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Challenges of the Monthly Contributory Pension Scheme in Nigeria: The Case of Gombe State Federal Workers

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Abstract

The study explores the challenges faced by Gombe State federal workers from the monthly contributory pension scheme (CPS). The survey research design was adopted for the study. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select 393 respondents as a sample size using Taro Yamane statistical formula, out of 13,536 populations. Thus, data analysed through mean and chi-square square to test hypotheses. The study found that the lack of information about the monthly deductions from employees' salaries, as well as the corruption and inefficiency of the organs responsible for regulating and controlling the administration of the scheme, pose the biggest challenges to federal government employees. Other significant issues include lack of sincerity and competence, corrupt management of the pension sector and the fear of financial mismanagement among those in charge of fund management, which casts doubt on the sustainability of Nigeria's contributory pension scheme. Therefore, the study recommends that those in-charge of the pension fund should organised a monthly or quarterly workshop/seminars, sensitisation and awareness to the federal government workers in order to shed more light regarding the pension fund and the communication procedure should be open between the PFAs and the employees and timely payment.

Keywords: Monthly contributory pension scheme, pension fund administrators, challenges of inefficiency

Introduction

A pension is both legal and social concept in the analysis of the world of work among scholars of industrial sociologists. Pensions play an important role in poverty alleviation of the senior citizens, one of the most vulnerable groups in any society. Yet, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO),

only one in five workers is covered by adequate social security schemes, at the same time as the World Bank (Holtzman and Hinz, 2021) point out that 85% of the world's population, over 65 has no retirement benefit at all. In the context of Africa, the opinion on pension scheme differs significantly in terms of variation in economic development, social welfare policies and demographic factors across the continent. However, in sub-Saharan Africa less than 10% of the older population has a Contributory Pension (Palacios and Pallares-Miralles, 2020).

Meanwhile, Nigeria was the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to implement a pension system based on individual, funded accounts in the Chilean pattern. The experiment raises the questions of whether a system like this is acceptable for a nation like Nigeria and whether the necessary infrastructure was and is in place to support its functioning.

To keep the ball rolling, the country was criticised for not having the same level of governance, records, financial institutional capability, or market development as Chile when the changes were implemented (in terms of economic, social, and pension system development). Additionally, because 90% of people labour in the unorganised sector, the new system cannot achieve the core objective of providing most accessible social security programmes for Nigerians. As a result, some have claimed that Nigeria still requires the basic social pension that Chile is implementing through changes to their own system (Stewart and Yermo, 2016).

However, several Nigerian governments had implemented pension plans. These include the following: Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) of 1993, the National Provident Fund (NPF) plan from 1961, and the pension statute from 1951 with retroactive effect from January 1, 1946. Others include the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) of 2004, which was created specifically for federal government workers to take care of themselves socially, psychologically, and financially after retirement (Adeniji, 2017).

Furthermore, CPS was established to help workers to access their benefits after retirement. This would ease some difficulties a retiree may face. The pension policy undergoes several changes and modifications geared toward reducing the burden faced by retirees (PenCom, 2004). Thus, Nigeria migrated from the defined benefit scheme which is also known as Pay-as-You-Go (PAYG) with effect from 2004 to adopt a CPS. Odewole (2017) posits that the old pension scheme was characterised by countless defaults that have inflicted pains and hardships on both Federal and State retirees.

Furthermore, CPS is largely a private sector initiative. It is contributory in nature, fully funded based on individual accounts that are privately managed by Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs). As stated in the pension Act 2004, the contributory system requires that employees contribute eight (8) percent of their monthly emolument (basic salary, housing and transport allowance) and the employer contributes ten (10) percent making eighteen (18) percent respectively, in the case of the public sector (Ako, 2006). An employer is obliged to deduct and remit contribution to a custodian within seven (7) days

from the day the employee is paid his/her salary, while the custodian shall notify the pension fund administrators within 24 hours of the receipt of remitted pension funds (PenCom, 2004).

Notwithstanding, the pensioners were owed a backlog of arrears and there was no hope at sight for the settlement. Regardless, of the fact that the rate of retirement in both Federal and State establishments kept on increasing at an unacceptable proportion. Few funds allocated for the payment of pensions were diverted (Adesodun, 2018). Ghost pensioners dominated the list of both federal and state pension payrolls. Also, the budgetary allocations were not sufficient to make regular payments of pensions, with outright fraud and irregularities among the top echelons in pension houses (Ozor, 2006).

In Gombe State, federal government workers are faced with many challenges in the monthly of CPSs like in other states in Nigeria. This uncertainty happened as a result of the inability of PFAs to discharge their duties appropriately to the retirees of government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). However, a recent 2019 protest by workers in Gombe State against irregularities of pension fund administrators was not something to write home about, as MDAs were blocked by workers which did not allow any vehicle or staff to go in and out of office environment.

Furthermore, the thought of no future after retirement by federal government workers could be responsible for low commitment to work, corruption, job dissatisfaction, incessant strike, and low productivity among public workers (Ekwunife, Egunlusi and Chikwe, 2019). It is on the above background that this study is geared towards investigating the challenges faced Gombe State federal workers from the monthly CPS with specifically research questions: What are the challenges faced by Gombe State federal workers from the monthly CPS? What are the strategies to minimize the hindrances faced by Gombe State federal workers from the monthly CPS?

The following research hypotheses were set to guide the study there is a significant relationship between level of education and the challenges of monthly contributory pension scheme among Gombe State federal workers; and there is a significant relationship between staff position and acceptability of monthly contributory pension scheme among Gombe State federal workers.

A Brief Review

Unachukwu, Oladeji and Grace (2020) conducted a study on public workers' perception of the CPS: Evidence from Lagos state. The descriptive research design was adopted, while simple random sampling techniques were employed to select 398 respondents as the sample size for the study. Analysis of data was performed with the aid of mean and chi-square. The result reveals that the perception of public workers towards the CPS encourages workers to save for the future, which is convenient for them. The study concludes that the CPS looks bleak for the sustainability of Nigeria.

Sanni (2012) carried out a study on how to develop an effective strategy for pension administration in the Nigerian public sector, a study of pension

commission Rivers State using a questionnaire on a sample of 370 respondents. Two hypotheses were tested using simple percentages and chi-square tools. The findings revealed a non-effective and inefficient strategy of pension administration can be likened to poor pension administration. The budgeted income to pensioners was not implemented when due. This study is also inadequate in the sense that the findings are mere pedestrian findings that are below empirical findings. Nyong and Duze (2011) examined the Pension Reform Act 2004 and retirement planning in Nigeria. They adopted a descriptive survey research design using a questionnaire instrument, sampling 300 teachers and teacher-pensioners. The result revealed the objectives of PRA 2004 were yet to be achieved. Retired persons still suffered trauma, pains, and even death before they received their pension packages in Nigeria, which poses questions about the sustenance of the scheme.

Theoretical Framework

This paper focuses on Victor Vroom's (1964) expectation theory and productivity theories of pensions by Stuart Dorsey (1998) the demand and supply sides make up the two sides of the productivity theory. That pension plans are set up as incentives and motivation to persuade employees to raise their output, performance, or productivity (Dhameji, 2016). The demand side of this theory posits that employers make payments to employees' pension funds because workers are keen or prefer pension savings to cash payments to their emoluments. This is because of the futuristic, hopeful, ambitious nature of employees and the attaching benefits which includes accumulation of large sum of money as income/pension, reduction in income tax of the employee, the retirement benefits, such as social security from the employer's contributions, interest earnings and dividend earnings on pension fund investment or assets that are not taxed. The demand side of the pension productivity theory also states that employees, especially the high-income earners, prefer pension to cash payments because of a possible annuity (fixed amount of money paid at regular intervals) for as long as the pensioners lives (Pension Reform Act, 2014).

The supply side of this theory posits that employees' gain from pension tends to raise the level of workforce productivity and reduce labour costs. This is because the employers' investment in the training of the workforce, improved conditions of service, provision of adequate resources, etc. are greatly off-set by the workforce, improved output or productivity. There is also the perspective that the supply side of the theory serves as an incentive for personnel to remain in the organisation for a long time. The theory enhances the average wealth of a pensioner, especially when the assets are invested to generate large income for redistribution to participants.

While the expectancy theory of motivation is based on the idea that employees believe that there are relationships between the efforts they put forth at work, the performance they achieve from that effort, and the rewards they receive from their effort and performance. In other words, people will be

motivated if they believe that strong effort will lead to good performance and good performance will lead to desired rewards (Pension). According to Fred (2011), Victor Vroom was the first to develop an expectancy theory with direct application to work settings, which was later expanded and refined by Porter and Lawler (1968) and others (Pinder, 1987) cited in Fred (2011).

The theory is based on four assumptions. Firstly, assumption is that people join organizations with expectations about their needs, motivations, and past experiences. These influence how individuals react to the organization. Secondly assumption is that an individual's behaviour is a result of conscious choice. That is, people are free to choose those behaviours suggested by their own expectancy calculations. Thirdly, assumption is that people want different things from the organisation (e.g., good salary, job security, and ultimately a good pension). Finally, assumption is that people will choose among alternatives so as to optimize outcomes for them personally.

The expectancy theory based on these assumptions has three key elements: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. An employee is motivated to the degree that he or she believes that (a) effort will lead to acceptable performance (expectancy), (b) performance will be rewarded (instrumentality), and (c) the value of the rewards is highly positive (valence). Pension here is seen as instrumentality and valence. Valence is the strength of an employee's preference for a particular reward (pension).

Thus, pension might have more value to individual employees than other organizational policies. Valences can be either positive or negative, if an employee has a strong preference for attaining good and healthy living at retirement, valence is positive. On the other hand, valence is negative, if an employee is indifferent to the reward system in place, and perceived that his future is not secured by inadequate information on his pension package.

The relevance of this theory is the emphasis that organizations should try to increase the belief that good performance will result in valued rewards (pension). In essence, organizations should link directly the specific performance they desire to the rewards desired by employees. It is important for employees to see clearly the reward process at work. Concrete acts must accompany statements of intent since employees have expectations for good pension package at retirement and that pension is very important and can be used as a tool for motivating and increasing their performance.

The theory provides guidelines for enhancing employee's motivation by linking the individual's performance to reward expectancy and reward valences (Pension) which must be in concrete terms. The weakness of this theory is that it does not provide specific suggestions on other specific issues on what motivates organisation members.

Instead, the theory provides a process of cognitive variables that reflects individual differences in work motivation. In this theory, employees do not act simply because of strong internal drives, unmet needs, or the application of rewards. Instead, they are rational people whose beliefs, perceptions, and probability estimates influence their behaviour.

Meanwhile, these theories (productivity and expectancy) also inform that a good pension scheme motivates the workforce to put in their best in the work place as they look forward to a rewarding retirement period. This confirms the views of Sterns (2006) cited in Ahmed (2009) that the contributory pension scheme has the capacity of reducing employees' turnover. Employees should be recognized and motivated through their pensions to enable them to see their abilities, capabilities and contributions as important either towards the future of the university or individual life after meritorious years of service.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Gombe State of northeastern Nigeria. The Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of Federal Teaching Hospital Gombe (FTHG), Federal College Education (FCE), Federal University Kashare (FUK), Nigeria Identity Management Commission (NIMC), and Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON) in Gombe State were the subjects of the study, which used a survey design with a total population of 13,536. The sample size for this study was calculated using Taro Yamane's statistical formula from 1963. Taro Yamane (1963) statistical formula as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Appropriate sample size

N = the total population

e = level of significance (or limit of tolerable error)

1 = Constant (unity)

Five percent (0.05) is the tolerable error

$$\frac{13,536}{1 + 13,536 (0.05)^2}$$

$$\frac{13,536}{13,537(0.0025)}$$

$$\frac{13,536}{33.8}$$

n= 400

The sample size of 400 respondents in the MDAs was selected for the research. The researchers employed the simple random sampling (SRS) technique using lottery method to give all the population equal chance of being selected. Questionnaire and will be complementary to in-depth interviews (IDI). The questionnaire will be administered to the federal government ministries (MDAs) covering information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

However, it also provides data on their perception of the monthly contributory pension scheme. For qualitative data, an in-depth interview would use in order to get the needed information one (1) interview with the official of the National Pension Commission (PENCOM), four (4) with officials of pension fund administrators (PFAs) that is making of the five (5) in-depth interviews (IDI). The in-depth interview was made up of open-ended questions accompanied by probes aimed at providing wider is on CPS. Chi-square was used to test hypotheses.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented below:

Table 1: Demographic and Socio-Economic Variables of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	277	70.5
Female	116	29.5
Total	393	100
Age Categories		
20-29	89	22.6
30-39	130	33.1
40-49	96	24.4
50-59	51	12.9
60 and above	27	6.9
Total	393	100
Educational level		
PhD	32	8.1
Master degree	52	13.2
First degree	211	53.7
HND/OND	67	17.1
SSCE/GCE	31	7.9
Total	393	100
Position		
Senior	234	59.5
Junior	159	40.5
Total	393	100
Ministries/place of work		
FTHG	113	28.0
FCE (T) G	114	29.0
FUK	125	31.8
NIMC	17	4.3
SON	24	6.1
Total	393	100
Income		
Less than ₦ 20,000	12	3.0
₦20,000 - ₦ 35,000	38	9.7
₦36,000- ₦ 50,000	56	14.2
₦51,000 - ₦ 65,000	60	15.3
₦66,000 and above	227	57.8
Total	393	100

Table 1 shows the demographic and socio-economic variables of the respondents. It shows that respondents comprised of 70.5 percent of male and 29.5 percent females. The majority of the respondents, 33.1 percent fell between 30-39 years of age. The current level of education of most of the respondents is 53.7 percent was first degree. Majority of the respondents, 59.5 percent were predominantly senior staff, 31.8 percent worked with Federal University of Kashare. The highest number of respondents, 57.8 percent were earned #66,000 and above as salary income.

Table 2: Challenges Faced by Federal Government Workers on the Implementation of the Monthly CPS

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Corrupt management of the pension sector	141	35.2
Insincerity of the pension sector	97	24.2
Incompetency of the pension sector	84	21.0
Skepticism of the Workers	71	17.7
Total	393	100

Table 2 shows the study found out that greater proportion of the respondents, 35.8 percent affirmed that corrupt and management of the pension sector as a very highly challenges to federal government workers in the implementation of monthly contributory pension scheme. Also, 24.2 percent were of the view that insincerity of the pension sector as a highly challenging factor to federal government workers. Furthermore, 21.0 percent of the respondents held the view that incompetency of the pension sector as highly challenge to Monthly CPS. Finally, an insignificant proportion of 17.7 percent of the respondents were of the view that scepticism of the Workers towards contributory pension scheme. An in-depth interview was conducted with a Male Director of PENCOM regarding the challenges of monthly CPS.

Most challenges faced in the administration of pensions are knowledge gaps between the administrators and the public on the scheme. Uhm (sic). Most workers did not understand the Act which is a serious challenge. Also, I can add more on the challenges that are concerned with the delay from the government from releasing bonds and deceased benefits is another challenge to the scheme.

Another interview with a female Director of NSITF opined that:

This is a good question; as nothing exists without challenges in the contemporary world. A lot of challenges are there for instance: lack of public awareness, public awareness means the knowledge that exists between both parties is very low. The misconception of federal government workers about the scheme is also a big challenge. Meanwhile, the problem of comparison between the old scheme and the new scheme in terms of the monthly payment by the Federal Government Workers as well as

the cumbersome procedural process, this will lead to delays in the payment of pension funds (*IDI*).

Table 3: Effects of the Challenges Faced by Federal Government Workers in the Implementation of the Monthly CPS

Effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly traumatised	125	31.2
Traumatised	111	27.8
Not traumatised	119	29.8
Highly not traumatised	39	9.5
Total	393	100

Table 3 shows that 31.2 percent of the respondents held the view that delay in payment of pension leads to highly traumatized, followed by 29.8 percent of the respondents had the opinion that delay in payment of pension could not traumatized. While, 27.8 percent of the respondents said delay could not be traumatized and finally, 9.5 percent of the respondents answered highly not traumatized. The interpretations of the table above indicate that majority of the respondents held the view that delay in payment of pension could lead to traumatized.

Table 4: Strategies to Minimise the Challenges Faced by Workers in the Implementation of the Monthly CPS

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Government policies	54	13.7
Close supervision by PENCOM	149	37.9
Justice and transparency	154	39.2
Timely payment of pension fund	36	9.2
Total	393	100

Table 4 shows that the strategies to minimise the challenges faced by FG workers in the implementation of monthly CPS. The table indicates that 39.2 percent of the respondents were of the view that justice and transparency are the only way to be strengthened the pension sector, followed by 37.2 percent of the respondents by argued that close supervision by PENCOM positively can also bring ease to the pension sector. 13.7 percent of the respondents held the view that government policies can strengthened pension sector finally, 9.2 percent of the respondents agreed that timely payment of pension fund the table above shows that the majority of the respondents agreed that only through justice, transparency, and God fearing that pension sector could be strengthened. A participant during in-depth interview said:

For me, the only solution to address the federal government workers' misconception towards monthly contributory pension scheme is addressing the public on the scheme, monthly pension

should be enhanced to address pension adequately and finally procedural timely of approval of payment. *(IDI with a Male Director of PENCOM)*

Another participant opined that:

I can comment that the only strategies to curb challenges are via sensitization on the operation of the scheme and prompt payment of retirement benefit. Also, let there be a review of the monthly pension frequently. *(IDI with a Male regional manager of premium pension limited)*

Test of Hypotheses

This study was design to find out the challenges faced by federal government workers on the implementation of monthly CPS in Gombe State, Nigeria. In this regards a cross-tabulation between level of education and employee to access their retirement saving account (RSA). Based on the above data collected, the hypotheses were tested using chi-square (x^2) as shown below.

Table 5: Percentage distribution of the respondents on level of education and it is easy for an employee to access their retirement saving account (RSA)

		It is easy for an employee to access their retirement saving account (RSA)				
		Highly easy access	Easy access	Not easy access	Not accessible	Total
Level of education	PhD	13	5	12	2	33
	Master	6	16	21	9	52
	First degree	41	54	87	29	211
	HND/OND	8	15	23	21	67
	SSCE/GCE	4	12	13	2	31
Total		72	102	156	63	393
Chi-Square Test	Value	DF	Asymp. Sig.(2.0)			
	31.106	12				

Sources: SPSS Version 16 Result, 2022

Table 5 contains the cross-tabulation and chi-square result on the relationship between level of education and it is easy for an employee to access their retirement saving account (RSA) in Gombe State. Also, the chi-square coefficient of the 31.106 at the degree of freedom 12, with 0.35 level of significant, which is greater than the table chi-square at the 5.226. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is acceptable which shows that there is significant relationship between level of education and it is easy for an employee to access their retirement saving account (RSA) in Gombe State. Based on the finding,

the relationship is significantly between the level of education and CPS in Gombe State.

Discussion

The study revealed that the challenges faced by Gombe State federal workers from the monthly CPS are corruption, poor management of pension sector, lack of sincerity of pension sector result to mismanagement and scepticism of the workers. The findings are in line with James (2017), the study found that challenge is that of embezzlement and mismanagement of Contributions. It also in line with study of Adesodun (2018), over the years the management of Pension Schemes in Nigeria has been inundated by multiple and diverse problems such as inadequate funding others include, inadequate subventions and grants, poor documentation and filing in pension offices, direct release of pension funds to underwriters, accumulated arrears of Pensioners, inability to determine appropriate investment portfolios, lack of accountability, corruption and embezzlement of Funds.

However, effects of such challenges were resulted the federal government workers to traumatised and even death. The study revealed that the federal government workers have a negative perception of the contributory pension scheme and to erase the negative opinion; proper communication procedures should be reported to the management of pension and Gombe State federal workers should get the statement of their pension fund; and there should be monthly or quarterly workshops/seminars, sensitisation and awareness to the employees organised by pension fund administrators (PFAs) in order to shed more light regarding the pension fund.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the challenges faced by federal government workers on the implementation of monthly contributory pension scheme in Gombe State, Nigeria. Based on the study, one could infer that federal workers suffered from the hands of PFAs due to the lack of information about the deductions from their salaries that are made each month. The inefficiency of the structures responsible for regulating and controlling the administration of the scheme also impede the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme. The following recommendations are therefore offered:

1. There should be effective communication procedure between the management of the pension scheme and the workers. This will offer some insights on the procedures of the scheme and enable the workers to get their statement of account on the pension fund.
2. The external auditors of PFAs are to be put under obligation to report a specific problem to the National Pension Commission (PENCOM). In proven cases of persistent contravention, the license granted can be revoked.

3. The management of the pension sector should be just and transparent in discharging their duties and timely payment of the retirees' benefits.

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