructed interviews.

Hayhoe, Celia R Leach, Lauren J. Turner, Pamela R. Bruin, Marilyn J. Lawrence, Frances C.	Is there truly a difference between male and female college spending and the use of credit cards?	1) Men save more for long term 2) Females have higher number of cards but overall outstanding balances between male and females the same	Summer 2000	Survey

Table 3: Race

Author	**Issue**	**Key Findings**	**Time Period**	**Database**
Lusardi, Annamaria	Financial Education and the Saving Behavior of African-American and Hispanic Households	Level of financial Literacy does influence savings behavior. Results show African-American and Hispanic households among the lowest in terms of financial literacy levels.	2005	1992 wave of the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and the 2002 National Survey of Latinos (NSL). Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation 2002 National Survey of Latinos (NSL-2002 for brevity)
Prudential Research Group	The African American Financial Experience	African-American households produce less income on average than other races	2011	Prudential Research Group
Bethea, Patricia Davis	Black Workers: Commitment to work, retirement attitude, and retirement planning	Black workers are very committed to work and very positive about retirement. However, they fail to plan adequately for the retirement role	1987	ASSIA, ASFA, BioOne Abstracts & Indexes, DAAI, EconLit, ERIC, LISA, PILOTS, PQDT, Proquest Reasearch Library, Social Services Abstracts,

Table 4: Education

Author	Issue	Key Findings	Time Period	Database
Mitchell, Olivia S. Lusardi, Annamaria	Why education on Financial Literacy is needed	Many are unaware of basic economic concepts needed to prepare for retirement and savings	January 2007	Analysis of surveys
Knoll, Melissa A. Z.	How do behavioral economics and behavioral decision making affect one another	More education and knowledge is not positively correlated with optimal decision making	2010	Analysis of Surveys
Glass, Conrad J. Flynn, Diana K.	Shows how individuals in rural areas differ in terms of retirement needs and wants	1) About 70% had not participated in formal retirement programs and 51.2% were 5 years from retirement	2000	Surveys were sent to houses in an envelope with a signed cover letter and two questionnaires, data analysis done by descriptive statistics, mean, percentage, and frequency distribution

3.0 Data and Methodology

Many researchers rely on information from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) to conduct their analysis of retirement. A study conducted by the University of Michigan, surveys more than 26,000 Americans over the age of 50 every two years. Focusing on income, work, assets, pension plans, health insurance, disability, physical health and functioning, cognitive functioning, and health care expenditures, HRS offers valuable information for those interested in any of the subject areas above. However, we did not use the HRS database because we wanted to focus on the correlation between financial know-how and retirement planning among females and males, as well as Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics.

The data used for this study was collected from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA). The Investor Education Foundation made FINRA database available with the purpose of assessing and establishing a baseline measure of the financial capability of U.S adults. The National Financial Capability study represents an opportunity to have a better understanding of specific financial behaviors that are affecting many Americans. The study was based on a national survey given to 1,488 respondents. The online study covered a four-month time frame: June 2009 to October 2009. Using the information provided by the survey, we carefully chose questions, which were accurate measurements in evaluating retirement planning and financial literacy levels.

Our study consisted of two broad hypotheses to analyze financial literacy and retirement planning; financial know-how and retirement preparedness. Within each hypothesis we analyzed gender first and then race. The Chi-square statistical analysis was deemed to be most appropriate in analyzing these two subject areas. Chi-square statistical analysis is used when responses are categorical. Chi-square is also used to compare the difference between an actual sample and another hypothetical distribution.

The following hypothesis was used to compare the financial know-how of males to females:

H_0: Financial know-how of males is equal to financial know-how of females
H_a: Financial know-how of males is not equal to financial know-how of females

We break the general hypothesis mentioned above into three sub-hypotheses in order to compare financial know-how among Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics, the following hypotheses. The sub-hypotheses are:

H_0: Financial know-how of Caucasians is equal to financial know-how of Hispanics
H_a: Financial know-how of Caucasians is not equal to financial know-how of Hispanics

H_0: Financial know-how of Caucasians is equal to financial know-how of African-Americans
H_a: Financial know-how of Caucasians is not equal to financial know-how of African-Americans

H_0: Financial know-how of African-Americans is equal to financial know-how of Hispanics
H_a: Financial know-how of African-Americans is not equal to financial know-how of Hispanics

The following hypothesis was used to compare the retirement preparedness of males to females:
H_0: Retirement preparedness of males is equal to retirement preparedness of females
H_a: Retirement preparedness of males is not equal to retirement preparedness of females

We further analyzed the above hypothesis through the following sub hypotheses to compare retirement preparedness amongst Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics.

Sub hypotheses:

H_0: Retirement preparedness of Caucasians is equal to retirement preparedness of African-Americans

H_a: Retirement preparedness of Caucasians is not equal to retirement preparedness of African-Americans

H_0: Retirement preparedness of Caucasians is equal to retirement preparedness of Hispanics

H_a: Retirement preparedness of Caucasians is not equal to retirement preparedness of Hispanics

H_0: Retirement preparedness of African-Americans is equal to retirement preparedness of Hispanics

H_a: Retirement preparedness of African-Americans is not equal to retirement preparedness of Hispanics

The following hypothesis was used to compare the financial satisfaction of males to females:

H_0: Financial satisfaction of males is equal to the financial satisfaction of females

H_a: Financial satisfaction of males is equal to the financial satisfaction of females

The following sub hypotheses were used to compare financial satisfaction among Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics:

H_0: Financial satisfaction of Caucasians is equal to the financial satisfaction of African-Americans

H_a: Financial satisfaction of Caucasians is not equal to the financial satisfaction of African-Americans

H_0: Financial satisfaction of Caucasians is equal to the financial satisfaction of Hispanics

H_a: Financial satisfaction of Caucasians is equal to the financial satisfaction of Hispanics

H_0: Financial satisfaction of African-Americans is equal to the financial satisfaction of Hispanics

H_a: Financial satisfaction of African-Americans is not equal to the financial satisfaction of Hispanics

4.0 Results

The results displayed in the tables below represent the financial know-how, retirement planning, and retirement satisfaction between gender and race. We selected three ethnicities; Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics for our study.

In table 5 the results show eight significant values, which allowed us to conclude with 95 percent confidence that the financial know-how of males is not equal to the financial know-how of females. Furthermore, the financial know-how of Caucasians is not equal to the financial know-how of African Americans. Also, with 95 percent of confidence we can conclude that the financial know-how of Caucasians is not equal to the financial know-how of Hispanics. However, the financial know-how between African Americans and Hispanics is equal.

Table 5 Result of Financial Know-how

Chi-Square Stat.				
	Gender	Race		
		Caucasians & African-Americans	Caucasians & Hispanics	African-Americans & Hispanics
	n= 1488	n=1136	n=1105	n=336
Q1	26.23*	1.91	8.28*	3.02
Q2	30.68*	14.71*	35.26*	4.15
Q3	23.49*	21.40*	14.59*	1.03

Note: n= number of people surveyed

Q1= Suppose you had $100 in a savings account and the interest rate was 2% per year. After 5 years, how much do you think you would have in the account if you left the money to grow?

Q2= Imagine that the interest rate on your savings account was 1% per year and inflation was 2% per year. After 1 year, how much would you be able to buy with the money in this account?

Q3= If interest rates rise, what will typically happen to bond prices?

* Statistically significant at 5% level of confidence- $\chi^2_{5\%, 2df} = 5.991$

Results show in table 6 that the null hypothesis of retirement preparedness of males and the retirement preparedness of females was accepted at 95 percent confidence. Furthermore, we were able to conclude with 95 percent confidence that the retirement preparedness of Caucasians is equal to the retirement preparedness of both African-Americans and Hispanics. Moreover, results show that the retirement preparedness of African-Americans is equal to the retirement preparedness of Hispanics.

Table 6 Results of Retirement Planning

Chi-Square Stat.								
	Gender		Race					
			Caucasians & African-Americans		Caucasians & Hispanics		African-Americans & Hispanics	
	n	cv	n	cv	n	cv	n	cv
Q1	1218	3.64	899	6.26*	892	23.8*	295	4.29
Q2	270	0.41	237	0.94	212	0.48	41	0.75
Q3	617	2.03	469	4.18	478	2.17	97	1.29

Note: n= number of people surveyed
Q1= Have you ever tried to figure out how much you need to save for retirement?
Q2= Before you (your spouse/partner) retired, did you try to figure out how much you needed to save for retirement?
Q3= Do you (or your spouse/partner) regularly contribute to a retirement account like a 401(k) or IRA?
*Statistically significant at 5% level of confidence- $\chi^2_{5\%, 2df}= 5.991$

Results in table 7 show that the financial satisfaction of males is equal to the financial satisfaction of females. We were able to conclude with 95 percent confidence that the financial satisfaction of Caucasians is not equal to the financial satisfaction of African-Americans. We were also able to conclude with 95 percent confidence that the financial satisfaction of Caucasians is equal to the financial satisfaction of Hispanics and that the financial satisfaction of African-Americans is equal to the financial satisfaction of Hispanics.

Table 7 Results of People's satisfaction about retirement

Chi-Square Stat.								
	Gender		Race					
			Caucasians & African-Americans		Caucasians & Hispanics		African-Americans & Hispanics	
	n	cv	n	cv	n	cv	n	cv
Q1	1488	1.06	1128	10.31*	1096	0.2	336	4.33

Note: n= number of people surveyed
Q1= Overall, thinking of your assets, debts and savings, how satisfied are you with your current personal financial condition?
* Statistically significant at 5% level of confidence- $\chi^2_{5\%, 2df}= 5.991$

5.0 Conclusion

Financial literacy is a main concern in retirement planning in the United States of America. Understanding the needs of each gender and race can greatly aid in preparing individuals for retirement. Retirement planning can begin at any time and thus must be a main priority. Financial know-how is an issue that every gender and race is facing. However, we must remember that it is essential to have sufficient financial knowledge to successfully plan for retirement. Through our research we have found many differences among individuals that can be addressed through the creation of programs based on gender and race. Nevertheless, it is very important to increase financial education through workshops and seminars.

6.0 Appendix

Category	Example	Explanation
Informational Issues	Ambiguity aversion	The tendency to avoid making decisions when some of the relevant information is unknown or unclear
	Anecdotal evidence	Turning to others who in their eyes are considered to be more knowledgeable
Heuristics and biases	Rules of Thumb	General rules that are followed because they have been heard of whether on the radio, news program, or newspaper
	Status quo biases	Disproportionately endorsing the alternative because one wants things to stay the same
	Default effects (example of framing effect)	Example: automatically being defaulted into being a donor and having the opportunity to opt out versus the other way around
Intertemporal choice	Self-control	Actually taking advantage of the opportunities and options given to you
	Procrastination	Enrolling right away and being able to make changes in a timely manner
	Hyperbolic discounting	A change in preference as a future event draws closer
	Emotions	Making decisions based on feelings rather than logic
Decision Context	Reference dependence	The status quo establishes a reference point from which changes are evaluated as gains or losses
	Choice Bracketing	The way in which people combine individual choices when selecting a course of action
	Framing effects	Reacting differently based on whether the situation will be a gain or loss
	Choice architecture	The different outcomes possible based on the way the choices are presented

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