

Public Perception on the Adoption of ICT in the Contributory Pension Scheme

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Abstract

The study accessed the perception of academic and non-academic staff of Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria on the use of Information and Communication Technology in the contributory pension scheme. Nigeria has been reluctant in actively embracing and implementing the global trend of integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the public service. The prevailing culture of resisting change and adhering staunchly to the old and manual way of service delivery, which have shown limited effectiveness, has hindered our public sector from meeting global standard for service delivery. The main objective of the study is to measure public perception on the extent and effectiveness of information and communication technology usage in Nigeria contributory pension scheme and the role it has played in building public trust on the scheme. Survey research method was adopted, 300 copies of Four Likert Scale Questionnaire was distributed using multistage probability sampling across 6 Faculties of the University including the registry. Simple percentages and frequency tables was used to analyze the data obtained. The finding revealed notably, a substantial portion of the respondents express a positive disposition towards the use of ICT in the scheme, suggesting a receptiveness to technology. Additionally, a majority have express dissatisfaction in the turnaround time and feedback mechanism. Due to the mixed landscape of perceptions and experiences, the research recommends for a balance and comprehensive approach in the implementation of ICT in the contributory scheme especially a regular feedback mechanism.

Keywords: Perception, Pension, Scheme, Contribution, ICT.

Introduction

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the management of contributory pension schemes has revolutionized the way these systems operate, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria (Achimugu, 2015). According to the National Pension Commission (PenCom), the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) in Nigeria was established to provide a sustainable and reliable source of income for retirees, addressing the inefficiencies and challenges of the previous pension system. The use of ICT in this scheme is a pivotal development aimed at enhancing operational efficiency, ensuring transparency, and improving accessibility for all stakeholders.

The Nigerian Contributory Pension Scheme, governed by the National Pension Commission (PenCom), has undergone significant reforms since its inception in 2004. The shift from a Defined Benefit (DB) scheme to a Defined Contribution (DC) scheme marked a significant

policy change, requiring both employers and employees to contribute to individual Retirement Savings Accounts (Amujuri, 2009). The introduction of ICT in this context is intended to streamline processes, reduce administrative burdens, and foster a more transparent and efficient pension management system.

Despite the potential benefits of ICT in enhancing the CPS, several challenges hinder its full adoption and effectiveness. These include issues related to digital literacy, infrastructural deficiencies, and security concerns (Atedo, 2006). Moreover, public perception of the use of ICT in the CPS is a critical factor that influences its success. Understanding how contributors perceive ICT integration and identifying the barriers to its adoption are essential for developing strategies to improve the system (Blake, 2003).

Literature Review

ICTs

ICT or Information and Communications Technology in simple terms, can be defined as the basket of technologies, which assist or support in storage, processing of Data/ Information, or in dissemination/ communication of Data/ Information, or both (Rory 2007). ICT thus includes technologies such as desktop and laptop computers, software, peripherals and connections to the Internet that are intended to fulfill information processing and communications functions. According to Rory (2007), the term ICT is the broader term of Information Technology (IT), to explicitly include the field of electronic communication, in addition to IT. The term IT is defined as "the study, design, development, implementation, support or management of computer-based information systems, particularly software applications and computer hardware." IT deals with the use of electronic computers and computer software to convert, store, protect, process, transmit and retrieve information, securely.

International Social Security Association (ISSA) opine that ICT is used as an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning. The importance of ICT lies, less in the technology itself, than in its ability to create greater access to information and communication among the hitherto un-reached geographies and populations (Sule, 2009). Appropriate ICT interventions are yielding very positive results in developing and under-developed economies, the "Grameen Phone" initiative in Bangladesh, Kothamale Radio Project in Srilanka, and ITC's e-Chaupals in India, are examples of such innovations. Many countries around the world have established organizations for the promotion of ICTs, because it is feared that unless less technologically advanced areas have a chance to catch up, the increasing technological advances in developed nations will only serve to aggravate the already-existing economic gap between technological "have" and "have not" areas (Rory, 2007).

Pension

Pension is a regularly paid stipend as benefit due to a person in consideration of past services. It is referred to as a sum set aside for retirement purposes. It is a form of arrangement that hopes that at retirement, retirees will not be stranded financially. Pension is simply the amount set aside either by employer or employee or both to ensure that at retirement, there is something for employees to fall back on as income (Fapohunda, 2013). Pension is an amount paid by government or company to an employee after working for some specific period of time, considered too old or ill to work or have reached the statutory age of retirement (Adams, 2005). Iwu (2007) mentioned that as a scheme, pension is the periodic payment granted to an employee for services rendered, based on contractual legal enforceable agreement, paid by an employer at the agree time of termination of employment.

Pension Management

Sterns (2006) observes that pensions could discourage labour turnover. If both the employees and employers contribute to the scheme, then it serves as a general area of joint interest and cooperation and therefore helps to foster better employment relations. He stated further that pension administration consists of five basic elements namely: flexibility; that is, to be able to cater for the needs of retirees'; amount of benefits which is sum accrued to an ex-employee of an organisation; finance, activity of managing pension money; contribution to cost of pension by employee and employer and death benefit that serves as a benefit for beneficiary of a deceased employee.

Pension as a programme is to improve the living standard of the elderly people who have outlived the labour force group and it is also a social security as well as welfare package for the old or retired people who are in their years of labour inactivity (Bertrand et al., 2003; Idowu, 2006). As for us, a pension scheme is a financial package which legally specifies its organization and operation, so as to provide rest of mind to workers, sustain or spur them to more productivity and ensure that a pensioner and his dependents live a decent life. Pension schemes are social security maintenance plan for workers after their disengagement as employees through retirement (Ilesanmi, 2006). Pension consists of lump sum payment paid to an employee upon his disengagement from active service.

According to him, payments are usually in monthly installments. He further stated that pension plans may be contributory or non-contributory; fixed or variable benefits; group or individual; insured or trustee; private or public, and single or multi-employer. In many advanced countries of the world, income from pension to an individual may be supplemented by social security benefits, which apply to all citizens in such country whether or not they belong to the working class. However, since most citizens in such countries might have at one time or another, been workers, it would appear that social security benefits are co-terminus with the working class. It is different from gratuity (Adegbayi, 2005).

Contributory Pension Schemes

Contributory pension is the amount of money set aside by an employer or employee or both to ensure that at retirement there is something to fall back on as income. Contributory pension scheme is a system in which an employer pays certain amount of money regularly into a pension fund while the employee also pays some money into the same pension fund which forms the aggregate of what the employee gets at the time of retirement. Either the person has worked in the public or private sector; it serves as a social welfare scheme for the age and ensures workers save to cater for their livelihood during old age (Sule, 2009; Egbe, 2013).

The 2004 Pension Reform Act is a paradigm shift from the 1979 pension Act. Under the new scheme, employers and employees alike are to contribute 7.5% of employees' monthly emolument which include basic salary, housing and transport allowance. Nevertheless, military personnel are to contribute 2.5 percent while the Federal Government contributes 12.5 percent of the employees' monthly emolument (Pension Reform Act, 2004). The scheme covers the private sector with five or more employees. The only exceptions are public employees who have three years or less to retire with effect from the date of enactment of the Pension Act being 30th June 2004 (National Pension Commission, 2004).

Challenges of the Old Pension Schemes

According to Amujuri (2009), the need for pension reform was necessitated by the myriad of problems that plagued the defined benefit arrangement in the Public Sector and other forms of pension systems like occupational schemes, mixture of funded and defined benefit schemes that operated in the private sector. One of the challenges of the defined benefit was its dependence on budgetary provisions from various tiers of government for funding. The scheme became largely unsustainable due to lack of adequate and timely budgetary provisions. This was the reason for the gap between pension fund obligations and revenues, which threatened not only economic stability but also crowded out necessary investments in education, health and infrastructure. It was worsened by various increases in salaries, which ultimately led to increase pensions and hence undue pressure on government fiscal responsibilities (Idowu, 2006; Fapohunda, 2013).

Pension administration had been largely weak, inefficient and cumbersome due to poor staffing and equipping that led to poor record keeping as a result, pensioners had to spend years before their retirement benefits were paid. The exit phase was quite challenging where payment procedure was often very tedious, sometimes the pensioners had to wait for months and years, to collect their entitlements. Similarly, the reimbursement process for the split of pension and gratuity payments in public service was very clumsy, untidy and sometimes fraught with bribery and corruption (Smart, 2012). The Private sector schemes were characterized by very low compliance ratio due to lack of effective regulation and supervision of the system. However, most of these schemes were akin to provident fund schemes which did not provide for periodic payment of benefits. Even at this, many private sector employees were not covered by any form of pension scheme (Omoni, 2013).

Pension fund custodians (PFCs)

PENCOM Act 2004 stipulates that pension funds and assets are to be held solely in custody for the Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) by an independent Pension Fund Custodian PFC). The PFC has the following responsibilities;

- i. Receiving the total contributions remitted by the employer within 24 hours and notifies the PFA of same and holds the pension assets in safe custody on trust for the employee and beneficiaries of the RSA;
- ii. Settling of transactions and undertaking activities relating to the administration of pension fund investments including the collection of dividends;
- iii. Executing relevant proxy in favour of the PFAs for the purpose of voting in relation to the investments. The PFCs provides some control over the activities of the PFAs and provides a hedge against unauthorized access or trading. The custodian is in no way empowered to utilize any pension fund assets in its custody to meet its own financial obligations or that of the third party.

Theoretical Frame Work

Many theories have been developed in relation to pension reform across the globe. Three of them that are practically germane to our study are utility and preference, life cycle, and productivity theories of pension.

Theory of Utility and Preference

The theory of utility and preference propounded by Samuelson (1950) quoted in Koszegi and Rabin (2007) recognizes that it is not always possible to obtain all necessary data to develop all alternatives to decision making. The theory posits that some decisions can be appropriately taken partly on subjective evaluation. Utility and preference theory states that a high risk, untested decision, which does not enjoy consumer or user or beneficiary acceptance, in spite of its potentialities, is not assured. Preference would be given to the high- risk decision in which utility is guaranteed, that is, inherent quality or value is potentially more assured to be constant than the low risk decision in which utility is not assured.

Theory of Life Cycle

This theory is associated with Modigliani and Brumberg (1980) cited in Idowu (2006). It states that consumption is a function of life time wealth at one's disposal. This wealth (financial, real assets and expected value of future income) is not affected by changes in the pattern of income that comes to one over time and the pattern of consumption is not also affected. The theory makes one exception to the above postulation, holding that there is one ground in which consumption can be affected. It is that pension reform plan can change the wealth of a pension plan participant (Achimugu, 2016). The life cycle theory believes or argues that pension reform can affect savings rate of a pension plan participant by affecting the average wealth of the person. This is because a sustainable pension plan can grow huge financial resources for further

investment earnings which can cause significant redistribution of income, leading to increased wealth to pension participants. This can encourage increased or sustainable saving propensity.

While the theory implicates the power of huge income creation and redistribution to participants or contributors, leading to increased wealth, its provision is that the pension plan be institutionalized and sustainable while the pension reform has the power to change or affect the life cycle. However, the reliability of the PFA, the regulatory bodies and security agents is thus, brought to the fore. The last point is an indication of a caveat that the theory is not influenced to economic depression such as world economic recession and management.

Productivity Theories of Pension

This work will be anchored on the Productivity theories of pension posited by Dorsey (1998). The Productivity theory is relevant to this work because double sided: The demand and supply sides. Both sides of the theory agreed that pension schemes are established as incentives and motivation to encourage workers to increase their productivity or output or performance. The demand side of the 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 attaching benefits. This includes 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, the supply side of this theory posits that employees' gain from pension tends to raise the level of workforce productivity and reduce labour costs (Balogun, 2006). 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 organization 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. The theories and concepts 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.

Methodology

This work adopted Survey research design the population constitute 2,500 academics and non-academic staff of Federal University of Kashere. Using krejcie and morgan table to determine the sample size. 335 questionnaires were administered using multistage probability sampling techniques across the 6 faculty and the registry, and only 300 were returned. Simple percentages and frequency tables were used to analyse the data obtained.

Analysis and Findings

Table 1: You are familiar with the use of ICT in the CPS (e.g., online portals, mobile apps).

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	165	55.0%
Agree	89	29.7%
Strongly disagree	16	5.3%
Disagree	30	10.0%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 1 presents responses on the familiarity of the use of information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), including online portals and mobile apps. A significant majority of respondents indicated a high level of familiarity, with 165 individuals strongly agreeing (55.0%) and 89 agreeing (29.7%) that they are familiar with ICT tools in the CPS. Conversely, a smaller proportion either disagreed (10.0%) or strongly disagreed (5.3%) with this statement. These findings suggest a positive reception and awareness among the surveyed population regarding the integration and utilization of ICT platforms within the CPS framework.

Table 2: Training is organized to learn about the use of ICT in the CPS? (Check all that apply).

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	19	6.3%
Agree	38	12.7%
Strongly disagree	156	52.0%
Disagree	87	29.0%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 2 outlines responses regarding the organization of training sessions for learning about the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). A notable proportion of respondents indicated negative views towards the availability of such training, with 156 individuals strongly disagreeing (52.0%) and 87 disagreeing (29.0%) that training sessions are organized for this purpose. In contrast, a smaller number either strongly agreed (6.3%) or agreed (12.7%) that such training opportunities exist. These findings highlight a perceived lack of structured training initiatives aimed at educating stakeholders on ICT usage within the CPS. The significant discrepancy between those who disagree and agree underscores

potential gaps in educational support and professional development within the context of pension scheme administration. Addressing these concerns could enhance awareness and proficiency in leveraging ICT tools effectively for pension management and administration.

Table 3: You use ICT tools frequently (e.g., online portals, mobile apps) to access your pension account

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	116	38.7%
Agree	85	28.3%
Strongly disagree	56	18.7%
Disagree	43	14.3%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 3 provides insights into respondents' frequency of using ICT tools, such as online portals and mobile apps, to access their pension accounts within the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). The data reveals that a substantial portion of respondents actively use ICT tools for pension account management, with 38.7% strongly agreeing and 28.3% agreeing that they frequently utilize these digital platforms. Conversely, a smaller percentage either strongly disagree (18.7%) or disagree (14.3%) with the statement, indicating less frequent use or preference for alternative methods. These findings underscore a significant adoption of digital channels for pension management among respondents, reflecting a growing trend towards leveraging technology for accessing and managing financial services.

Table 4 The ICT tools in management of CPS are easy to use

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	188	62.7%
Agree	110	36.7%
Strongly disagree	2	0.7%
Disagree	0	0%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 4 provides insights into respondents' perceptions regarding the ease of use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in managing the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). A significant majority of respondents expressed positive views, with 188 individuals strongly agreeing (62.7%) and 110 agreeing (36.7%) that the ICT tools in CPS management are easy to use. This overwhelming agreement suggests a high level of satisfaction and comfort with

the usability of digital tools within the CPS framework. In contrast, a negligible number of respondents either strongly disagreed (0.7%) or disagreed (0%) with the ease of use, indicating minimal concerns or challenges perceived in navigating ICT platforms for pension management. This finding reveals the successful implementation of user-friendly ICT solutions in CPS management, potentially contributing to enhanced user experience, efficiency, and accessibility in pension-related transactions and services

Table 5 Lack of digital skills is a challenge in the use of ICT tools for managing pension account

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	167	55.7%
Agree	132	44.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Disagree	1	0.3%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 5 explores respondents' views on whether a lack of digital skills presents a challenge in using ICT tools for managing pension accounts. Majority of respondents indicated agreement with this statement, with 167 individuals strongly agreeing (55.7%) and 132 agreeing (44.0%) that a lack of digital skills poses a challenge. These findings reveal a significant concern among the surveyed population regarding the importance of digital literacy in effectively utilizing ICT tools within the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). Notably, no respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, and only one individual (0.3%) disagreed, suggesting a widespread acknowledgment of the impact of digital skills on navigating and maximizing the benefits of digital platforms in pension management. The findings reveals the critical need for targeted digital literacy initiatives and training programs aimed at equipping stakeholders with the necessary skills to leverage ICT tools confidently and proficiently in CPS administration.

Table 6: Poor internet connectivity is a challenge in the use of ICT tools for managing pension account

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	195	65.0%
Agree	74	24.7%
Strongly disagree	21	7.0%
Disagree	10	3.3%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 6 examines respondents' perspectives on poor internet connectivity as a challenge in using ICT tools for managing pension accounts. The data indicates that majority of respondents

perceive poor internet connectivity as a notable obstacle. Specifically, 195 respondents strongly agree (65.0%), and 74 agree (24.7%) that poor internet connectivity poses a challenge in utilizing ICT tools for pension account management. Conversely, a smaller proportion of respondents either strongly disagree (7.0%) or disagree (3.3%) with this statement. These responses highlight the impact of infrastructure limitations on accessing and utilizing digital platforms within the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). The high percentages of agreement underscore the critical role of reliable internet access in ensuring seamless and efficient pension-related transactions and services.

Table 7 Complicated interface is a challenge in the use of ICT tools for managing pension account

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	47	15.7%
Agree	62	20.7%
Strongly disagree	65	21.7%
Disagree	126	42.0%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 7 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the complexity of the interface as a challenge in using ICT tools for managing pension accounts. The data reveals a diverse range of viewpoints among the respondents. A notable portion, comprising 47 respondents (15.7%), strongly agree that the interface is complicated, while an additional 62 respondents (20.7%) express agreement with this sentiment. Conversely, 65 respondents (21.7%) strongly disagree that the interface is complicated, and a larger group of 126 respondents (42.0%) simply disagree with this assertion. These findings highlight a significant division in opinion regarding the usability of the interface within the context of pension account management.

Table 8: Lack of online help desk for pension issues is a challenge in CPS

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	21	7.0%
Agree	13	4.3%
Strongly disagree	156	52.0%
Disagree	110	36.7%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 8 reveals respondents' perceptions regarding the absence of an online help desk for addressing pension-related issues within the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). The data shows that majority of respondents either strongly disagree (52.0%) or disagree (36.7%) with the statement that the lack of an online help desk is a challenge. A smaller proportion of respondents either strongly agrees (7.0%) or agrees (4.3%) that this absence poses a challenge. These findings reveal a general satisfaction or lack of concern among the surveyed population regarding the availability of online support for addressing pension queries or issues.

Table 9 Contributors are confident of the security of personal and financial information when using ICT tools for managing pension account

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	95	31.7%
Agree	89	29.7%
Strongly disagree	65	21.7%
Disagree	51	17.0%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 9 provides findings into contributors' perceptions regarding the security of personal and financial information when using ICT tools for managing pension accounts within the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). The data reveals a range of attitudes among respondents. A significant portion, comprising 95 respondents (31.7%), strongly agrees that their personal and financial information is secure when using these tools. An additional 89 respondents (29.7%) express agreement with this sentiment. However, there is also a notable level of concern among respondents, with 65 individuals (21.7%) strongly disagreeing and 51 respondents (17.0%) disagreeing that their information is secure. These findings revealed the varying degrees of confidence and apprehension regarding the security measures implemented in CPS-related ICT platforms. **Table 10:** You have experienced security issues (e.g., data breaches, unauthorized access) with your pension account

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	0	0%
Agree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	195	65.0%
Disagree	105	35.0%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 10 reveals that none of the respondents strongly agree or agree that they have encountered security issues such as data breaches or unauthorized access, accounting for 0% in both categories. Instead, a significant majority of respondents, totaling 195 individuals (65.0%), strongly disagree that they have experienced such security issues. Additionally, 105 respondents (35.0%) disagree with the statement, indicating a perception of security and trust in the protection of their pension account information. These findings suggest a high level of confidence among the surveyed population regarding the security measures implemented within CPS-related ICT platforms. The absence of reported security incidents highlights effective security protocols and a robust framework aimed at safeguarding personal and financial data. This positive perception is important for fostering trust and reliability in digital pension management systems, thereby encouraging continued adoption and utilization of ICT tools for managing pension accounts.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from the survey on public perception of ICT used in the Nigeria Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), several conclusions were drawn that address the specific objectives of the research: The survey indicates a notable level of awareness and understanding among contributors regarding ICT applications in the CPS. Majority of respondents perceive ICT tools positively, particularly in terms of usability and security, as evidenced by high percentages in agreement with statements related to ease of use and confidence in data security. Contributors generally exhibit confidence in the security and reliability of ICT systems used in managing their pension funds. The overwhelming majority either strongly disagrees or disagree that they have experienced security issues like data breaches or unauthorized access. This reveals a perceived effectiveness of current security measures implemented within CPS-related ICT platforms. Despite positive perceptions, certain barriers to the adoption of ICT in the CPS are identified. These include concerns about the complexity of interface and the lack of online help desks for addressing pension-related issues. A significant minority also expresses apprehension about digital skills, internet connectivity issues, and the need for enhanced user support mechanisms.

Recommendation

Due to the mixed landscape of perceptions and experiences, the research recommends for a balance and comprehensive approach in the implementation of ICT in the contributory scheme, especially a regular feedback mechanism.

The Management in charge of decision making of the scheme should endeavor to bridge the gap between operators and their clients by creating pension help desk in all organization, so that client will not feel marginalized and should organize periodic training courses and seminar where pension workers can be professionally trained.

The pension managers should also improve on the internet connectivity by Updating and improving it network and website so it can be accessible to client, this will improve trust on the scheme.

Finally, the pension service providers should embark on public awareness programme on the benefits, ways and condition of accessing the pension scheme.

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