The Effect of Merging Pension Funds on Provision of Retirement Benefits in Tanzania: A Survey of Retirees in Dar es Salaam Region

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Abstract: Prior to merging pension schemes in the year 2018, there were a total of five recognized pension schemes in Tanzania. This paper investigated the impact of merging pension funds on the provision of retirement benefits in Tanzania. Specifically this paper intends to examine the impact of merging membership contributions on the provision of retirement benefits in Tanzania. A survey research design was deployed. Total of 100 retirees of Public Service Social Security Fund (PSSSF) retired from 2018 onwards in Dar es Salaam Region were involved. Non-probability sampling technique was deployed and the required sample was selected using purposive and convenience sampling methods. The obtained data was analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis. Overall results of this study showed that merging membership contributions, has positive and significant impact on the provision of retirement benefits (r= 0.311 respectively at 0.05 significant level). The study concludes that, the decision to merge four public pension fund; Local Authority Pension Fund (LAPF), Parastatal Pension Fund (PPF), Government Employees Provident Fund (GEPF) and Public Service Pension Fund (PSPF) to form Public Service Social Security Fund (PSSSF) has significant impact on the provision of retirement benefits to retirees in Tanzania. In order to ensure that merging the pension funds improves provision of the retirement benefits, the Government through PSSSF management should take measures such as increase sense of care of the pension contributions to employees of the PSSSF and by strengthening internal control systems.

Keywords: Merging Pensions Funds, Retirement Benefits, Membership Contribution

1. Introduction

Pension funds (also known as schemes) is one of the categories of compulsory social security programs which have been operating across the world and advancing over years and decades [1, 10]. It is perceived that the earliest compulsory social security program began in Europe in the late 19th century [2]. In the African continent, pension funds were introduce during the colonial era and was operated under the name provident fund [3].

In Tanzania, the right to social security for all citizens is stipulated in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 as amended from time to time. Some of these rights include the right to social welfare at times of old age, sickness or disability and in other cases of incapacity.

Prior to merging pension schemes in the 2018, there were a total of five recognized pension schemes in Tanzania namely; Local Authority Pension Fund (LAPF), Parastatal Pension Fund (PPF), Government Employees Provident Fund (GEPF), Public Service Pension Fund (PSPF) and National Security Social Fund (NSSF). In 2018, the parliament passed Act No. 2 of 2018 which consolidated the social security schemes by merging four public funds, PPF, PSPF, LAPF and GEPF, into one scheme which is the Public Service Social Security Fund (PSSSF) [18, 21]. As reported by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), until December 2018 the PSSSF had registered 6,075 new members, which is still very little compared to the working population in Tanzania [19].

Merging the pension funds aimed at pooling all pension contributions made by members of individual pension funds into single source and then using harmonized procedures and

payment structures in managing and providing retirement benefits to retirees [4, 16, 17].

The Tanzanian pension system policymakers have been doing several parametric reforms, which however face several problems including economic costs and political resistance [18]. In 2018, the government stopped the implementation of the pension benefit harmonization rules due to complaints from members, politicians, and trade unions. Benefits are therefore currently paid as before the harmonization rules were introduced, although more changes are expected in the near future [4].

Following merging and aforementioned reforms, employees and retirees have been uncertain on the fate their previous contributions and impact on application of harmonized procedures and payment structures on the provision of retirement benefits [6].

There are limited studies on the effect of merging social security funds on provision of retirement benefits. Some other studies which reported failure of the Tanzania pension schemes to demonstrate care to members beyond paying basic entitlements and contribution of incompetency and dissatisfaction of employees into delay in processing and paying pension respectively were conducted prior to merging the pension schemes hence justify the need for this study as [6, 2].

This paper intends to examine the impact of merging membership contributions on the provision of retirement benefits in Tanzania.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Meaning of Key Concepts

2.1.1. Pension Funds

Pension funds refer to a defined benefit funds which involve compulsory savings plan for help in the later life [7]. Pension funds benefit concerned with ensuring security in old age through consumption smoothing, insurance, poverty relief and redistribution [15].

2.1.2. Retirement Benefits

Retirements benefits refers to statutory entitlements to members of the pension funds which include retirement pension benefit, survivors' benefit, invalidity benefit, maternity benefit, unemployment benefit, sickness benefit, death grant and funeral grant [8, 22].

2.1.3. Merging Membership Contributions

Merging membership contributions refers to bringing together all pension contributions made by all government employees into different pension funds to the PSSSF [5].

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework of this study is based on service quality model (SERVQUAL) which was modified by Kotler, P., and Keller, K. L as RATER model [9]. The RATER model explained that when making evaluation of quality of the service, customers normally use five factors namely, reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness simply expressed as (RATER) [12]. This model is widely used by large number of researchers on service and customer related studies. Based on this model, it is easy to understand and explain the impact which merging pension fund made on the provision of retirement benefits. The model demonstrates clearly that provision of retirement benefits like other services can be evaluated by retirees based on the factors such as security, accessibility and reliability of the services which in turn determine level of satisfaction [9].

2.3. Conceptual Framework

This paper focus only on one objective of the study which was to examine the impact of merging membership contributions on the provision of retirement benefits in Tanzania.
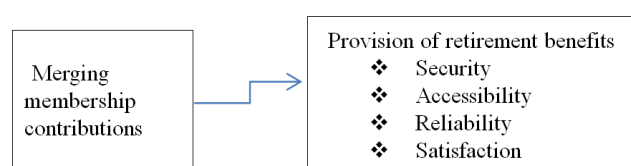
Source: Researcher idea (2022)

Figure 1. *Conceptual framework.*

The conceptual framework shown by Figure 1 relies on assumption that provision of retirement benefits is being dependent on merging membership contributions.

In other words, the conceptual framework views that merging membership contributions, have significant impact on the provision of retirement benefits (security, accessibility and reliability to retirement benefits and level of satisfaction among retirees).

2.4. Empirical Review

According to Maduga, F. C, the level of interaction required between the service providers and their potential clients was insufficient. This can be taken as the factor that could affect provision of retirement benefits to the retirees among the surveyed pension schemes. Also, the pension schemes were not seen to play an active part in assisting their contributors who lost employment. In this regards, the researchers translated that the pension schemes failed to demonstrate care beyond paying the basic entitlement to members. Moreover, the findings revealed that low income, fragmentation of the pension schemes, unattractive benefit packaging, unfriendly restrictions and corruption had an impact on the low coverage of pension schemes [6].

Some authors analysed reform options for the Tanzanian pension systems. Their study was based on simulation of the results for a time horizon of fifty years which showed that the national defined contribution reform will much improve the sustainability of the pension system. The researchers supported the report by World Bank which claimed that merging pension funds will just lower government contingent liabilities but not provide a long term sustainability [4, 20, 6].

It was revealed by Semango, D, that there was a cause and

effect relationship between employee satisfaction and organization's performance because satisfied employee served customers better. Also, it was revealed that incompetent employees made errors in processing benefit claims that necessitate reworking of the claims. This prolonged benefit payment cycle time, which resulted to member's dissatisfaction eventually delay in making payment of the pension which at the end affected the scheme's cash flow [2].

2.5. Research Gap

According to reviewed studies, merging pension funds will just lower government contingent liabilities but not provide a long term sustainability due to continued complaints from retirees on delays of their benefits payments [4, 20]. Also, the pension schemes failed to demonstrated care beyond paying the basic entitlement to members and factors such as fragmentation of the pension schemes, unfriendly restrictions and corruption had an impact on the low coverage of pension schemes [6]. Further, incompetent employees and job dissatisfaction contribute into errors in processing benefit claims and prolong benefit payment cycle time which in turn account for delay in paying pension and dissatisfaction among retirees [2].

However, the above study especially were conducted prior to merging pension funds in Tanzania and hence, offers nothing about impact of merging pension funds on the provision of retirement benefits [2, 6]. Research by Mwakisisile, A. and Larsson, T, which is most recent in the field of Tanzanian pension system focused on reform options available to pension systems rather than the impact of merging pension funds [4]. The study conducted by Mlay, E, only focus on effect of Social Security Merging on Employee Performance In Tanzania and leave apart the issue of retiree benefits [14].

Thus, in order uncover the research gap; this study investigated the impact of merging pension funds on the provision of retirement benefits by surveying the retirees in Tanzania.

3. Methodology

Quantitative data were collected from 1st Jul 2021 to 30th September 2021. A survey research design was deployed and involved a total of 100 retirees of PSSSF retired from 2018 onwards in Dar es salaam Region. The target population of this study was all retirees of the PSSSF retired from 2018 onwards which is the year that PSSSF was formed. This study used non-probability sampling technique whereby samples of 100 retirees were selected using purposive and convenience methods. This sample was calculated using formula as cited by Yin, R. K [11]. At the first, the researcher obtained list and contact numbers of all retirees of the PSSSF from 2018 onwards through the office of communication and institution partnership officer. This list was used in sample selection. The authors highlighted importance of selecting eligible sample that have experience and knowledge on the subject matter under investigation. In line with authors' recommendations, purposive

sampling method involved two criteria namely; having retired after formation of the PSSSF and having started to receive retirement benefits. Questionnaire was used as the tools for data collection. The obtained data was analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis [13]. The validity of research instrument was ensured by constructing the questions in line with relevant literature, previous researches and research conceptual framework. The reliability of research instruments was tested using the pilot data with the aid of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Data showed that 54% of the study samples were male retirees and the rest 46% were female retirees. Data revealed that about all retirees in the sample (97%) retired after attaining 60 years age and hence, accoutered for variability of the results on the variable compared. Very few retirees in the sample (3%) retired after attaining voluntary retirement age of 55 to 59 years old. It was revealed that 93% of all retirees in the study sample contributed into the pension funds above 15 years. Only 7% of all retirees in the study sample contributed into the respective pension funds for a period of 15 years.

According to the results, all pension funds merged to form PSSSF contributed a significant number of retirees into the study sample (at least 10%). However, LAPF contributed majority of the respondents (38%) followed by PSPF (28%) and GEPF (20%). The PPF contribute 14% of all retirees into the study sample.

According to the results, very low percent of the respondents (4%) received retirement benefits sixty days (2 months) from retirement date. The rest, 96% of all respondents received retirement benefits beyond sixty days after retirement which is contrary with PSSSF Act (2018).

Interestingly, highest percent of the respondents (59%) received pension after more than a year from time of retirement. This amount of delay and contravention of the law could be accounted for by merging the pension funds, among other factors.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Variable	Characteristic	F	%
Prior Membership	LAPF	38	38
	PSPF	28	28
	GEPF	20	20
	PPF	14	14
Years of Contribution	15 years	93	93
	Above 15 years	07	07
Gender	Male	54	54
	Female	46	46
Retirement Age	55-59 years old	97	97
No. of years since Retirements	Less a year	25	25
	1- 3 years	47	47
	Above 3 years	28	28
Time taken Receive Retirement Benefits	Within 2 months	04	04
	3- 7 months	14	14
	8-12 months	23	23
	Above a year	59	59

4.2. Merging Membership Contributions

The views of the respondents were captured by requiring them to indicate the extent which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: 1), transferring my pension contributions into single pension fund did not affect me anyway, 2) my contributions are very well cared by the PSSSF, 3) there is high sense of responsibility of PSSSF staff towards my pension contribution. All responses were rated using 5-points Likert scale as shown in Table 2.

All responses were rated using 5-points Likert scale as shown in Table 1.

Table 2. *Views of the Respondents on Merging Membership Contributions.*

Statements	Response scale	%
Transferring my pension contributions into single pension fund did not affect me anyway	Strongly agreed	18
	Agreed	24
	Neither agreed nor disagreed	30
	Disagreed	17
	Strongly disagreed	11
	Total	100
My pension contributions are very well cared by the PSSSF	Strongly agreed	16
	Agreed	17
	Neither agree nor disagree	41
	Disagreed	18
	Strongly disagreed	8
	Total	100
There is high sense of responsibility of PSSSF staff towards my pension contributions	Strongly agreed	17
	Agreed	15
	Neither agree nor disagree	11
	Disagreed	49
	Strongly disagreed	8
	Total	100

Source: Survey data (2021).

According to the results shown by Table 2, a total of 42% of all retiree respondents agreed with a statement that transferring pension contributions into single pension fund did not affect them anyway. This statement was disagreed by a total of 26% of all retiree respondents. By relying to the views by majority, transferring pension contributions into single pension fund did not affect retirees anyway. Also, 33% of all retiree respondents agreed with a statement that their pension contributions were very well cared by the PSSSF.

However, 26% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. Meanwhile, majority of the respondents, 41% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. This translated that retirees were not sure whether or not their pension contribution would be cared much by the PSSSF. Furthermore, a highest percent of retiree respondents (57%) disagree with a statement that there was high sense of responsibility of PSSSF staff towards their pension contributions. Alternatively, these results informed that there was low sense of responsibility of PSSSF staff towards their pension contributions.

The above results implied that merging membership contributions by transferring pension contributions into single pension fund did not affect majority of the retirees. However, retirees were not sure whether or not their pension contribution will be cared much by the PSSSF. Likewise, there was low sense of responsibility of PSSSF staff towards their pension contributions.

4.3. Views of the Respondents on the Provision of Retirement Benefits

In order to realize this variable, the views of the respondents were captured by requiring them to indicate the extent which they agreed or disagreed with the statements indicated in table 3.

Table 3. *Views of the Respondents on Provision of Retirement Benefits.*

Statements	Response scale	%
Security of my retirement benefits at PSSSF is very high	Strongly agreed	0
	Agreed	15
	Neither agreed nor disagreed	68
	Disagreed	17
	Strongly disagreed	0
	Total	100
Access to retirement benefits through PSSSF is very easy	Strongly agreed	0
	Agreed	0
	Neither agreed nor disagreed	50
	Disagreed	34
	Strongly disagreed	16
	Total	100
Reliability of my retirement benefit at PSSSF is very high	Strongly agreed	0
	Agreed	17
	Neither agreed nor disagreed	34
	Disagreed	34
	Strongly disagreed	15
	Total	100
I am very satisfied with the way retirement benefits are paid by PSSSF	Strongly agreed	0
	Agree	18
	Neither agreed nor disagreed	27
	Disagreed	32
	Strongly disagreed	23
	Total	100

Source: Survey data (2021).

According to the results in Table 3, highest percent of all retiree respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with a statement that security of retirement benefits at PSSSF was very high. This means that retirees could not confirm security of their retirement benefits at PSSSF. Likewise, highest percent of the respondents (50%) neither agreed nor disagreed with a statement that access to retirement benefits through PSSSF was very easy.

In other words, the results tell that access to retirement benefits through PSSSF was not yet confirmed to be easy or difficult by the retirees. However, highest percent of the retiree respondents (49%) disagreed with a statement that reliability of retirement benefit at PSSSF was very high. Alternatively, the results can be stated that reliability of retirement benefit at PSSSF was very low. Moreover, highest percent of the retiree respondents (55%) disagreed with a statement that they were very satisfied with the way retirement benefits were paid by PSSSF. In other words, the results implied that retirees were not satisfied by the way retirement benefits were paid by PSSSF.

From the above results, the study established that provision of retirement benefits following merging all pension funds to form PSSSF did not guarantee security of retirement benefits and easy accessibility of retirement benefits. Reliability of

retirement benefit at PSSSF was very low. Also, retirees were not satisfied by the way retirement benefits were paid by PSSSF.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was performed in order to test association between independent variables (membership contribution) and one dependent variable (provision of retirement benefits). This analysis utilized the data captured on the general statements on the manner which merging membership contributions.

The data captured on general improvement in the provision of retirement benefits following merging the pension funds was used. It also used the specific data captured on the statements which described the constructs of provision of retirement benefits. Since, the data were ranked, the Pearson correlation coefficients were determined and used to evaluate nature and strength of association at p-value ≤ 0.05. A matrix of the Pearson correlation coefficients between variables was as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *A matrix of the Pearson correlation coefficients between Variables.*

Variables	Provision of retirement benefits	Security	Accessibility	Reliability	Satisfaction
Provision of retirement benefits	1				
Merging membership contributions	0.220	0.435	-0.640	-0.539	-0.080
Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).					

Source: Survey data (2021).

Dep. variable: Provision of retirement benefits (Security, Accessibility, Reliability, and Satisfaction).

Indep. Variables: Merging membership contributions,

The Pearson's correction coefficient (r) between merging membership contributions and provision of retirement benefits is 0.220 at 0.05 significant level. This means that merging membership contributions has positive impact on the provision of retirement benefits. This relationship is also shown by the correlation between merging membership contributions and security issues in the provision retirement benefits (r = 0.435 at 0.05 significant level). But, the correlation coefficients between merging membership contributions and accessibility, reliability as well as satisfaction with the retirement benefits reveal existence of negative impact (r = -0.640, -0.539 and -0.080 respectively at 0.05 significant level). This means that merging membership contributions has positive impact on the provision of retirement benefits based on the security issues of the retirement benefits which might be enhanced. But, merging membership contributions has affected negatively accessibility, reliability and satisfaction with retirement benefits in Tanzania.

5. Discussions

The current study revealed that merging membership contributions has positive impact on the provision of retirement benefits. However, this impact was associated by security of the retirement benefits only which could have been enhanced by merging the pension funds. When the impact of merging membership contributions was correlated with provision of retirement benefits based on accessibility, reliability and satisfaction with retirement benefits, negative impact was revealed. Thus, the study showed that decision to merge four pension funds (LAPF, PPF, GEPF, and PSPF) to form PSSSF in the 2018 which merged membership contributions, had significant impact on the provision of the pension fund to retirees in Tanzania. This decision has positive impact on the security of the retirement benefits. However, it had negative impact on the accessibility, reliability and satisfaction with retirement benefits among retirees.

Also, empirical results of this study showed that merging membership contributions by transferring pension contributions into single pension fund did not affect retirees. However, retirees were not sure whether or not their pension contributions will be cared much by the PSSSF because there was low sense of responsibility of PSSSF staff towards their pension contributions. Due to this problem, retirees were not satisfied by margining pension funds which accompanied with merging membership contributions by transferring them into single fund (PSSSF).

The current study is in agreement with report by Maduga, F. C, which was published prior to merging the pension funds in Tanzania. In this report, it was highlighted that employees and retirees were uncertain about the fate their previous contributions. That is why after merging the retirees have been not sure whether or not their pension contributions will be cared much by the PSSSF due to low sense of responsibility of PSSSF staff towards their pension contributions [6]. Contrary with the report by Maduga, F, C which highlighted that employees and retirees were uncertain that merging membership contributions would affect their pension contribution; this study discovered that merging membership contributions by transferring pension contributions into single pension fund did not affect retirees.

Also, this study is in agreement with prior research by Semango, D, who underlined that level of interaction required between the service providers and their potential clients was insufficient [2]. This problem was considered by the current study as the factor affected provision of retirement benefits to the retirees. This is because, inadequate interaction of PSSSF staff with retirees countered for failure to demonstrate care beyond paying the basic entitlement to members. Transferring members' contributions into single pension fund following the formation of PSSSF needed high care and sense of responsibility for the merging decision to have positive impact on accessibility, reliability and satisfaction with retirement benefits as it did on the security of the retirement benefits.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that decision to merge four pension funds (LAPF, PPF, GEPF, and PSPF) to form PSSSF in the 2018 has significant impact of the provision of retirement benefits to retirees in Tanzania. The first components of merging the pension funds which was to merge all membership contributions has positive impact on the security of the retirement benefits and negative impact on the accessibility, reliability and satisfaction with retirement benefits among retiree.

6.2. Recommendation

In order to ensure that merging the pension funds not only become a strategy of improving adequacy, coverage and administration efficiency of the pension by the Government, but also the strategy to improve provision of the retirement benefits, the Government through PSSSF management should focus on the following:

First, sense of care of the pension contributions should be increased through employees of the PSSSF and by strengthening internal control systems. Next, high sense of responsibility of PSSSF staff towards pension contributions must be ensured. The pension payment modes should be checked by involved retirees and improved accordingly to increase their reasonableness. This will also ensure that pension pay levels is fair to all retirees.

Again, clearance of pension forms must be made easy to retirees. This can be achieved by designing both English and Swahili pension forms. It can also be improved by avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy at workplace of the prospective retirees and at the PSSSF office.

The retirees, the employers and the PSSSF should ensure that they mutually fulfil their responsibility to facilitate timely processing and payment of the retirement benefits as stipulated under section 43 of the PSSSF Act of 2018.

6.3. Limitation and Area for Further Studies

This study decided to cover retirees of the PSSSF found in one geographical boundary of Dar es Salaam urban. This means that the findings obtained cannot be generalized to all retirees across the country retired after formation of the PSSSF and having started to receive retirement benefits from PSSSF.

Also, the current study used purposive and convenience methods to select study sample which normally do not give an equal chance to all members of the population to be selected in the sample.

The researcher did not conduct interviews or discussions for gaining insights of the respondents about the subject matter. Also, secondary source of fata was not used due to limited researches, literature and documents linking merging pension funds and provision of retirement benefits.

In line with the above encounters, this study would suggest conduct of this study in other urban areas across the country.

Large sample should be selected using probability sampling to avoid biasness and to increase randomization of the sample. The researcher should also consider using interviews and discussions as the methods of data collection in order to gain insights and in-depth information and explanations of nature and behavior of the phenomena and patterns of the results portrayed by this study. Considering that the current study, has laid down foundation of empirical literature on the phenomenon, the researcher can use this study as one among the potential sources of secondary data.

Acknowledgements

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