Evaluation of IEC's
Workplace Financial Wellness Programme

Prepared by

ZHOU, Huiquan, Mary

YAU NG Lai-tuen, Monica

Department of Social Work

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Investor Education Centre has identified working adults as one of the priority target segments that have distinct financial education needs, and has therefore developed its Workplace Financial Wellness Programmes with a focus on pre-retirees and those who are new to employment respectively.

The pilot programme for pre-retirees was run at HKT Limited, a telecommunications company in Hong Kong, which sees a sizeable number of staff members nearing retirement and is keen to help them prepare better financially for retirement.

With the objective of motivating participants to make better financial plans for retirement, the programme was customized, and consisted of two parts:

(a) a half-day workshop
(b) an optional one-on-one consultation session provided by CFP^{CM} Professionals, all of whom are volunteers recruited by the Institute of Financial Planners of Hong Kong (IFPHK)

A total of 11 workshops, divided into two batches, were conducted in this pilot programme. The first batch of four workshops (and corresponding financial consultations) was run during the first quarter of 2016. Qualitative feedback obtained via focus groups with the participants was used to fine-tune the programme and the second batch of workshops was rolled out in the third quarter.

A total of 305 HKT employees attended the workshops, and among them 61 attended the optional one-on-one consultation sessions with financial planners. All participants were retiring within 10 years.

Evaluation

Using a mixed-methods approach, with both quantitative and qualitative elements, we investigated the effectiveness of the Workplace Financial Wellness Programme run by the Investor Education Centre. We also collected feedback from the employer and the programme partner IFPHK, as well as the financial planners who volunteered to participate in the programme.

Self-administered surveys before and after the workshops[1]

We tested the participants' understanding of some key financial concepts covered in the workshop. Out of five knowledge check questions, the average number of correct answers for these questions increased significantly from 2.73 before the workshop to 3.95 after the workshop. In particular, significantly more participants were able to learn about annuities, critical illness insurance and the relationship between interest rates and bond prices.

A comparison of the pre- and post-intervention survey findings also shows that the programme contributed to the participants' having a heightened sense of their need for better retirement planning:

- More participants agreed that they should plan for their retirement finances together with their family (98% in post-test vs 91% in pre-test).
- More participants realized that they needed to review their financial positions regularly as part of good retirement planning (95% vs 90%).
- More participants reported confidence in getting financially prepared for retirement (55% vs 47%)

Due to limitations in data collection, actual behavioural changes could not be captured. However, the programme appeared to strengthen the participants' intentions to act on a number of tasks in retirement planning. Before attending the programme, procrastination was at play and less than half of the participants had performed tasks like taking stock of their assets and liabilities, estimating the fund needed for retirement, and reviewing their insurance needs etc. Among those who did not take any proactive steps, many claimed they had wanted to but hadn't taken action, while some thought those tasks were not necessary. After the programme, the determination to take action was rekindled (among those who did not do these things in the previous 12 months before the programme):

- 86% intended to estimate the amount of funding required for their retirement
- 77% planned to take stock of their assets and liabilities
- 73% said they would review their insurance needs

We tried to re-contact the participants about two months after the programme to see if the good intentions had translated into action. Unfortunately only 25 participants responded to the survey, which is too small a sample size to yield conclusive findings.

Focus groups with participants[2]

Participants highly appreciated the programme, which they regarded as a good reminder of the considerations and sound practices surrounding planning ahead for their retirement. Many particularly appreciated the "in-class" exercise of estimating the cost of living expenses over a period of 10 years or more factoring in the effect of inflation. For them, going through the calculation themselves turned something abstract into a real example demonstrating how inflation could erode their spending power over time.

They also pointed out the impartial background of the Investor Education Centre was a key appeal of the programme. Those who had attended the financial consultation admitted they were a bit worried about the potential selling of financial products to them during the process beforehand, but all felt the volunteering financial planners had been highly professional and impartial throughout the consultation.

All said, this programme was the first time they had encountered a financial wellness programme at the workplace, and they appreciated the employer's goodwill in caring about their financial well-being after retirement. A few participants who said their supervisors had got them to join the programme felt particularly appreciative.

They believed the programme should be expanded to benefit more people preparing for their retirement. At the same time, they said the programme should target a younger age group (those in their 40s), so that the participants would have more time to put what they learnt into practice and to accumulate wealth for their retirement.

Satisfaction ratings[3]

Overall 92% of the participants were satisfied with the workshop, which they agreed strengthened their financial knowledge and made them reflect on better retirement planning.

Among those who attended the financial consultation, satisfaction also stood high at 93%, and the majority agreed they obtained useful advice from the financial planners.

Conclusions & recommendations

This pilot programme was well-received by the participants. Measurement by means of a survey showed a good gain in knowledge as well as a modest shift in attitudes towards retirement planning, resulting in the participants having an enhanced intention to take action to make better plans.

Representatives from the key stakeholders, namely HKT and the IFPHK, also agreed the workplace financial wellness programme is a meaningful initiative. They believed that helping employees to financially prepare for retirement is an important element of corporate social responsibility, which should be further promoted among employers in Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, the workplace is a rarely used platform for financial education and as a newly developed initiative, this programme can certainly benefit from a number of enhancements. The following recommendations are based on our findings:

- **Extend the programme to reach a younger segment** – we recommend broadening the target segments of this programme to include those in their 40s. They would have more time to adjust their retirement plans and maximize the benefits they get from the programme compared with those already in their 50s.
- **Develop a flexible delivery format** –formats and training elements that have been customized to fit the specific needs of different industries and companies would facilitate employers introducing the programme at their workplace.
- **Encourage participation in the financial consultation** - the financial consultation in this programme made sure the participants completed the tasks of taking stock of their assets and liabilities, estimating the retirement fund needed for their preferred lifestyle and setting up a personal budget, before finally going through a comprehensive review session with the financial planners. Therefore, one good way to help programme participants overcome procrastination in retirement planning is to encourage more participants to take part in the financial consultation sessions.
- **Strengthen the promotion of the programme** – the workplace financial wellness programme is a new concept for both employers and employees. More should be done to promote the benefits of the programme among employers, such as emphasizing the corporate social responsibility aspect of helping employees to get financially prepared for retirement. Targeting organisations/companies which currently run Employee Assistance Programmes[4] or staff credit unions[5] may also be a good strategy. In addition, when

rolling out the programme, having line managers explain the benefits and encourage staff to join the programme may be a good way to boost participation.

- **Mobilise resources from more stakeholders** - in the long run, once the demand for the workplace financial wellness programme builds up, more resources from different sectors will be required to provide workplace financial education and stakeholder collaboration is instrumental to achieving this.

Remarks:

1. The surveys were based on a partial sample of the participants who attended the second batch of the workshops (N = 103 / 87 for pre-test and post-test respectively), see section 3.1 for details of the sampling and measurement, and section 4.3 for the limitations in data collection.
2. Based on two focus groups conducted with participants who attended the first batch of workshops (N = 18), see section 3.2 for details.
3. Based on surveys administered at all workshops and consultations (N = 276 for workshops and N = 57 for consultation), see section 3.1 for the details.
4. An employee assistance program (EAP) is an employee benefit program that assists employees with personal problems and/or work-related problems that may impact their job performance, health, mental and emotional well-being. EAPs generally offer free and confidential assessments, short-term counselling, referrals, and follow-up services for employees and their household members.
5. A staff credit union is a member-owned financial cooperative, democratically controlled by its members, and operated for the purpose of promoting thrift, providing credit at competitive rates, and providing other financial services to its members.

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1. Introduction

1.1 About the programme

International research has shown that personal financial matters are a main source of stress for working adults, which can lead to distractions at work and can lower productivity (Kim & Garman, 2004; Kim, Sorhaindo, & Garman, 2006). Meanwhile, it has been found that financial education programmes at the workplace can be an effective means to motivate staff to proactively manage their personal finances and thereby alleviate financial stress (Bayer, Bernheim, & Scholz, 2009; Bernheim & Garrett, 2003; Garman, Kim, Kratzer, Brunson, & Joo, 1999).

As an organisation dedicated to raising the financial capability of Hong Kong people, the Investor Education Centre (IEC) works with employers to offer financial education programmes to employees at the workplace as part of a staff wellness programme.

Hong Kong is seeing a rapidly ageing workforce and good retirement planning is becoming ever more important (Census and Statistics Department, 2015; Lee & Law, 2004; Yeung, 2013). As such, the IEC has identified pre-retirees as a prioritized segment who, more than other segments, need to have a sense of urgency around preparing for retirement. A customised workplace wellness programme targeting pre-retirees was implemented at HKT Limited, which has a sizeable number of staff members nearing retirement.

The objective of the programme was to motivate participants to make better financial plans for retirement. It consisted of two parts:

(1) A half-day workshop on retirement planning;

(2) An optional one-on-one consultation session, which took place about one month after the workshop. Participants were required to review their own financial position and prepare documents detailing their financial status before attending the consultation session.

The consultation was provided by financial planners who were volunteers of the Institute of Financial Planners of Hong Kong (IFPHK). They offered advice on participants' retirement planning during the consultation, but were prohibited from recommending financial products.

A total of 11 workshops, divided into two batches, were conducted in this pilot programme. The first batch of four workshops (and corresponding financial consultation) was run during the first quarter of 2016. Qualitative feedback via focus groups with the participants was used to fine-tune the programme and the second batch of workshops was rolled out in the third quarter. Enrolment in the programme was on a voluntary basis and a total of 305 HKT employees participated in the workshop (113 and 192 for the first and second batch respectively); among them, 61 participated in the financial consultation. All participants were in their 50s and were retiring within 10 years.

1.2 About the evaluation

An independent evaluation of this pilot programme is called for to assess its effectiveness with regard to the programme objectives and to recommend potential enhancements.

This study aims to

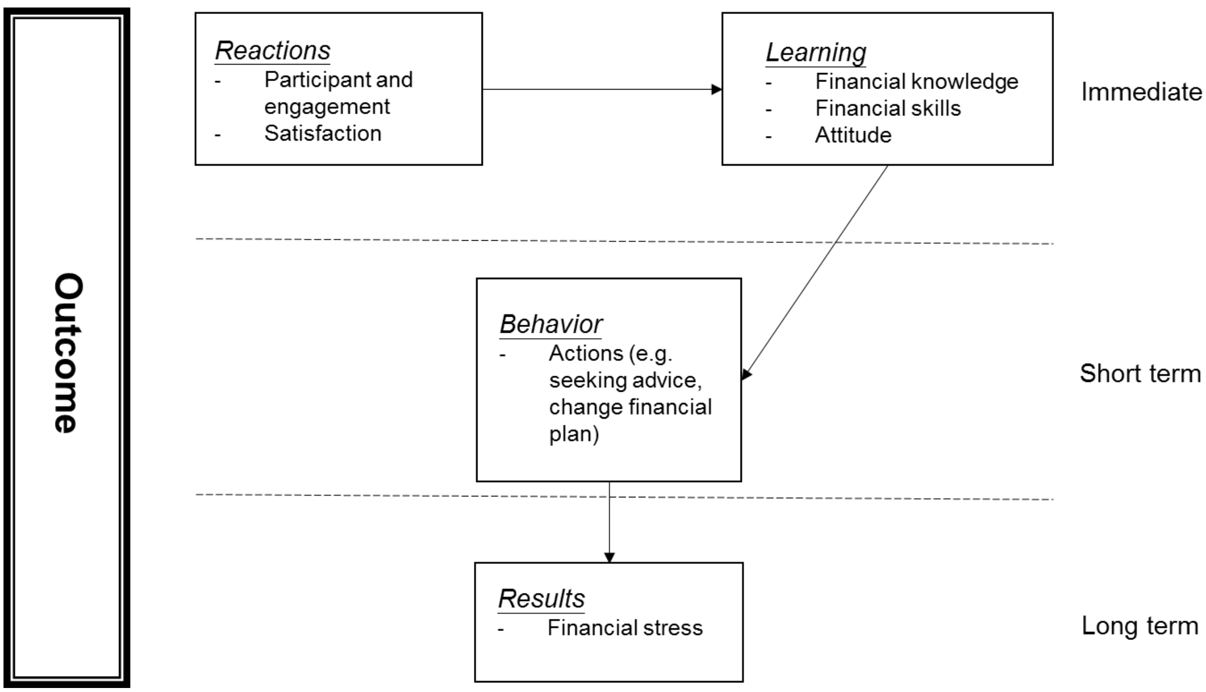
(1) Evaluate the objective outcomes of the programme;

(2) Understand participants' subjective satisfaction with the programme, including the workshop and financial consultation;
(3) Explore the participants' experience during the programme and their perceived personal gains;
(4) Make recommendations to improve the programme based on the findings.

2. Conceptual framework

This study uses the Kirkpatrick evaluation model (Kirkpatrick, 1977, 1979), which contains four interlocking domains: reactions (participants' perception of the programme and their satisfaction level), learning (change of attitude, knowledge and skills that result from the programme), behaviour (transfer of learning from the programme to actions in daily life), and results (final outcomes of the programme which are more long-term and could not be captured in the evaluation).

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



Fitting this programme's elements into the model, the programme changes individual participant's behaviour through education and empowerment (Miller, Reichelstein, Salas, & Zia, 2014; Xu & Zia, 2012). As shown in Figure 1, the programme first increases participants' financial capability by equipping them with essential financial knowledge and skills; then it motivates participants to make financial plans for retirement and other long-term financial goals. It is expected that in the long run, the individual participant will reduce their financial stress related to retirement by applying the knowledge and skills they learned in the programme (Bernheim & Garrett, 2003; Borden, Lee, Serido, & Collins, 2008; Haynes-Bordas, Kiss, & Yilmazer, 2008).

The study explored the individual participants' perceptions, experiences, knowledge, skills, and behaviour. It should be noted that while participants were able to report their perceptions and experiences shortly after they completed the programme, and the knowledge they acquired through the programme could also be accessed right away, the change in behaviour is built upon an integration of what participants have learnt in the programme and their reflection on their life experiences. Hence, these behavioural outcomes may take months or even years before they can be observed. The long-term outcomes, such as better retirement planning and reduced financial stress, may need even longer to manifest, and can be influenced by many factors which cannot be controlled by the programme (e.g. market situation). The current study focused on perceptions, experiences, knowledge and attitudes, as well as possible behavioural changes, but was not suitable for assessing long-term outcomes.

3. Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the first batch of workshops, we mainly used satisfaction surveys, participant observation, focus group discussion, and in-depth interviews to explore the participants' experience, as well as their perception of the programme content and format. The findings were used to enhance the programme design. For the second batch of workshops, we mainly used pre- and post-test design to assess the participants' changes in knowledge about and attitudes towards retirement planning, as well as their intention to act after participating in the programme. The satisfaction survey was also employed to explore their subjective feelings regarding the programme content and format. Additionally, an online follow-up survey was conducted to examine what types of actions participants had taken 2-3 months after the completion of the programme.

3.1 Quantitative Research Design

Pre- and post-test research design was employed to evaluate the objective outcomes of the programme, including financial knowledge gained, attitude shifts and changes in the intention to act. A satisfaction survey was also administered right after the workshop and the financial consultation respectively, to assess whether or not the sessions were perceived as being helpful by the participants. An online follow-up survey was conducted to explore behavioural changes.

Specifically, we attempted to answer these research questions:

(1) To what extent does participation in the programme influence participants' financial knowledge, attitude towards retirement planning and actual retirement planning behaviour?
(2) To what extent are the participants satisfied with various aspects of their experience with the programme?

a. Sampling

The study utilized convenience sampling. HKT recruited the participants, and all participants were invited to fill out evaluation questionnaires.

Focus group participants were recruited on a voluntary basis from those participating in the first batch of workshops.

For the follow-up survey, contacts (email addresses and telephone numbers) were collected at the workshop from participants who were willing to be re-contacted.

b. Measurement

The questionnaire used for the pre- and post-test measurements consisted of three parts: financial knowledge, attitude and action. Some basic demographics were also collected, including gender, age and income bracket, which might influence one's financial situation. The knowledge part was developed based on several existing surveys, such as the National Financial Capability Study (FINRA, 2010), and Byrne (2007). It tests important concepts in financial planning, such as time value of money, planning, borrowing, saving/investing and protection concepts. The section included five questions covering inflation, annuity, investment risk, investment diversification and reverse mortgages. In the analysis, a financial knowledge score was calculated based on how many questions were answered correctly. The attitude part asked about attitudes towards retirement planning. One question was also asked to explore participants' opinions of providing financial education workshops in their workplace. The action part was also based on various existing surveys mentioned above. It consisted of questions checking whether respondents have acted on / intend to act on a number of tasks related to retirement planning, such as setting a personal budget, reviewing one's financial position, seeking advice, and estimating retirement funds needed, etc.

A satisfaction survey was administered to explore the participants' level of satisfaction with the content and the delivery format of the workshop, and another satisfaction survey was used to assess participants' level of satisfaction with the financial planner and the one-on-one financial consultation service.

c. Data collection procedures

For the first batch of workshops, all participants completed a satisfaction survey at the end of the workshop, and another after participating in the financial consultation.

For the second batch of workshops, all participants were invited to fill in a pre-test questionnaire before the start of the workshop. Initially, we planned to administer the post-test questionnaire after the completion of the financial consultation so as to be able to check on any actions taken in the one month between the workshop and financial consultation. However, as only a small proportion of the participants completing the workshop signed up for the consultation, we decided to change the data collection strategy and administer the post-test questionnaire right after the workshop (together with the satisfaction survey) in order to solicit enough data points for analysis. This resulted in a higher response rate for the post-test. However, 82 participants who participated in the workshop before the change in the data collection strategy missed the chance to fill out a post-test questionnaire, and only had a chance to take the satisfaction survey. Those participants who completed the financial consultation were invited to complete an additional satisfaction survey. All participants were also invited to fill in an online survey in mid-December (1-2 months after the workshop), which focused on behavioural changes. Reminder calls were made to participants who had consented to be re-contacted, and telephone interviews were also offered to those who did not have Internet access (Table 1).

All questionnaires were anonymous, i.e. participants did not put down any information that would allow the researchers to identify them. Meanwhile, for the pre-test and post-test, in order to match a specific participant's pre-test data to that of the post-test, all participants were asked to create a unique reference ID, which consists of the last four digits of their personal mobile phone number, and their birth date. For instance, if a person's mobile number is 90008000, and birthday is March 25th, then the reference ID would be 8000 0325. The reference ID was not required for the satisfaction survey and the online follow-up survey.

Table 1 Number of participants and number of questionnaires collected

	Workshop attendance	Pre-test survey	Post-test survey	Workshop satisfaction survey	Consultation satisfaction survey	Follow-up survey
1st batch	113	-	-	105	33	-
2nd batch (workshop 1-4)	85	82[1]	-	84	24	25
2nd batch (workshop 5-7)	107	103	87	87[2]		
Total	305	103	87	276	57	25

Notes:

i. Since the 82 pre-test questionnaires do not have matching post-tests, they were dropped from the analysis.

ii. It should be noted that some participants skipped some questions on the questionnaire. The actual number of responses varied from question to question, so that the size of the sample for analysis also varied from question to question.

3.2 Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative methods were used for three main purposes: (1) to understand participants' experience with the programme and the interaction between trainer, financial planners and participants; (2) to make further sense of the quantitative data; and (3) to gather constructive suggestions from various stakeholders to strengthen and improve the quality of the programme.

The qualitative research answered these questions:

(1) What expectations did the participants have for the programme?
(2) How do participants describe their experiences in the workshop and the one-on-one financial consultation?
(3) How do participants and the trainer and/or financial planner interact with each other?
(4) What specific suggestions do the participants and various other stakeholders have for the programme?

a. Participant observation

We attended all the workshops in the first batch and observed the training process, focusing on the participants' reactions and the interaction between the participants and the trainer. Field notes were taken to record the details for each workshop.

b. Focus group

We conducted two focus groups based on participants' availability (8 in the first group, and 10 in the second group). Each focus group session was about one hour long and the entire discussion was tape-recorded. During these sessions, we asked participants' about their motivations, expectations, perceived personal gains, and what they thought was the most impressive part of the programme. They were also asked to share their suggestions regarding the programme.

c. In-depth interview

To gather opinions from the key stakeholders in the programme, we interviewed three of the IFPHK financial planners who had volunteered to participate in the programme over the phone and conducted face-to-face interviews with the Head of Group Human Resources of HKT and the Chief Executive Officer of the IFPHK. These in-depth interviews gave us a more comprehensive picture of the programme. The telephone interviews were approximately 20 minutes long. The financial planners were asked to share their motivations for volunteering to give the financial consultation, their expectations for their volunteer experience, their impressions of the programme's participants, and their suggestions for the programme.

During the face-to-face interviews, we asked the senior executives of HKT and the IFPHK to share their views on the programme, and make suggestions for future improvements to the programme. The interviews lasted for about one hour, and were tape-recorded.

3.3 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to explore the overall satisfaction rate and the behavioural changes captured in the follow-up survey as well as the general demographics of the sample. A paired-sample t-test and Chi-square test were used to compare the participants' responses in the pre- and post-test questionnaires to assess to what extent their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour had changed after participating in the workshop.

The qualitative data was analysed using Atlas.ti 7. Majors themes in the transcription and field notes were identified. Thematic coding was used to identify general themes and patterns in the responses.

4. Findings

4.1 Quantitative findings

a. Pre- and post-workshop comparison

<u>Knowledge gain</u>

Five knowledge check questions were used to gauge participants' understanding of some basic financial concepts and participants were given three answer options: agree, disagree and not sure. A knowledge score ranging from 0 to 5 was calculated to compare their overall performance in answering the knowledge check questions. As shown in Figure 2, on average, a participant could only get about three questions correct before attending the workshop. After attending the workshop, on average, they could answer about four questions correctly. The change in knowledge gain is statistically significant ($p<0.001$).

Figure 2 Pre- and post-test comparison of overall knowledge score

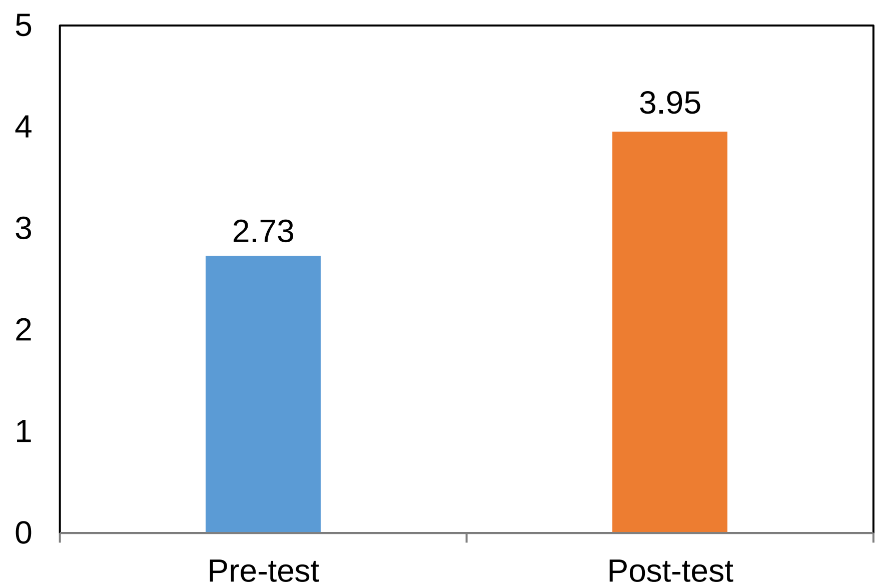
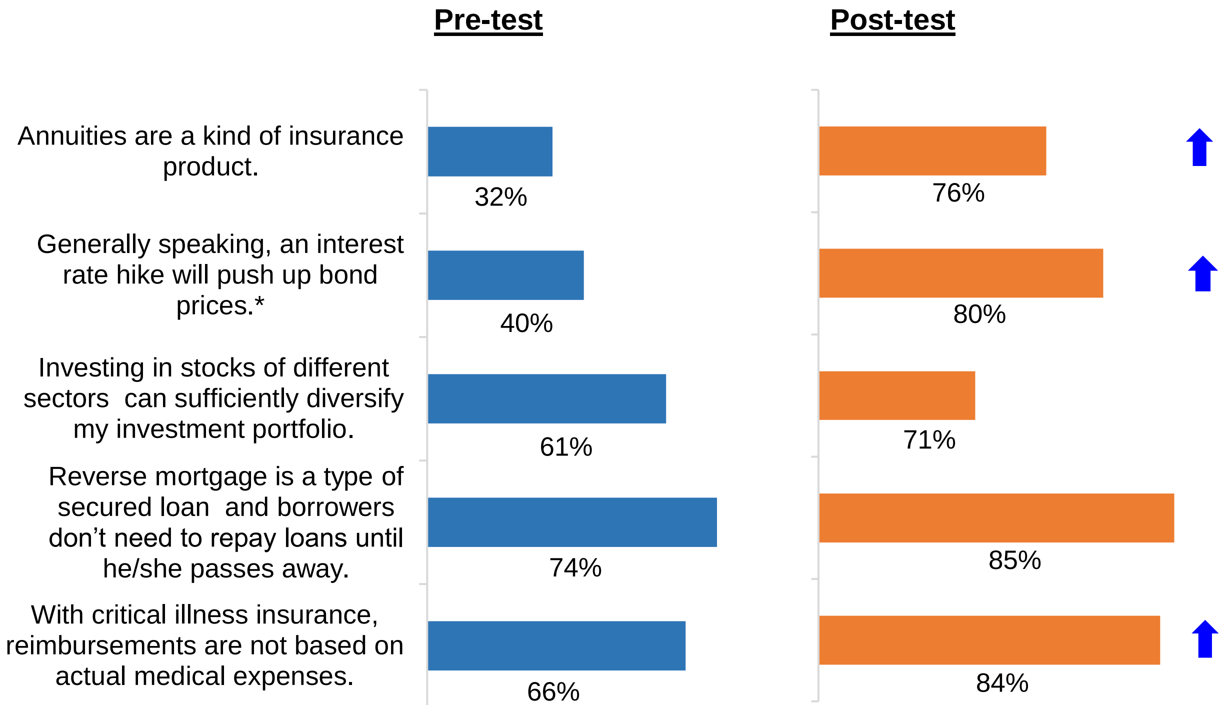


Figure 3 shows the detailed scoring of the five knowledge check questions. Significant improvement was identified in three questions. For instance, before the workshop only about one third knew that annuities are an insurance product but after the workshop about three quarters became aware of it. The proportion of participants understanding the relationship between interest rate and bond price also doubled. In addition, significantly more participants had a better understanding of the features of critical illness insurance policies after the workshop.

Figure 3 Pre- and post-test comparison of financial knowledge – percentage of participants correctly answering the knowledge check questions



Notes:
1. * denotes a false statement
2. Blank answers are excluded in the calculation and the base for each question may vary.
3. Blue arrows denote significantly more participants answering the question correctly in the post-test than in the pre-test.

Attitude shift

It appeared that most of the participants, those who enrolled in the programme on their own accord and presumably were interested in the topic of retirement planning, were positive towards the need for planning for retirement before the workshop. However, less than half were confident that they could prepare well for retirement financially. After the workshop, there was a modest shift in attitudes and more participants saw the importance of involving family members and regularly reviewing one's financial position regarding retirement planning. The confidence level in one's skills to plan well also slightly increased (Fig 4a & 4b).

The participants' attitude towards the workplace financial wellness programme also became more positive after attending the workshop, with 96% agreeing that it is useful for helping them plan better for their retirement (up from 80% agreement before the workshop) .

Figure 4a Pre- and post-test comparison of attitudes towards retirement planning

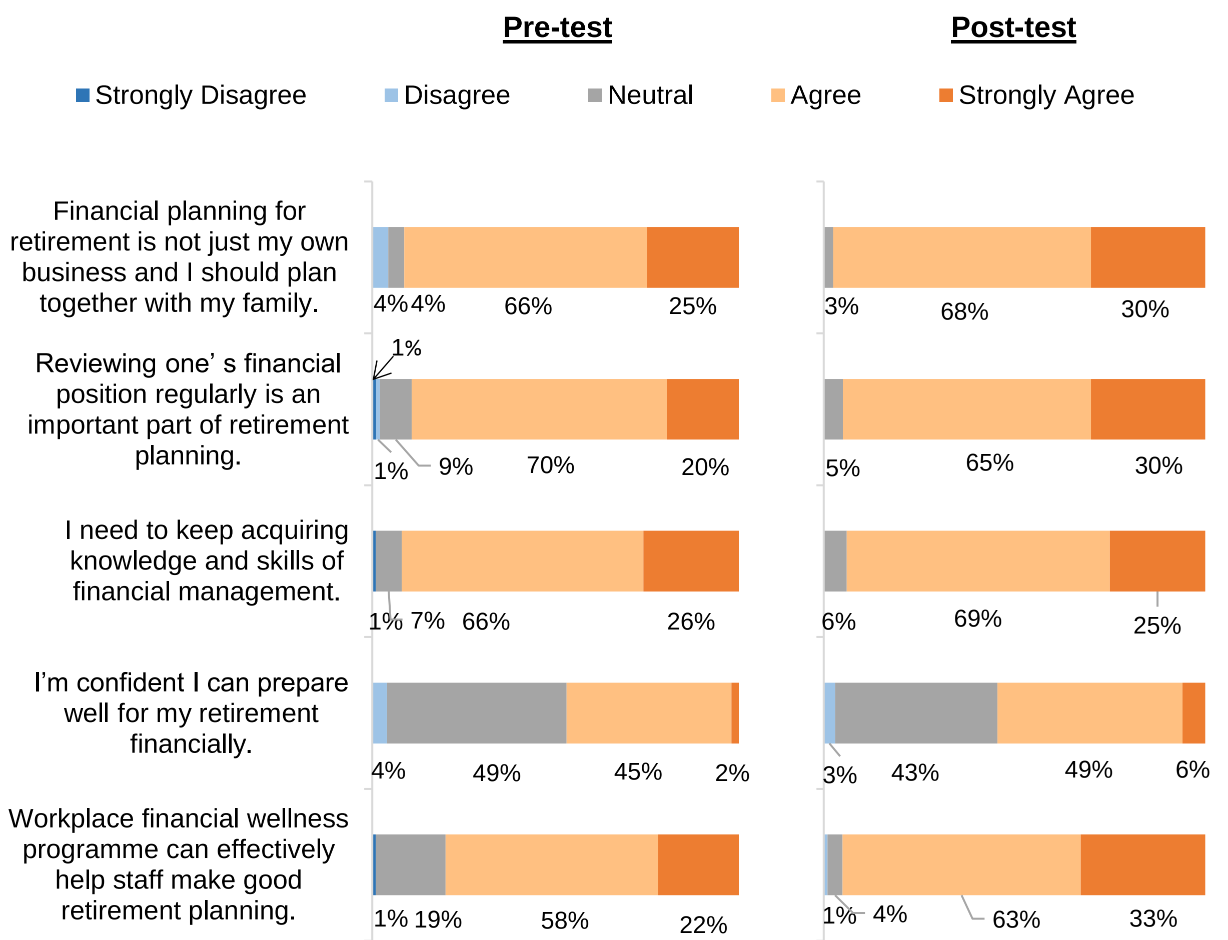
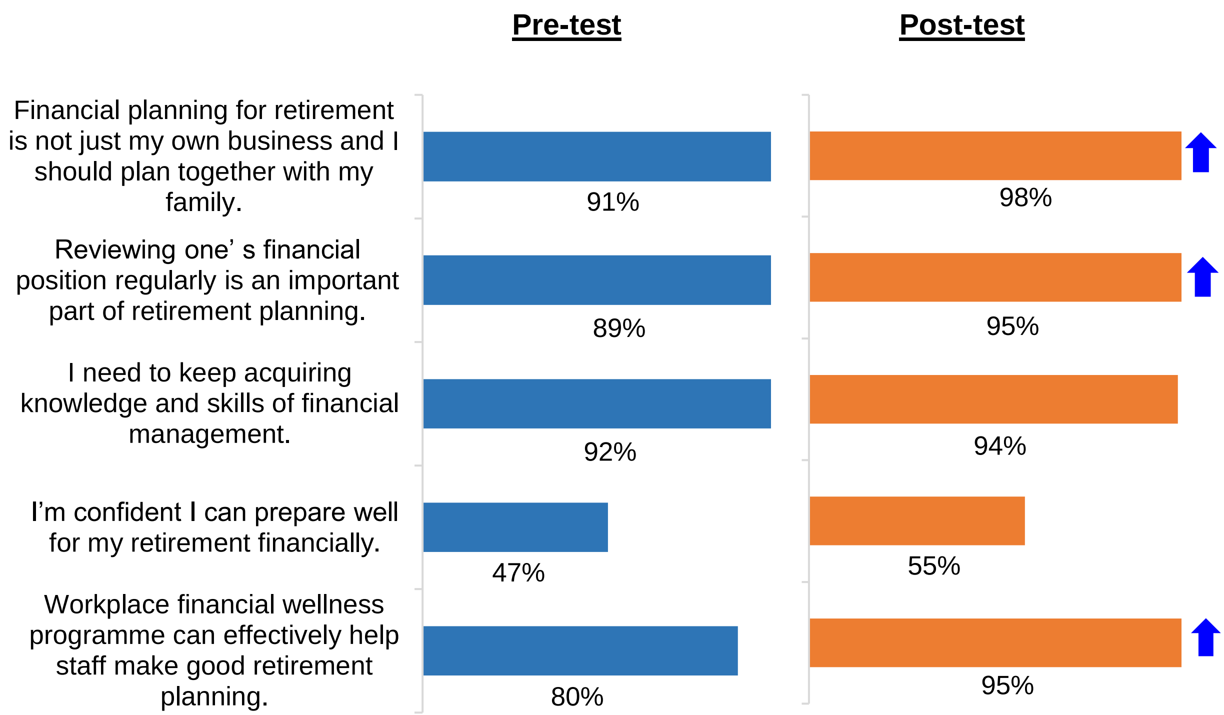


Figure 4b Pre- and post-test comparison of attitudes towards retirement planning – summary of the percentage of participants agreeing with the statements



Notes:

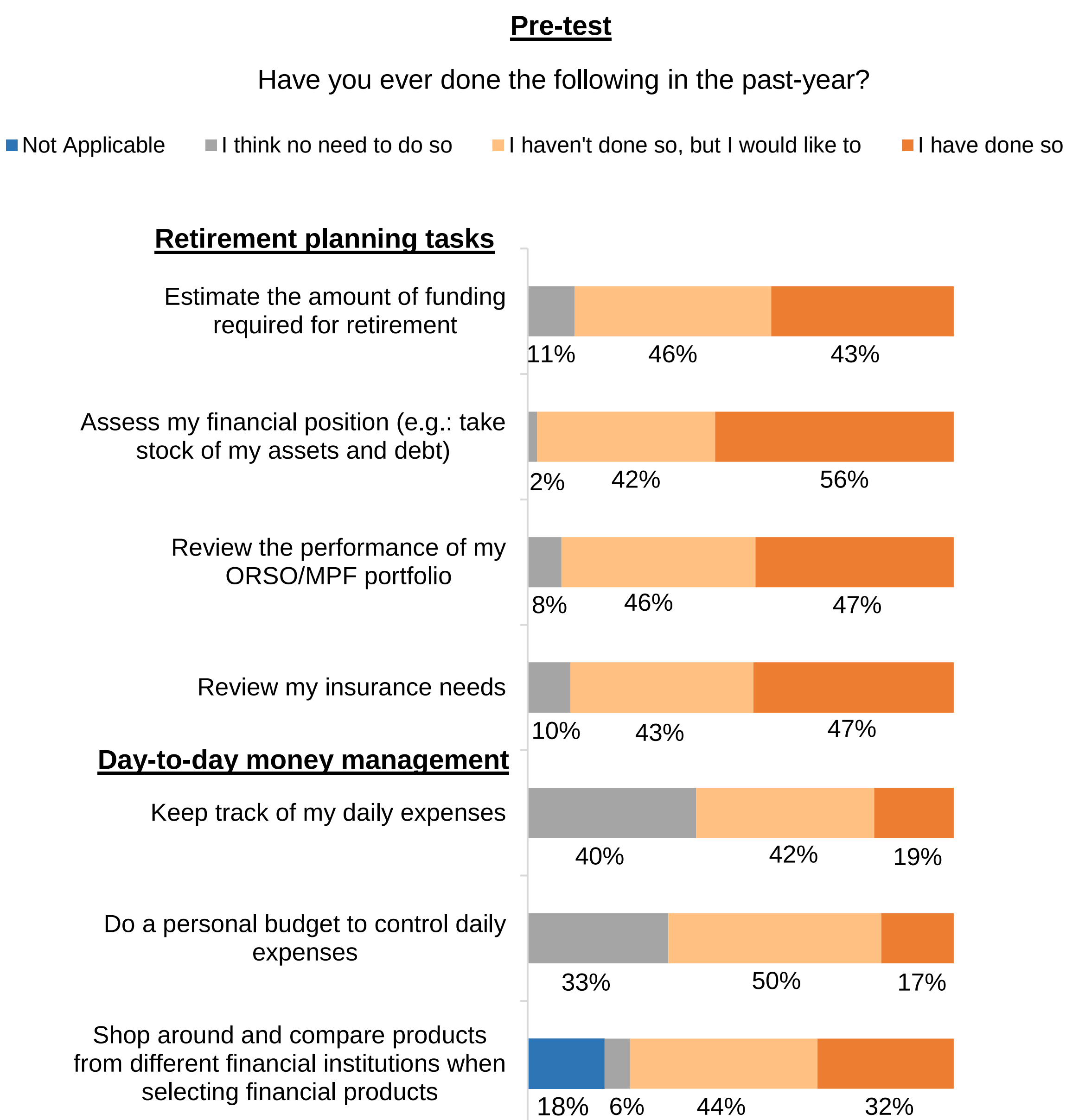
1. Blank answers are excluded in the calculation and the base for each question may vary.
2. The percentage given of those agreeing with the items is the result of combining the percentage of those agreeing with that of those strongly agreeing.
3. Blue arrows denote significantly more participants answering the question correctly in the post-test than in the pre-test.

Behaviour

Figure 5a shows the participants' retirement planning behaviour before they participated in the workshop. In general, slightly less than half of the participants had performed crucial retirement planning tasks like estimating funding required for retirement, reviewing performance of their MPF/ORSO portfolio and insurance needs before the workshop. It is also apparent that procrastination was at play, that many realized they should work on these tasks but had not been able to push themselves into action. Some, mostly less than 10%, claimed they did not think these tasks are necessary.

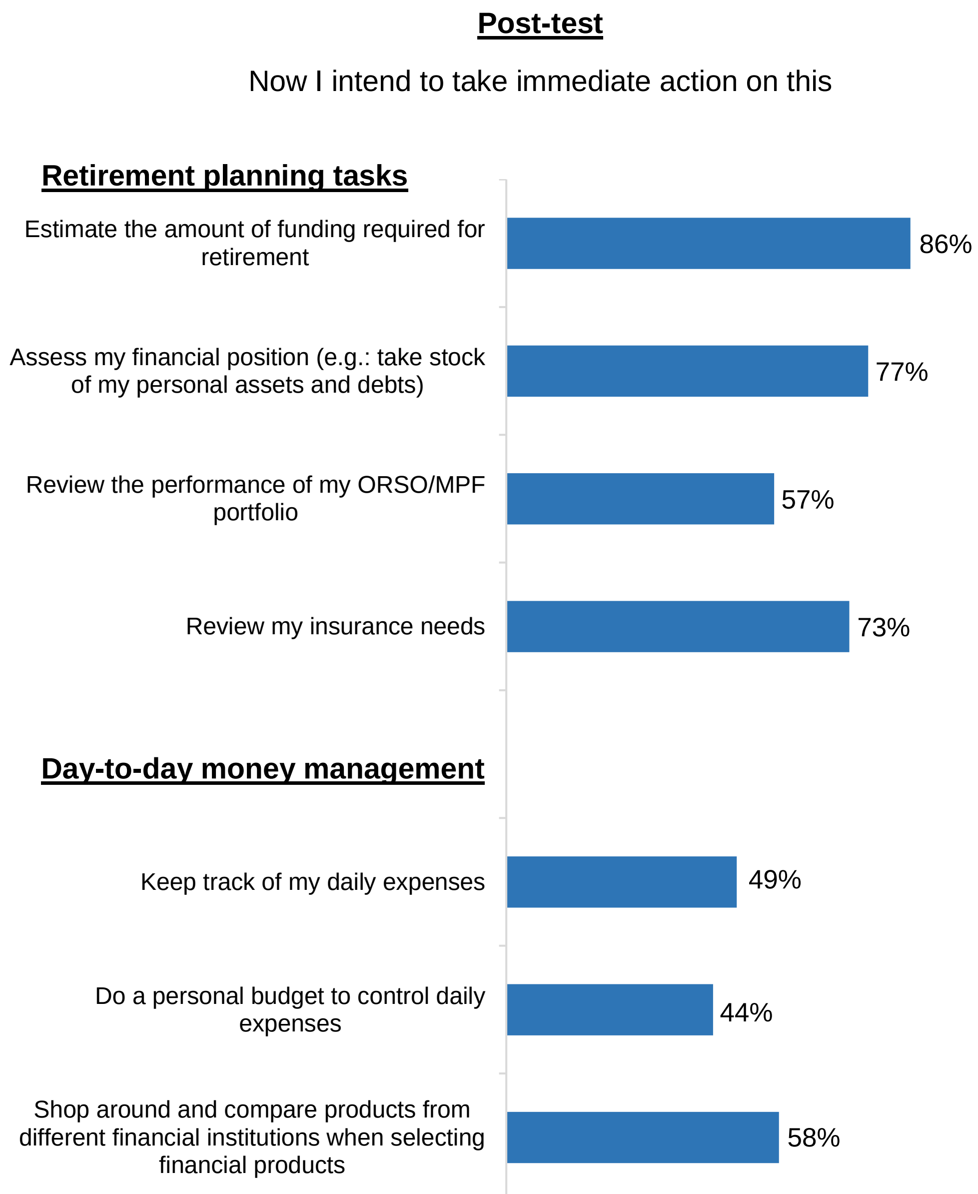
Practices in their day-to-day money management show a different picture, with less than one fifth sticking to the tasks of tracking daily expenses and setting a personal budget, and over one third did not think these practices are necessary.

Figure 5a Retirement planning behaviour before attending the workshop



After the workshop, we asked participants if they intend to take immediate action on those tasks that they had not acted on in the past year. Figure 5b shows the responses of those participants who had not performed the planning tasks (i.e., people who have already taken action during the past year were excluded in the analysis). A significant proportion of them were motivated to take immediate action. In particular, over 80% claimed they would estimate the amount of funding needed for retirement, and over 70% said they would assess their financial position and review their insurance needs. Fewer participants were committed to budgeting and tracking their daily expenses, but they still constituted a good proportion (44% and 49% respectively) of the participants.

Figure 5b Intention to take immediate action among those who had not taken this action before attending workshop



Notes:

1. The results shown here do not include those participants who chose “I have done so” in the pre-test survey.

b. Follow-up survey

Considering the small base of respondents (less than 30), numbers reported in this section should be read with caution – they only represent a small proportion of the programme participants. In particular, it is possible that participants who responded to the follow-up survey are more likely to be those who had been motivated to take action.

As shown in Table 2, all those who responded to the follow-up survey had taken at least one action related to retirement planning after participating in the programme. The top two actions are estimating retirement funds and assessing financial position, which were also the top items workshop participants claimed they intended to act on. In addition, just over half had reviewed their financial arrangements for retirement and insurance needs. Day-to-day money management practices like expenses tracking and budgeting were less popular.

Though these cannot be taken to represent a behavioural change among all programme participants, it is still good to know at least some participants had been motivated to take actual actions to safeguard their retirement more effectively.

Table 2 Actions taken since the end of programme (N=25)

Answer options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Estimate the amount of funding required for retirement	64%	16
Assess my financial situation by taking stock of my assets and liabilities.	64%	16
Review my financial arrangement/investment for retirement	52%	13
Review my insurance needs	52%	13
Review the performance of my ORSO/MPF portfolio	36%	9
Seek/search for information about retirement planning	32%	8
Keep track of daily expenses	28%	7
Discuss retirement planning with my family/friends	28%	7
Set a personal budget to control expenses	24%	6
Increase monthly savings for building a retirement fund	24%	6
Adjust my ORSO/MPF portfolio	4%	1
None of the above	0%	0

We also tried to collect feedback from participants in both batches of workshops concerning the reasons why they did not participate in the one-on-one consultation (Figure 6). It seems that the leading reasons were that participants could not find a session that fitted in with their schedule, and also that they were not sure what the consultation would offer. Many were also worried that there would be product selling during the consultation.

Figure 6 Reasons for not attending the financial consultation (N=23, from both the 1st and 2nd batch of workshops)

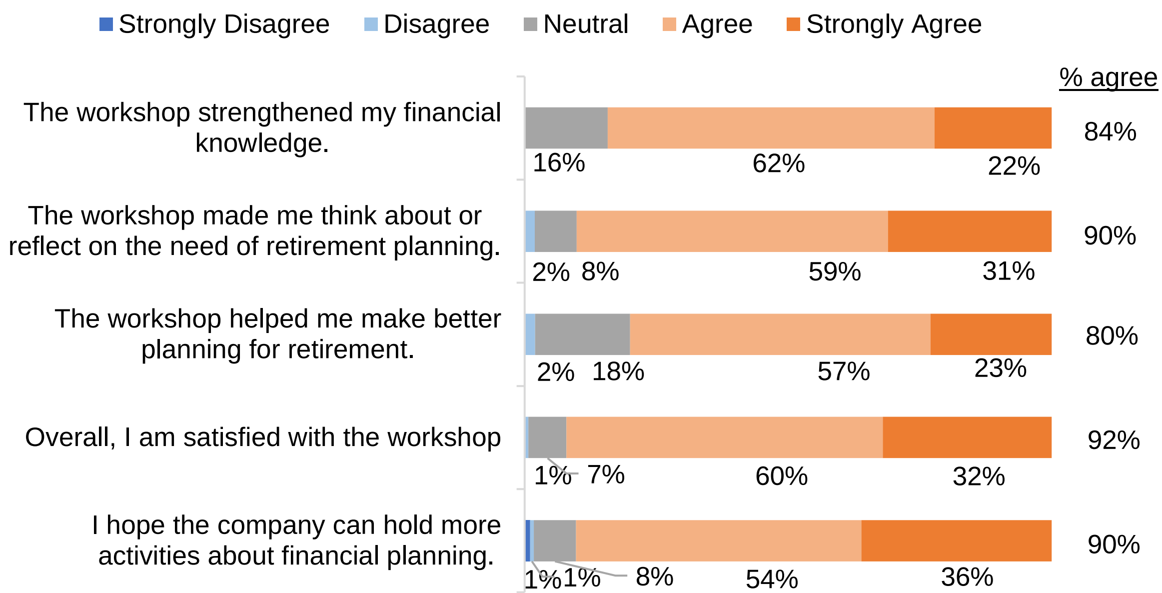
	Response Percent	**Response count**
Date/time of the consultation sessions is inconvenient / Had other engagements	52%	12
Not sure how the financial consultation can help me / Do not see a need for such a service	43%	10
Worried about product selling	39%	9
Don't have many assets and so no need for financial planning	17%	4
Did not receive information about the financial consultation	9%	2
Already well-prepared for retirement	9%	2
Location is inconvenient	9%	2
Not clear about the content of the consultation session	4%	1
Registered, but failed to attend	4%	1
Other reasons	4%	1

c. Satisfaction surveys

As shown in Figure 7, the participants were highly satisfied with the workshop. They felt the workshop had strengthened their knowledge and enabled them to make better plans for their retirement. Overall 92% were satisfied with the workshop and the majority welcomed more workplace financial wellness activities.

Some participants also left comments in the write-in section saying that they appreciated the interactive nature of the workshop and the clear communication of the trainer as well as the useful content. There were also suggestions for more discussion time and more real-life examples in future workshops.

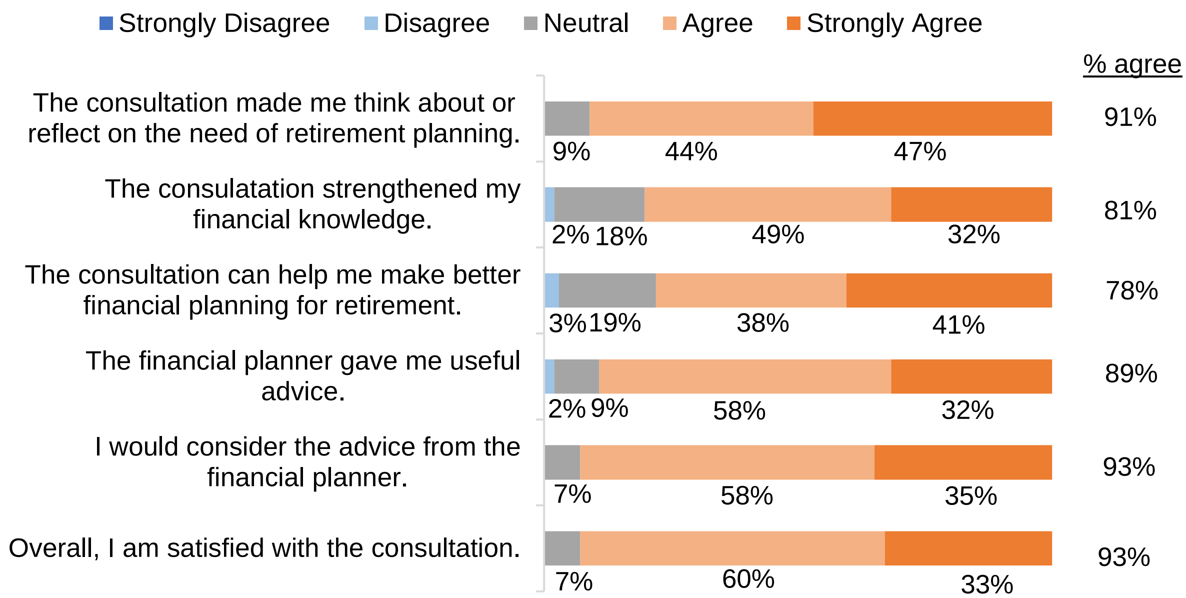
Figure 7 Satisfaction with the workshop



Notes:
1. The satisfaction survey was administered at all workshops in batch 1 and 2 (N = 276).
2. Blank answers are excluded in the calculation and the base for each question may vary.
3. The percentage of those agreeing is obtained by adding up the percentage of both those who "strongly agree" and those who "agree".

Figure 7 shows the high satisfaction ratings of the financial consultation. Over 90% of the participants attending the financial consultation said they obtained useful advice from the financial planners and that they would consider their advice.

Figure 8 Satisfaction with the financial consultation



Notes:
1. The satisfaction survey was administered at all consultation sessions in batch 1 and 2 (N = 57).
2. Blank answers are excluded in the calculation and the base for each question may vary.
3. The percentage of those agreeing is obtained by adding up the percentage of those who “strongly agree” and those who “agree”.

4.2 Qualitative findings

a. Feedback from the participants (focus groups)

Most of the participants in the two focus groups attended both the workshop and the financial consultation. The majority gave positive feedback for both the workshop and the one-on-one financial consultation. They reported that before attending the programme, they were a bit sceptical that it might be a commercial event with the hidden agenda of selling financial products (which was in fact a reason for not attending cited by some participants who did not sign up for the financial consultation, see page 19). After attending the workshop and financial consultation, they were impressed when they found that the trainer and the financial planners were highly professional and remained impartial throughout the process without promoting any products. The participants highly appreciated this impartiality, and believed that such a workplace financial wellness programme should be expanded to benefit more pre-retirees in the future.

The participants believed that the workshop provided them with a lot of useful information. In particular, they were reminded that the cost of living during retirement should be calculated with inflation factored in. One participant said:

> *Calculating inflation…that's the most impressive part for me. In the past, I never thought I should factor in inflation. Now when I calculated it…I found I am in trouble…I found I do not have enough money to last through my retirement!*

Another participant had a good concept of inflation, but did not know that he should factor in inflation for 10 to 20 years after retirement:

> *I work in planning, so I know about budgeting and forecasting…But for inflation, I did not calculate it right. Usually, I only calculate for one or two years in the future, but not for ten or twenty years... I thought I would have enough for retirement before I attended the workshop. Now, I have re-calculated it…Wow, I still have a huge gap!*

Participants also found that the mobile app on tracking expenses and budgeting introduced to them during the workshop was very useful. Some have been using the app to track their daily spending. One participant said:

> *The app helps me find out where most of my money goes. It is much clearer. In the past, I just spent my money, but I never knew on what things I spend the most. The app helps me keep a record. So I can kind of estimate what my daily spending after retirement would look like. I am not saying that the app will change my spending behaviour, because this is my way of life. However, the app will give me get a clear idea of my spending style. If I ever want to save some money, it might help me to find out which category (of expenses) I can cut.*

Confirming the quantitative findings, participants also reported that the workshop reminded them that when doing retirement planning, they need to take their family members into consideration, because their financial situation would influence the lives of their family members. At the same time, their retirement plans would also be influenced by the behaviour of their family members. For instance, one participant had to re-do his financial plan because his daughter suddenly decided to study abroad, a situation in which he incurred unexpected cost.

Those participants that met with the financial planners for a one-on-one financial consultation highly appreciated the advice given. They said that because the financial planners did not sell any products, they trusted the financial planners more, and were able to share their personal information. The financial planners gave them advice based on their individual situations, which was very helpful. Many hoped that the consultation session could last longer, some even said they would not mind paying to receive such services.

Some participants, after getting information from the workshop or advice from the financial planner, took immediate action to modify their retirement plans. For instance, one participant, after meeting with the financial planner, called his friend who works in an insurance company to draft an insurance proposal right away. Another participant decided to draft a will. In some other cases, the participants found the advice useful, but could not take immediate action. For instance, one participant was told that his investment strategy was too aggressive. He decided to make changes according to the advice, but had been waiting for the right opportunity to do so since the market was volatile at the moment.

Sometimes, the advice from the financial planners were not taken by the participants, because it was too late for them to change their retirement plans. For example, some participants were advised to consider insurance coverage for critical illnesses. They all agreed that this was important for their quality of life, as health care spending would be the most unexpected and significant cost in old age. However, they felt it would be too expensive for them to purchase any critical illness insurance now. They wished that the advice had been given to them when they were still young.

Overall, most of the participants found the programme useful, but expressed that it would be even more useful if they had been able to join such a programme when they were younger. Some admitted they had been over confident about retirement before joining the programme. Then, when they found out their plan was insufficient, they felt time was running out for them to accumulate further wealth. Despite these limitations, participants thought highly of the workshop, and some even actively discussed retirement planning with their colleagues. One participant reported that she had been talking to other colleagues about retirement planning so often that they thought she was taking up a part-time job as an insurance agent.

The participants welcomed the company to organise more financial wellness programmes at the workplace. They suggested targeting younger employees, or that the programme could be offered as a series of activities, engaging staff in different stages of life. To encourage staff enrolment, some suggested invitations by line managers might be a good approach. In fact, one participant shared that it was her supervisor that encouraged her to join the programme and she felt appreciative of the supervisor’s caring about her retirement planning.

b. Feedback from HKT Limited

The Head of Group Human Resources of HKT, Florence Chow, believed that even though it is the individual employee’s responsibility to prepare for retirement, the employer can mobilize resources to increase the staff's knowledge and skills. However, she regarded the provision of the programme in the workplace as a way engaging with staff rather than providing staff with benefits. She shared that the company already has a club for retirees, and has a long history of encouraging the retirees to lead a meaningful life and contribute to the community. The company sees the value of a work-place financial wellness programme as a form of internal corporate social responsibility.

She remarked that the actual enrolment in the programme was below expectation. She suggested that positive stories from this round of participants could be reported and shared within the company, so as to encourage future participation, especially participation from a younger cohort of employees, who might benefit more from the programme.

She greatly appreciated the IEC's meaningful initiative, which does not involve any commercial elements and is unique in the market. She pointed out that it would be difficult to have corporate partners (e.g. insurance companies) provide free training workshops and financial consultations without promoting their financial products.

She also suggested that in future workshops, the IEC may take into consideration some specific financial arrangements that the company offers to its employees. For instance, HKT is now paying the cost for a medical scheme for its staff. When the staff leave the company, they are eligible to extend the medical cover at their own cost. This is an area that the employee can consider in his/her retirement planning.

Overall, HKT saw the benefits of the programme. She believed that sizable organizations in Hong Kong should take on the responsibility of helping their staff to prepare financially for retirement. However, the social atmosphere in this aspect is not so strong at the moment. The IEC needs to work more to engage with these large corporations. Sharing participants' testimonies may be a way to promote the programme to other employers.

c. Feedback from IFPHK representatives:

The three volunteers from the IFPHK and the Chief Executive Officer of the IFPHK, Dennis Lau, all agreed that the prevailing model of product selling among financial planners in Hong Kong prevents a financial planner from carrying out an impartial and independent financial consultation. They believed that there is a need to explore the option of having financial planners provide an unbiased financial planning service.

They appreciated the IEC's initiative, which helps ameliorate the problems created by the current product-selling model. Through the programme, the pre-retirees received useful suggestions, and the volunteers could polish their communication skills and get a better understanding of the concerns of pre-retirees. The programme is therefore beneficial to both parties.

They also believed that the programme should target a younger cohort. In fact, they see this as being education in personal responsibility, rather than being just for retirement:

> *Financial education should start as early as possible. It is true that when you are young you have too many dreams and ambitions, such as buying an apartment, starting your business, or paying for your child's education. Retirement planning may not be your priority. However, you should start thinking about retirement before you reach 45 years old. You need to think about your retirement, and not just financially. Where do you want to retire? What kind of life do you want to have after retirement? Who do you want to retire with? ... In this era of global aging, we constantly talk about how to solve the problems related to aging. Maybe we do not have to debate questions such as a universal pension plan. Instead, we should start financial education early. It is your personal responsibility to prepare for your retirement.*

To increase the impact of the programme, it is suggested that the IEC should take an active role to encourage the participation of other corporations, and to educate the corporations to see that increasing the financial literacy of their employees is part of their corporate social responsibility. Incentives (e.g. awards and recognition schemes) can be explored to encourage the participation of employers.

4.3 Study limitations: small sample size and low response rate

The major limitations of this study are the small sample size and the low rate of response to the surveys, which forced us to change our data collection strategy during the course of the programme.

In order to have an ideal pre- and post-intervention comparison, originally we attempted to collect three waves of data: a pre-test before the workshop, a post-test immediately following the consultation (if applicable), and follow-up via an online survey. In addition, in order to match a specific participant's pre-test data to that of the same participant's post-test, all participants were asked to create a unique reference ID, which consists of the last four digits of their personal mobile phone number and their birth date. However, enrolment in the financial consultation was lower than expected (less than 20% of the workshop participants), which would make the pre- and post-test comparison meaningless. Also, despite our explaining the purpose and procedure of the evaluation to all workshop participants, less than half of the workshop participants consented to be re-contacted for a follow-up survey.

We therefore changed our data collection strategy to administering the post-test immediately after the workshop. In this way, we were able to solicit enough data points for a meaningful pre- and post-intervention comparison. However, in the case of the present study, we have had to give up on measuring actual behavioural changes, and can only gauge the intention to act after the workshop.

For the follow-up survey, we collected 87 consent forms with contact details (email address and telephone number) out of 192 workshop participants in the 2nd batch of workshops. Survey invites with a link to the online survey were sent out to all contacts. However, even after making a round of reminder calls, during which we offered to conduct the short interview over the phone, we only obtained 25 responses to the survey.

These limitations to data collection meant we could only use a partial sample of the total workshop participants. While we were able to maintain a decent sample size (around a hundred) for the pre-test and post-test comparison, the follow-up survey is of too small a sample size (N=25) for meaningful analysis. While the numbers are reported for reference, it should be noted that the low response rate means those who responded to the survey might be participants who thought they benefited from the programme, and so do not represent the average participant.

Regarding the focus groups, most of the participants who agreed to join had participated in the financial consultation, and it appears that those who participated in the consultation were financially better-off than those who attended the workshop only (see comparison of profiles in table 2). Therefore the qualitative feedback collected from the focus groups may only represent those participants who are more resourceful.

Table 3 - Profile of participants in the 1st batch of workshops: Workshop + Consultation vs Workshop only

		Consultation	Workshop only
Gender	Male	79%	87%
	Female	21%	13%
Age	45-49	4%	0%
	50-54	0%	1%
	Above 55	96%	99%
Education level	<Form 5	36%	53%
	A-Level	4%	8%
	Associate degree	36%	19%
	University	8%	13%
	Graduate School	16%	7%
Monthly Income	<20,000	20%	36%
	$20,001~$30,000	36%	23%
	$30,001~$40,000	16%	14%
	$40,001~$60,000	24%	8%
	$60,001 and above	4%	10%
Housing	Private home-ownership	76%	54%
	Public house ownership	16%	29%
	Public housing rental	4%	11%
	Dormitory	0%	0%
	Private house rental	4%	6%

Table 4 - Profile of participants in the 2nd batch of workshops

Gender	Male	85%
	Female	15%
Age	45-49	3%
	50-54	44%
	Above 55	52%
Education Level	<Form 5	26%
	A-Level	12%
	Associate degree	27%
	University	22%
	Graduate School	13%
Estimated ratio of ORSO/MPF in total retirement funds	Not sure	20%
	Less than 20%	8%
	20% to less than 50%	26%
	50% to less than 70%	25%
	70% to less than 90%	10%
	More than 90%	11%

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, this pilot run of the IEC's workplace financial wellness programme at HKT Limited achieved encouraging results in terms of meeting the objectives of imparting knowledge and motivating actions regarding retirement planning.

Participants were able to learn more about the key features of financial products related to retirement planning and be reminded about the things that are essential to consider when making their own plans. In view of the continual development of new financial products/services targeting the pre-retirees/retirees, strengthening people's financial knowledge and encouraging them to keep learning about the latest developments is important.

Attitude shifts towards retirement planning and changes in intention to act are less pronounced. Many participants attended the workshops with a good awareness of the importance of retirement planning but had yet to overcome procrastination over taking action. The programme appeared to renew in some the determination to act, and it succeeded in convincing many about the benefits of budgeting and tracking expenses in day-to-day money management. Still better, user-friendly digital tools developed by the IEC were introduced to facilitate their adopting these good practices. Further, the one-on-one financial consultation provided participants with individualized advice. As indicated in the follow-up survey, at least some participants did act on what they took away from the programme.

The programme is also well-appreciated by participants and partners as a meaningful and well-delivered initiative.

Meanwhile, the workplace is a rarely used platform for financial education and as a newly developed initiative, this programme certainly can benefit from a number of enhancements. The following recommendations are based on our findings:

(1) Extend the programme to reach a younger segment

In this pilot run, the participants were mostly in their mid to late 50s. As the focus group respondents pointed out, some financial advice might come too late for them to act on. It makes sense for the programme to be extended to include those in their 40s, who would have more time to adjust their retirement plans and maximize the benefits they get from the programme.

In addition, if resources allow, programmes targeting participants from different age groups can be developed. It is never too early to plan for retirement - as at different stages in life, one has different needs and assets as well as different "planning horizons", retirement planning should be done according to the specific life stage one is at, and then be reviewed and adjusted regularly (Bodie, 2003; Bodie, Treussard, & Willen, 2007; Boscaljon, 2004).

(2) Develop a flexible delivery format

To encourage employers to introduce the programme at their workplace, there should be flexibility in the delivery format. We understand that for this pilot programme, as the HKT staff came from different work locations and some participants may work on shifts, it was considered that a half-day workshop with an optional consultation session was more practicable. However, for other employers, for instance those with staff at a single location, it might be possible to develop a programme consisting of a series of short workshops.

(3) *Encourage participation in the financial consultation*

Apart from providing an individualized financial advice, the optional financial consultation sessions in this programme also made sure the participants complete the tasks of taking stock of their assets and liabilities, estimating retirement funds for their preferred lifestyle and setting up a personal budget, before finally going through a comprehensive review session with the financial planners. Therefore, one good way to help participants overcome procrastination in retirement planning is to encourage more participants to take part in the financial consultation.

Enrolment in the financial consultation in this pilot run was lower than expected, which could be attributed to mismatched schedules and not understanding the benefits of the financial consultation, as well as worries over potential product selling during the process. During the workshops, more emphasis could be placed on explaining the benefits and procedures for attending the financial consultation, and testimonies from past participants could be used to raise interest. Also, weekend sessions and more locations (if applicable) could be explored.

(4) *Strengthen promotion of the programme*

The workplace financial wellness programme is a new concept for both employers and employees. To attract employers to introduce the programme at their workplace, more should be done to promote the benefits of the programme. As suggested by the programme partners, emphasizing the corporate social responsibility aspect of helping employees to get financially prepared for retirement can be a sensible appeal.

Apart from promoting the programme as an addition to staff wellness initiatives, the IEC can consider targeting organisations/companies that offer Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) – those which assist employees with personal problems and/or work-related problems that may impact their job performance, health, mental and emotional well-being. Financial issues are a common source of stress and programmes promoting sound money management practices can be complementary to other EAP services. Likewise, organisations/companies with staff credit unions – unions which are member-owned financial cooperatives providing deposit-taking services while providing credit to members at competitive rates - are also more likely to be receptive to financial wellness programmes.

In addition, once an employer has signed up to run the programme, having internal promotion to recruit participants to join the programme is also important. Having line managers explain the benefits of the programme and encourage staff to join may be a good way to boost participation.

(5) *Mobilise resources from more stakeholders*

In the long run, once the demand for the workplace financial wellness programme builds up, more resources from different sectors will be required to provide workplace financial education. For instance, NGOs might collaborate with the banking and insurance industries to develop new initiatives that offer impartial financial education without commercial elements. Strong stakeholder collaboration will also promote peer learning and the sharing of best practices, which would in turn help to advance financial education at the workplace.

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